

Summer 4-H Engagement

In a dual effort to address the impact of learning loss due to the decreased instructional time during the COVID pandemic and better market the local 4-H Program to new and underserved youth audiences, CKD 4-H Youth Development Professionals Jacob Schmeidler and Kate Littich mentored two Summer Engagement Interns. The internship capitalized on collaboration with community partners -- such as schools, summer school providers and day camp providers -- in order to reach K-12 participants and engage them in areas as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), agriculture and natural resources, creative arts, family and consumer science, and personal development. This general offering of project-based learning opportunities complemented efforts already in place within formal education system of the local schools.



Over the course of 12 weeks, CKD interns developed connections with nearly 400 kids through partnerships with the summer school programs of three school districts, K-State Salina, Bennington Senior Center, Assaria Summer Youth Program, Indigo Mood Ice Cream, Delphos Library, Kids Creative Corners, and several churches. Statewide, 56 interns reached 22,611 youth through 962 programs resulting in more than 1,975 hours of instruction.

Increasing ag awareness in local youth

With the bulk of his work being technical assistance to area farmers and ranchers, CKD Crop Production Agent Jay Wisbey also sees the value in educating youth. For 2023, he had a designated action plan to work with K-12 students in programs related to plant science/ agronomy. For the younger crowd, he focused on the various crops grown in Kansas and what products they are used for. Specifically, Jay partnered with Bennington Grade School, Minneapolis Grade School, Minneapolis Summer Program, Lakewood Discovery Center, and the Farm Bureau Associations of both Ottawa and Saline County to reach 4th and 5th graders throughout the district on multiple occasions.

Jay also helped local FFA chapters prepare for crop judging competitions and developed educational materials students can use to study on their own. Another strong youth program offered by CKD each year is a Safe Tractor and Machinery Operation safety class, which aims to educate participants of the hazards existing on the farm in an effort to prevent future injuries and loss of life.

Understanding poverty



Poverty is a reality for many individuals in Saline and Ottawa Counties. Residents deal with the challenges of being poor in an area that is known for economic growth. But unless you've experienced poverty, it's difficult to truly understand its impact. To help folks better comprehend, Lisa Newman, CKD Family & Community Wellness Agent, assisted with two poverty simulations in the district. Simulations with a local coalition and the Kansas Department of Children and Families were organized to walk community members through an experience where participants assumed identities of up to 26 different families facing poverty. Participants role-played a month in poverty, trying to maintain their basic needs.

At the end of the exercise, participants were invited to discuss their experiences and what they learned. Through this exercise, participants reported a better awareness, knowledge and understanding of various risk factors that impact health and wellbeing for those living in poverty. Also, participants gained greater insight into a health culture created through policy, system, and environmental changes.

Resource Management comes in many forms

In addition to her popular retirement planning seminars and Medicare counseling, CKD Family Resource Management Agent Debra Wood also taught monthly financial courses for the Life Skills Program at the Ashby House in Salina. These covered topics such as health insurance, debt, taxes, and disaster preparedness.

Over at the Salvation Army, classes on credit and money management were offered in both English and Spanish. Additionally, she assisted with training the Heartland Head Start staff on how to work with families on developing budgets.



On the youth side, Deb plays an instrumental role in the coordination of the annual Saline County Back to School Fair, which includes nearly 30 community agencies and upwards of 80 volunteers. This last year, over 800 supply-filled backpacks were given out, 60 school physicals were performed, and just shy of 150 students received a dental screening and fluoride application.

Addressing the generational transfer of the ag industry

The Central Kansas District is home to numerous generational farms and ranches who will eventually experience the transition of operation and, ultimately, ownership. With an increase in land values, startup costs, and tightening credit standards, the need for a smooth transition from one generation to the next is vital as ever.

Justine Henderson, CKD Livestock Production Agent, made it a goal this year to help families gain knowledge and tools on the estate planning process, which leads to a more effective and efficient transfer of farms and ranches, thus, benefiting our community members by keeping agribusinesses alive and successful so they can further their contribution to the local economy and global food production system. She joined forces with the KSU Office of Farm and Ranch Transition to organize and host several meetings and conferences around the district focused on transition planning and follow-up consultation.



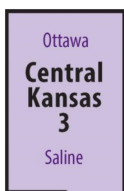
Numerous participants reported they have a better understanding how to approach the topic of succession within the family and can now start to have those conversations properly and effectively. Others indicated they took the time and steps to develop (or update) their farm business plans after they attended.

Casting a wide horticulture net

2023 was another successful year of horticulture outreach in the district. Jason Graves, CKD Horticulture Agent, was able to provide local clientele direct access to K-State Research and Extension resources through a variety of educational methods. Nearly 700 phone calls and/or walk-in visits were received as well as another 450+ diagnostic questions coming in through email, text message and Facebook. Outside the office, 85 on-site consultations were done to assist with landscape, garden and tree health questions.

Not only is Jason's expertise sought out by homeowners and gardeners, but by other industry professionals such as nurseries, horticulture retailers, landscapers, and applicators to tackle difficult questions and assist in troubleshooting situations. Jason is an avid presenter and was able to collaborate with various groups and organizations including Eaglecrest Retirement Community, Lakewood Discovery Center, Salina Food Bank, Minneapolis Lions Club, Salina Public Library, and Kansas Wesleyan University to name a few. He is also routinely interviewed on radio and podcast throughout the year. Jason also has a devoted following of readers who look for his articles in area newspapers and on his blog www.ckdgardens.com.

When not educating, he can be found getting his hands dirty in the various community gardens right alongside his Master Gardeners who, in 2023, logged over 1,800 volunteer hours valued at \$57,000.



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