

### **Navigating Medicare**

Every fall, CKD Family Resource Management Agent Debra Wood spends most of her time helping steer folks who are 65 years old or older through the choppy waters of Medicare enrollment. As a result of the Medicare Basics programs she presented to over 160 participants in the 2020-2021 program year:

- 96% Agreed or Strongly Agreed they better understood when to enroll in and the components of Medicare and Medicare supplement insurance.
- 100% Agreed or Strongly Agreed they understood where to get help with prescription drug plans.
- 100% Agreed or Strongly Agreed they had a better understanding of types of programs available to help pay for Medicare premiums, deductibles, copays, and their eligibility requirements.

In addition to the educational programs, 417 one-on-one Medicare consultations were completed. Of these, nearly half of beneficiaries changed drug plans. Total savings of \$172,285.15 was achieved for those beneficiaries compared to what they would have spent if they had not changed plans for 2021.

Over the last eight years of fall open enrollments, Deb and her volunteers have completed over 6,534 plan comparisons. These appointments have led to 54% of the beneficiaries changing drug plans resulting in a cumulative savings of \$3,750,997. This equates to an average savings for those changing plans of \$1,061 for the plan year. This is money which is then available to the beneficiary to help them meet their basic needs.

### **Farming and Ranching: A Hazardous Occupation**



In May, 2021, Jay Wisbey, CKD Crop Production Agent, and Justine Henderson, CKD Livestock Agent, organized the annual Safe Tractor and Machinery Operation Program in collaboration with the Minneapolis FFA Chapter. This proved to be a stellar year with over 40 youth participating in the course – the largest in recent history.

This program is designed for 14- and 15-year-olds seeking employment in production agriculture and is a requirement for farmers and ranchers who employ non-family workers under the age of 16. Those who completed the classroom portion gained valuable knowledge in several core content areas, including safety basics, agricultural hazards, tractors, connecting and using implements, and materials handling.

The youth also gained hands-on skills and experience through the driving skills portion, which was administered by their employer, using the actual equipment they would be operating.

### **Facing the fear of grant writing**

Cade Rensink, CKD Director and Community Vitality Agent, partnered with Nancy Daniels, who is a Community Vitality Specialist with K-State, to host a two-part Online Grant Writing Workshop in the spring of 2021. This training helped members of various community groups, non-profits, local governments, and other organizations conquer grant writing fears and to begin writing, plus discover new sources of data to document their community needs. The class was held virtually and reached a very diverse audience.

Upon evaluation after completing the course, survey respondents indicated: 100% had greater confidence to write a successful grant and were more aware of new sources of data to document a community need or issue, two-thirds learned to better explain a problem or opportunity that a grant might address, 100% found new grant funding sources, 100% were able to express outcomes and activities, 83% felt they could develop evaluation tools and all respondents agreed or strongly agreed they had gained confidence in drafting a grant budget.

### That's a lot of vegetables!

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of people wanting to get dirt under their fingernails and grow their own food has spiked. Jason Graves, CKD Horticulture Agent, coordinates the Extension Master Gardener (EMG) Program in Ottawa and Saline Counties to provide extensive training to those aspiring green thumbs. In return, EMG participants engage in volunteer service.

In 2021, local Master Gardener volunteers donated over 1,200 hours and recorded over 1,000 contacts in the Central Kansas District. The monetary value of these volunteer hours was over \$34,000.



Hours were spent tending the Master Gardener Demonstration Garden, which is the largest educational outreach project. CKD EMGs also organized a Plant and Garden Garage Sale outreach in May that reached over 400 people. They were also active in the EMG Vegetable Plot, Bennington Community Garden and the Food Bank Community Garden, all of which combined to provide nearly one ton (2,000 pounds) of fresh produce to the immediate communities they exist in, either through donations or free will giving.

### Citizenship and Leadership Development through 4-H

The CKD 4-H Program had over 100 members enrolled in the Leadership and/or Civic Engagement Projects in 2021. Sarah Maas, CKD 4-H Youth Development Agent, worked with these young people to assess their development in the two project areas, which include learning about self, practicing teamwork in achieving a goal, learning to accept differences in people, identifying different leadership styles, finding out what good citizenship is, exploring how other groups and clubs work, studying other cultures, and understanding government.

Overall, the average age in the project areas was 14.5 years old and their average tenure in the 4-H program was 6.9 years—nearly half of their life! It was clear that once youth engage in 4-H, they find value and desire to achieve mastery of their interests.

All participants agreed or strongly agreed they gain skills through serving the community that will help them in the future, think they can create positive change in their communities, and can apply knowledge in ways that solve “real-life” problems through community service.

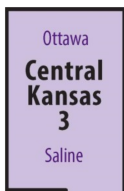
### People are “flocking” to sheep and goats

In the last couple of years, there has been a significant increase in the demand for peer-to-peer educational opportunities amongst farmers and ranchers - especially those young and beginning producers. Additionally, interest in sheep and goat production has been on the rise both on a large scale, as well as on small acreage.

To capitalize on both points, CKD Livestock Agent Justine Henderson and Director Cade Rensink partnered with the Kansas Grazing Lands Coalition to do the Central Kansas Small Ruminant Tour in late July, 2021. Over 60 people attended, with several driving in from 200 miles away! The hot event featured three progressive sheep and goat operations in Ottawa and Saline Counties. In the morning, participants visited a commercial goat producer who spoke on marketing, health, rotational grazing, and facilities. Next, folks observed multi-species grazing of goats and cattle and learned about facilities, fencing, economics, water, and brush control. After lunch, participants gained valuable information about using a variety of forages, including native grass, cool season grass, residues, cover crops, and Teff grass to run sheep on.



Funding for the tour was made possible through a Kansas NRCS Conservation Collaboration Grant.



### Central Kansas Extension District

**Minneapolis Office** • 307 N. Concord, • Minneapolis, KS 67467 • (785) 392-2147  
**Salina Office** • 2218 Scanlan Avenue • Salina, KS 67401 • (785) 309-5850

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service  
K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

*Knowledge  
for Life*