



February 2023

THE EXTENSION CONNECTION

Wyandotte County K-State Research and Extension

Director's Note

Denise Dias,

Wyandotte County Director

If you were asked to describe Wyandotte County in one word, what one word comes to mind? For me it is “Community”. Our residents love living in the “Dotte” and want things in our community to improve. That is what this newsletter is all about. Ways for you to improve your life and community to make it the best it can be. Enjoy our lineup of articles this month and if you are interested in more healthy living content, [sign up for our 'Dotte Eats' Newsletter!](#)

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INTRODUCING DOTTE EATS!

Stephanie Whatley-Hopkins
EFNEP Agent

Are you looking for a resource that focuses specifically on nutrition? [Join the Dotte Eats Newsletter list.](#)

Every month we will explore a “superfood” and how trying something small and new can make big changes in your overall health.

In January, we focus on how we can cut out sugar in little ways. That may mean swapping out the sugary cereal in the morning for something more filling, trying a new type of tea, or some tips on how to spend less of your daily calories on soda, but still satisfying your craving for something sweet and fizzy.

Every month will include a “superfood” to try alongside a recipe starring the month’s “superfood.” Mini-articles will give more information about health conditions that may be reduced by including “superfoods” into our diet. Each month will also feature information about physical activity.

Other topics that we will cover throughout the year; are activities to try so we can bond with our families.

Learn some tips on how to keep our families safe from foodborne illnesses. Ways that we can save money during our trips to the grocery store. Finally, when the season changes we will learn about what foods are coming into season locally.

The new year is a time to try new things and start fresh, so subscribe to the Dotte Eats Newsletter and make your family’s nutrition a priority for 2023.

Nutrition and Food Safety



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SHARE THE LOVE WITH HOMEMADE GIFTS FOR VALENTINES DAY

Jessie Carr
4-H Youth Development Agent

4-H Youth Development

Sometimes I think Valentine's Day could be a second Christmas. Not because of gifts or fancy celebrations but because of the love and joy you can spread to those you care most about! There is just something special about expressing your love for someone, whether it's through kind words, acts of service or gift giving. There are a lot of ways to share love!

This Valentine's Day you can pledge your heart to those you love with some simple crafts from National 4-H and JOANN Craft-Stores!

Friendship Bracelets: Show your friends how much they mean to you with this simple and fun friendship bracelet activity! Experiment with different colors and designs to create the perfect bracelet to celebrate your friendship.

Drawstring Treat Bags: This simple and fun craft activity is great for intermediate sewers! Family and friends will love getting a special treat in these festive drawstring bags.

Tie-Dye T-Shirts: Celebrate Valentine's Day in style with this colorful tie-dye activity complete with a heart-shaped design! These t-shirts can be the perfect handmade gift for your friends and family or can make a great Valentine's Day outfit to wear yourself.



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MARRIAGE PRINCIPLES FROM A NATIONAL EXTENSION MODEL

Chiquita Miller,
Family and Consumer Sciences Agent

During the month of February, let's focus on what shapes healthy relationships. Understanding what qualities make relationships work, prompted several Extension state-level faculty to develop seven research-based principles that shape healthy relationships.

Learn about these seven principles—Choose, Care for Self, Know, Care, Share, Manage, and Connect—and how to apply them.

Choose

The first step in creating a healthy marriage is making decisions to create and strengthen healthy relationships.

Care for Self

Research has linked physical and mental health with relationship satisfaction. Self-care is a very important part of maintaining a healthy relationship. It will be easier to maintain a healthy relationship if your personal well-being is a priority.

Know

It is just as important to know your partner before starting a romantic relationship as it is to continually know your partner throughout the relationship.

Care

Cultivating positivity through thoughts and actions is one of the important contributors of Care in a relationship.

Share

Trust, friendship, and love shared between two people is at the epicenter of a happy couple relationship.

Manage

Manage covers handling relationship differences in healthy ways. Conflict is a normal part of relationships, and knowing how to handle conflict in healthy ways will help the couple manage stressors effectively.

Connect

If couples turn to meaningful connections during challenges, they tend to fare better. It can also offer a different perspective and links in the community can open new opportunities for couples.

Developing healthy relationship skills is important to you and your family. Children learn by example so, by using these healthy relationship tips, you can improve the future relationships of the little ones you care about. For more information regarding the tips, you can visit this resource:

<https://extension.usu.edu/relationships/research/marriage-principles-from-a-national-extension-model>

Family and Consumer Sciences



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FOOD SAFETY IN BLESSING BOXES

Lori Wuellner

Food and Nutrition Agent

Many communities have Blessing Boxes, Parking Lot Pantries, or similar efforts to offer easy access to foods and other items for people in need, which helps improve food security. Such boxes also are convenient places for people to donate food and other items. However, because these pantries are normally outside and subject to extreme temperatures in various seasons of the year, not all foods are safe to donate. It is critical that foods available through “Blessing Boxes” are as safe and nutritious as possible to truly be a blessing to those using the boxes.

This new fact sheet covers a variety of information including:

- Good Items to Donate Through a Blessing Box
- Foods That May or May Not be Safe, Depending on the Outside Temperature
- Items NOT Recommended for Donation Through a Blessing Box
- Good Practices for Implementing a Blessing Box

Also noted in the fact sheet is information and a link to the K-State Research and Extension Bookstore guiding you to a handout on food product dating. Two picture examples of acceptable and not acceptable foods are included as well.

You can find this resource through the K-State Extension’s Food Safety page at, <https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/foodsafety/>, or directly at, <https://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/16592>

Nutrition and Food Safety



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KEEP UP THOSE NEW YEARS RESOLUTION!

Jan McMahon

Nutrition Program Assistant

How are those new year resolutions going? Did they get tossed out on January 2 or are you on track at least somewhat.? Sayings like "Make Progress Every Day" or "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step" Life is full of baby steps. As a child we did not take off running,

The secret to making progress is getting started today. Three steps to make progress every day toward health is: daily affirmations, daily learning activities, and daily action steps

Affirmations are positive statements about how you want to think, feel, and/or behave that are repeated multiple times each day. Affirmations should be short positive and stated in the present tense, even though they probably do not reflect your current reality. Start your affirmations with the word "I" (e.g., "I have, " I believe") or "my" to make them personally yours. Make them simple so you can remember them. Repeat them out loud at least ten times two times a day.

Second is Daily Learning Activities: Learning to learn is one of life's most important skills. One way to make progress toward your health goal is to learn more about your health. Make a conscious effort to learn something new every day

Thirdly, Daily Action Steps: Today, and every day, is the time to take action to improve your health. There are no "magic bullets" that guarantee health. But daily progress will build upon itself, just like compound interest. If you think you don't have time look for ten to fifteen minutes segments three times a day to work on your goal

Use these strategies for improving health because it promotes a healthy attitude about behavior change.

https://njaes.rutgers.edu/sshw/workbook/08_Make_Progress_Every_Day.pdf

Nutrition and Food Safety



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LET'S BUILD OUR COMMUNITY BY FOCUSING ON OUR ASSETS

Denise Dias
Extension Director

People view the world differently, each through a different lens. People often say is your glass half full or half empty? For those who view things in a negative manner it is called deficit-based thinking. Others who tend to focus on the positive are considered asset-based thinking. What is your approach? Do you tend to focus on the positive or the negative?

The definition of Asset-Based Thinking is "When you decrease your focus on what is wrong and increase your focus on what is right, you build enthusiasm and energy, strengthen relationships, and move people and productivity to the next level." Asset-Based Thinking is not blind optimism or magical thinking. It takes "positive thinking" to a whole new level of engagement. Just imagine how we could improve our community if everything was viewed in this manner?

Making the Move in a more positive direction is not as difficult as one might think. An asset-based (appreciative) approach can keep individuals, workgroups, organizations and even communities moving in a positive direction! Community leaders should be self-aware of the tone they set when leading projects and initiatives. If they are positive, then it is more likely that the people around them will be taking that approach. However, if you (or even your community) have fallen prey to deficit-based thinking, it can lead to getting caught in a negative cycle and drain energy.

The next time you are in a group of people, give it a try, you may be surprised how a bit of positivity can totally change the conversation!

Community Development



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HOUSEPLANTS LOOKING SAD

Lynn Loughary
Horticulture Agent

Homeowners often become concerned about their houseplants at this time of year because they look unthrifty and may even shed leaves. Most of this is the plant responding to low light levels. Not only is the day length shorter during the winter but the angle of the sun means sunlight must travel through more atmosphere before it reaches our houseplants. Houseplants respond to this stress by stopping growth and dropping leaves if necessary. So how can we tell if leaves are being dropped due to stress or due to other factors? Normally, stress is the culprit if leaves are dropped throughout the plant so a general thinning occurs.

The next question, then, is what do we do about it? Well, you can add supplemental lighting or just wait until longer days and higher light levels allow the plants to recover. Unfortunately, people are often not patient enough and decide the plant needs more fertilizer or water to perk it up. Remember the problem is low light; not a lack of fertilizer or water. Adding extra fertilizer or water won't help and may actually harm the plant. Everything needs to be balanced in the plant. If there is plenty of sunlight, the plant can use plenty of water and plenty of fertilizer. Under low light levels, the plant is unable to use much fertilizer and the nutrients just stay in the soil where they can build up and may eventually burn roots. Also, excess water can actually drown roots. Only water when the soil is dry ½ inch deep in the pot. Also, reduce or eliminate fertilizing during the winter months.

Lynn Loughary is the Horticulture Agent for Wyandotte County, K-State Research and Extension. She can be reached by calling 913-299-9300, ext 104, or by email lloughar@ksu.edu

Horticulture



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Upcoming Events



February:

**February 1- K-State Garden Hour:
More plants from your plants**

**February 2 - Using Native Plants in the
Ornamental Garden**

February 14- ServSafe

**March 1- K-State Garden Hour:
Houseplants- Basics and Beyond**

K-State Research and Extension is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Program information may be available in languages other than English. Reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities, including alternative means for communication (e.g., Braille, large print, audio tape, and American Sign Language) may be requested by contacting the event contact Jo McLeland two weeks prior to the start of the event (insert deadline date) at (insert phone number and email). Requests received after this date will be honored when it is feasible to do so. Language access services, such as interpretation or translation of vital information will be provided free of charge to limited English proficient individuals upon request.

Connect with us!



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