



January 2024

THE EXTENSION CONNECTION

Wyandotte County K-State Research and Extension

Director's Note

Denise Dias

Wyandotte County Director

Happy New Year! Our staff is here to educate you to have a better new year! Be sure to check out the programs, events and services we offer. Be sure to follow us on Facebook or view our website. Both contain lots of current and interesting topics for you to use. If you have thoughts on how we can do things better, feel free to send those suggestions to me.

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GRANTS FOR OUR YOUTH

As the 4-H Youth Development Agent, I am always looking for ways to help our 4-H program thrive. Earlier this fall the WyCo Extension Director, Denise Dias, approached me with the idea to submit a grant application on behalf of the WyCo 4-H Program to be a beneficiary of the 2023 BPU Employee Charity Golf Tournament. I could not have been more thrilled at the opportunity! We spent several days thinking through ideas, brainstorming, and discussing with other agents in the Extension Office what could be the most beneficial items to request through this grant. We decided to submit the application with the specific goal of purchasing two things for our program: a wire grid display system and a blender bike.

On December 11th, 2023 the BPU Employees Charity Golf Corporation Committee attended the Extension Office's executive board meeting to award us with an \$8,000 grant. The wire grid display system will be used to replace the current displays used for the 4-H photography and art projects. Our 4-Hers work hard on their projects and deserve to have them displayed to the judges and to the public in the best way possible. The new display system will be used at the WyCo Fair and 4-H Summer Showcase, as well as other 4-H related events that have art, photography, or other 4-H projects that are best displayed vertically.

The blender bike is a stationary bike with an attachment between the handle bars that is a manually powered blender. The blender bike will be used during health and nutrition classes to help students see the connection between movement, exercise, and nutrition. Be sure to check out the new wire grid display system at the 2024 WyCo Fair and come see the blender bike at one of the nutrition classes!



Family and Consumer Sciences

A NEW START FOR 2024

Many people made promises that in 2024, they would bring in the year by accomplishing their New Year's resolutions. The reality is that many people will not keep their resolutions throughout the year. We have some helpful tips on how to set a New Year's resolution this year that are reasonable and that you will be more likely to hold on to and make good! New Year's resolutions are a great way to create a life-long journey of self-improvement. Here are 5 tips to help you find success in your resolutions:

1. Make the resolution!

Just setting a definite intention or goal is a huge step towards improvement, and a good indicator that you'll have success. Remember goals can be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely.

2. Be positive.

Frame your resolution in a positive light. Say what you're going to achieve instead of what you're going to lose or give up. Try not to use discounting when you know you have achieved your goals.

3. Think BIG...and small.

It's a great idea to set big, ambitious goals. Just be sure to plan out the small steps you need to take to achieve them. Making a plan that works for you can make great promise for your future self.

4. Reward your success.

Giving ourselves immediate rewards or seeing immediate results keeps us motivated for the long haul. Don't wait to celebrate your small or large wins!

5. Get back up!

You're going to slip up or have setbacks. People who succeed in their resolutions don't quit after this happens. Every day is a new day...get back up and keep trying, please never give up!

<https://extension.illinois.edu/blogs/connection-corner/2020-12-30-new-years-resolutions>



Nutrition and Food Safety

STARTING FRESH

January...it often signals a fresh start for many. This looks different on everybody but it usually involves personal wellness...mental, physical, and emotional. The reality is these don't stand alone. They impact each other. But for now, let's focus on mental wellness. What are ways to enhance your mental state of mind? Some tips include...practice daily gratitude, get enough quality sleep, manage stress with healthy coping skills, nourish your body (eat well), be physically active, learn a new skill, give yourself a break, be willing to ask for help and slow down.

How does nourishment and nutrition play into this? A balanced diet contributes to both physical and mental health. Specifically, there is a connection between the gut and the brain. Foods that promote gut health not only may be good for you physically; they also may help your mental state. This is addressed in the K-State publication, *Healthy Body, Healthy Brain*. It sites 9 steps you can take including eating a diverse range of food, adding fermented foods in your diet, eat food rich in polyphenols, and more. The MIND (Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay) eating plan is also addressed. It has 15 dietary components, including 10 "brain-healthy food groups" (leafy greens, berries, etc..). All of this information (and much more) can be found in the following link (both [English](#) and [Spanish](#)):

Another source from NDSU Extension, [Nourish Your Brain with a Healthful Diet](#), provides helpful information on specific nutrients that benefit the brain:It's been said, "what is good for your heart, is good for your head" which means following a heart-healthy diet and regular activity can also [improve brain health...](#)

If a "healthier you", by adopting better eating habits, is on your list for 2024 there are plenty of ways to start. What does that look like for you? It doesn't have to be "all or none". Small steps matter...add one more vegetable to your plate, eat one less heavily processed food, go meatless for one meal during the week, eat a small handful of nuts, try adding in a fermented food during the week, and more. The "more" can be found in the links above. You got this!

WELCOME OUR NEW SNAP-EDUCATOR

The Kansas SNAP-Ed program is supported by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) grant, in partnership with the Kansas Department for Children and Families and implemented by Kansas State University Research and Extension (KSRE). Kansas SNAP-Ed supports low-income Kansans by making the healthy choice the easy choice through a dual focus on nutrition and physical activity education and partnering with local and statewide organizations to improve policies, systems and environments that support healthy behaviors.

Kansas SNAP-Ed focuses on preventing nutrition and activity-related chronic disease by empowering low-resource Kansans to achieve healthy lives, improve food security and reduce health disparities.

Through a series of nutrition classes, community-based nutrition educators lead interactive lessons for youth, adults, and older adults across the state to help individuals and families with:

- Easy, nutritious meal planning according to MyPlate
- Stretching limited food dollars
- Increasing physical activity
- Improving skills for safe food handling and preparation



HOUSEPLANTS LOOKING SAD?

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 $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep in the pot. Also, reduce or eliminate fertilizing during the winter months.



Community Development

JANUARY IS RADON AWARENESS MONTH: SHOULD YOU TEST?

Radon is a colorless, odorless and tasteless gas that can have serious health consequences. It is the number one cause of lung cancer in non-smokers. When there are high levels of radon present in your home, you are at a higher risk of developing cancer. January is National Radon Awareness Month. Winter is an excellent time for Wyandotte County residents to test their homes for radon gas. Radon is prevalent in Wyandotte County, so it's important to test your home. Radon levels in our county average around 5.3 pCi/L which is above the EPA action level of 4.0 pCi/L.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recommends installing a mitigation system to reduce indoor radon levels when homes are confirmed with 4.0 pCi/L of radon gas or higher. Chronic, long-term radon gas exposure in homes increases the long-term risk of developing lung cancer. Residential radon gas exposure is the number two leading cause of lung cancer death in the U.S. for smokers, cigarettes are number one.

Residents can purchase radon test kits through the K-State Extension office for \$15. The kit is opened and left in the lowest livable part of the home for a couple of days. Once the test is completed, the kit is packaged up in the self-addressed stamped envelope which is part of the kit and then returned by mail for testing. Test results are usually ready in 7-10 days. If results show high levels of radon, addressing the issue is relatively inexpensive and should be done sooner rather than later. Each home is unique, the only way to know if your home has radon is through testing. For more information please contact Denise Dias at 913-299-9300 or denise.dias@ksu.edu.



Denise Dias,
Director
ddias@ksu.edu

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Upcoming Events



January

Jan 1: Office Closed

Jan 4: Good Bug, Bad Bug

Jan 5: Kitchen Restore

Jan 8: Dining with Diabetes

Jan 27: Cake Decorating

Connect with us!



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 (913-299-9300 or jo1@ksu.edu). 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.

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