



October 2024

Extension Council Elections to Be Held October 15th

It is once again time to elect representatives to the Shawnee County Extension Council. **Voting will take place on Tuesday, October 15th, at the Shawnee County Extension Office, 1740 SW Western Avenue, from 8am - 6pm.** Enter the upstairs meeting room from the outside upper southwest door.

The Extension Council election gives all Shawnee County residents, 18 years or older, the opportunity to elect Extension Council members for a two-year term. Twenty-four elected Shawnee County residents make up the Extension Council, which is charged with the responsibility of working with Extension Agents to develop and conduct educational programs in the areas of Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, Community Development, and Family and Consumer Sciences.

Six members serve on the program development committees (PDC) for each of those areas. Extension staff and council members appreciate your support and hope you will take time to vote in the upcoming election.

Extension Council Election Candidates

Agriculture & Natural Resource

Kevin Siek – Kevin is retired. He is a Master Gardener Volunteer and Chair on the Master Gardener Native Plant Garden Committee as well as a recipient of the President's Gold Volunteer Service Award. He is also a member of the Master Gardener Speakers Bureau Committee and has given numerous presentations at the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library, to private groups and to the Shawnee County Extension Master Gardeners membership.

Kevin's passion is gardening for pollinators and wildlife. He welcomes any opportunity to share scientific research-based information to assist others in becoming better gardeners and stewards for our environment.

Kevin enjoys educating our community on ways they can make personal choices to positively address the climate crisis and connecting them with research-based resources on horticultural best practices.

Carrie Etzel – Carrie is a homeschooling mom of five, some of whom have disabilities, and an administrator for Topeka Secular Homeschool Co-op. She founded Urban Homesteaders of Topeka

eleven years ago with a friend, with the dual purpose of connecting local farmers/producers with consumers, and member to member education. The Co-op frequently recommends the extension office for further questions, canning safety classes, etc. She is also a Shawnee County Extension Master Gardener ('21) and loves the response line.

Besides facilitating her own kids' education, as well as various therapies, Carrie has led adult classes for UHOT, for the Lawrence Public Library, and regularly teaches the teen class through our co-op.

Carrie would love to see the local parks incorporate more labeling of plants, and more community orchards. She believes we could replicate something like the Lawrence Fruit Tree Project here.

Angela Dake – Angela served on the Extension Council Board from 2020-2023. She uses and shares the information and services the office provided.

Angela was a public school teacher for 35+ years. During her Board tenure she offered support as needed for all Extension programs.

Angela expresses that we should continue to encourage youth and our diverse population to participate and utilize the benefits of Extension programs.

Community Development PDC

Cayla King – Cayla is a retired army service member of 25 years. She and her husband own My Gym, Children's Fitness Center. Cayla is involved as a 4-H parent, Cub Scouts and is very active in the Rossville American Legion. She is also a member of PEO (Philanthropic Education Women's Organization) and is a substitute teacher for Kaw Valley School District.

Cayla's business has given her extensive training with youth programs and she was a platform instructor at the army aviation center.

Cayla notices that extension could bring visibility to the many opportunities in our community. Can Extension help people discover what the community resources are?

Johnathan Sublet – Johnathan serves as a full-time servant pastor of Fellowship Hi-Crest Church. He volunteers and serves on the boards of many community organizations dedicated to lifting up underserved communities. He is the co-founder of SENT, Inc.

Johnathan's first program with SENT called STREAM (Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, and Mathematics) served approximately 200 kids between the ages of four and eighteen each weekday for two months over the summer. He has launched a Youth Investment Club for 6th to 12th graders in the community.

Johnathan believes that a partnership with Extension could benefit many of the needs we have in the community. He recently launched the Southside Filling Station another SENT initiative.

Israel Sanchez – Israel is the Director of Equity and Business Development at Go Topeka. Due to the nature of his job, he is often in the community talking to business owners and future entrepreneurs, including youth. He is also a member of several boards, including Top City Promise, which aims to help refugee families in need. It originally started to help Ukrainian families but has evolved to include people from Latin American countries, including Cuba.

Israel has supported several initiatives to help youth in the community succeed. For example, this summer he allocated up to \$15,000 in funds to support a youth workforce program. These young people learned valuable skills and in turn helped their community.

When Israel travels to certain areas of the community and hear from young people, or see how

they live, he is struck with the fact that we can do more to ensure that they escape the cycle of poverty that they inherited. There is hope and there are resources to help them see the path, but someone must lead, and someone must show up to make a difference. This is by no means an easy task, and it's not just one person, but organizations working together with the community.

Family & Consumer Sciences PDC

Mary Tyler – Mary was the manager of the Downtown Farmers Market and now owns Breadbasket Farmers Market.

Mary worked with Extension to secure a grant from Topeka Community Foundation for seniors to shop at the Downtown Farmers Market. She has served on Heartland Healthy Neighborhoods (HHN) Healthy Eating Workgroup and has secured a grant to expand her Market.

Mary would like to see help for hunger, food and nutrition security and improving access to healthy food options, and supporting small producers to produce and sell more local foods.

Jene Yoder – Jene has been a long-standing member of 4-H and has completed Master Food Training. She is a social worker with the Shawnee County Health Department, working in Maternal and Child Health.

Jene likes to focus on Fetal Infant Mortality and the First Step Program, which provides home visits to pregnant clients and families with infant up to one year of age. She also serves on community coalitions with Extension FCS agents.

Jene wants to see more access to basic needs for families – healthy foods, housing, transportation, nurturing relationships.

Jana Patton -

Jana is a registered dietitian working for the WIC Program at the Shawnee County Health Department. She grew up in 4-H and participated in various projects over the years, but fell in love with Foods and Nutrition. While in college she interned with EFNEP and now teaches nutrition education to WIC clients and serves on community coalitions with Extension Agents.

She has also assisted with teaching prenatal education classes for Baby Basics. Jana would like to see emphasis on prenatal nutrition, infant nutrition,

child nutrition, access to healthy foods, and breastfeeding.

4-H Youth Development PDC

Tracy Keegan – Tracy is a Middle School Administrator with the Topeka Public Schools. She is also a former 4-H member and has served two years on the 4-H PDC.

Tracy has 31 years of experience with Topeka Public School in General Education, After School Grants, Special Education, as a classroom teacher, support staff and administrator.

Tracy believes that healthy families start with physical and mental health, then the rest will come!

Brianna Brooks – Brianna is the VP of Program Management & Quality Assurance at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Topeka (BGCT). She has a Masters in Educational Psychology. Brianna has partnered with 4-H through BGCT for summer programming (4-H STEM & Kids in the Kitchen) for three years.

Brianna has worked in youth development for the last five years. She is a Montessori teacher-testing Director and Club Director. Brianna is developing a curriculum in community partner work on quality assessments.

Brianna believes financial literacy is an area of growth not only for youth but their families in budgeting and workforce readiness. She also feels nutrition and food health is important, especially in areas where food options are limited in high poverty areas.

Toby Weber- Toby is a Facilities Specialist with Stormont Vail Health, a member of Bethel Community Church, Treasurer of Shawnee County Livestock Committee, Swine Superintendent for Shawnee County Fair and has helped with the Shawnee County 4-H Livestock judging team.

Toby has served two terms on the Shawnee County Agriculture and Natural Resource Program Development Committee. Toby notes that the Livestock Committee organizes two livestock shows per year, one at the county fair and the other at the Shawnee County Spring Show.

Toby believes that continuing to educate the residents of Shawnee County on where and how their food comes from. It is not the grocery store! Farmers and ranchers produce most of the food that we consume.

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