

# OUR IMPACT

*K-State Research & Extension provides research-based information to help people, businesses and communities solve problems, develop skills and build a better future.*

## Brandon Pope

Brandon was nominated for Extension Appreciation award by Agriculture Agent Abigail Gettinger. Brandon is the Regional Operations Manager of Heritage Tractor in Topeka. When Abigail wanted to update and improve the Tractor and Farm Machinery Safety Program Brandon was pivotal in the execution of her plans. Brandon went above and beyond of just finding a space to have the class. He helped film over two hours of instructional and educational videos on farm equipment. He taught a segment of the class on Tractor operator's Manuals. He also allowed the youth to use multiple pieces of equipment at Heritage Tractor so they could take in-person driving and machine operation tests. The time, knowledge and equipment use were all donated for the program because Brandon saw the value in safely training youth in Tractor and Farm Machine safety. He heard Abigail's ideas and was on board 100% with this education being done in Shawnee County. Thank you so much Brandon, your excitement for this education truly makes a difference for the youth that are now safely trained to work on farms. Our program would not have been possible this year without your support.



## Lisa Martin

Lisa was nominated for the Extension Appreciation award by the Nutrition Educators in Shawnee County. Lisa was hired as the EFNEP Agent for Shawnee County in 1997. After 24-years Lisa retired in June of 2024. During her tenure she worked with many Nutrition Educators, partners and coalitions all to improve the health of those the most resource challenged in Shawnee County. Lisa's former educators nominated her because of all the work she has done for Shawnee County Extension and because she continues to serve in a volunteer capacity in some of the partnerships she worked with as an Agent. She doesn't clock in for the cause of Nutrition Education anymore but it is still her passion to help people. And she continues to do that in many different ways. Thank You Lisa, for being an advocate for education and nutrition in Shawnee County!



## From Farm To You Our Entire Office's Effort to Teach Agriculture

On April 23rd, the Extension Office was happy to host the From Farm To You field trip for the first time since 2019. This program is designed to teach second-grade students that food comes from farmers and ranchers before they see it in the grocery store. We had 720 Shawnee County students attend the event.

There were three different 90-minute sessions. The school busses dropped students off at Landon Arena at the Stormont Vail Events Center. Participants enjoyed a slice of cheese pizza while they watched a short film on wheat processing and how grain crops are turned into our food.

The students were then dismissed to Domer Barn, where they visited ten different agriculture learning stations. Youth got to see animals like beef cattle, chickens, pigs and dairy goats. Youth also got to hear stations present about soil, weather, veterinary science, grains and fruits and vegetables. They left with a better understanding of where their foods come from and how much work it takes to raise and grow our food.

This is our front page story because every Extension Agent and staff member plays a part in From Farm to You. From teaching learning stations, to coordinating volunteers, to directing our students through the day, we could not do this without our entire office. We start planning in September and meet monthly for our program. It's no easy task to host over 700 students in one day, but we not only do it, we enjoyed it!

In addition to the effort of our paid staff, we also had community partners like Shawnee County Farm Bureau, local FFA Chapters, Shawnee County Master Gardeners, Shawnee County 4-H members and 4-H parents to make this day possible.

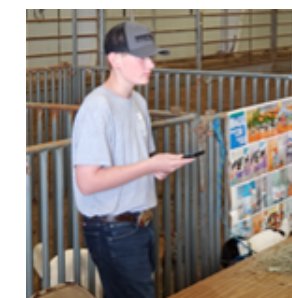
We surveyed the teachers after the program, and all teachers who responded said their students understood the role of farmers and ranchers in food production after the program.

The surveyed teachers also said the program helped their students understand how ranchers care for their animals. 91% of the teachers reported that, after the program, their students understood how soil and water are important to growing food and raising livestock.



These metrics are what we strive to convey, and we were happy to see these second-graders understood what we were presenting. Teachers also commented that for many of their students, this is the first time they have been close to livestock, and that is impactful for them. The second-graders also enjoy seeing the high school 4-H and FFA students lead some of the learning stations. It helped them understand the people raising and growing their food are all around them, everyday.

Our date for 2025 is set, and we are hoping to max out our number of students at 750 next year!



# Agriculture

## Highlights from the Agriculture and Natural Resource Program Area

My first year here has been a full one with intentionally meeting producers and community organizations, becoming more familiar with Shawnee County, stepping into established programs, implementing new programs, and answering individual questions that came into the Office. There were many valuable moments in between the following events, but I wanted to provide several specific highlights from my first year!

The first highlight of the year for me was the Topeka Farm Show in January. The team of Extension Agents who manned the booth were able to collectively reach 126 individuals through an educational publication or some type of educational interaction despite the snowstorm that occurred! One of the new aspects that I implemented at the booth to increase engagement was an interactive buzzer game that went over Extension facts and services that are available.

Another program that was memorable was presenting at a station for Farm to You in April. Farm to You is a program designed to help 2nd graders make a connection between pizza and the farm. I taught how the ingredients of a pizza are interconnected with soil and created a song called "The Soil High-five" to help the children remember that soil is made up of five basic components. Jennifer Leever, the Horticulture Program Assistant, assisted me in keeping the beat and teaching the song to the kids. It was fun to watch some of the little kids' faces light up when we began singing the song!

My work with youth additionally included providing leadership in the preparation and delivery of the regional 7-day Tractor and Machine Operation Program in June. A team of Ag Agents from northeastern KS worked together to pull off the 24-hr teaching requirement and set up two in-person testing sites for students to pass a physical tractor driving course, a physical machine operation test, and a written exam. The program required a lot of intentional work, and I was so encouraged by the local support of our Heritage Tractor in making this program happen!

**Abigail Gettinger**  
Agriculture Agent  
agettinger@ksu.edu



I also collaborated with 4-H Agent Grace Wiens and taught 181 students at the Topeka Water Festival about the water cycle. We used a plexi-glass shield to create a model of the water cycle and also set up a relay race for students to physically race from station to station to represent water moving through different features of the landscape. The best part of the day was hearing a student share how much he enjoyed coming to our station!

Beyond the work I performed with youth, a significant portion of my time was invested in answering individual questions that came into the Office as well as adult educational program preparation and delivery. I was excited to put on a Backyard Poultry Program, a Pond Management Program, and a Shawnee County Row Crop Program this year. However, my favorite educational experience was getting to provide a short presentation on Soybean Cyst Nematodes at a Kansas Farm Management Association (KFMA) meeting!

The last highlight that I want to share is that I was able to finish a project that has been a personal goal in this position. I compiled a draft soil testing instructional pamphlet in order to be able to provide individuals with comprehensive testing instructions and common soil test package options in a user-friendly pamphlet.

All in all, 2024 was a productive year for the Agricultural and Natural Resource program area of the Shawnee County Extension Office, and I am thankful for the opportunity to serve our community as the next Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Agent!

# Horticulture

## Educational Efforts Promote Healthy Gardens

### Taking Response Line Questions at all Times

In addition to taking questions over the phone, through email, and walk-ins to the Extension Office, the Horticulture Agent developed an online question submission form to intake Response Line questions. This form allowed people to submit their lawn, landscape, and gardening questions at any time. Thirty-six Master Gardener Volunteers took turns answering the 400 horticulture questions that came into the office with research-based information to solve their plant problems.



*Horticulture Agent Lane Wiens helping Master Gardeners Terry Stahl and Glenda McCune with a plant identification question on the Response Line.*

**Lane Wiens**  
Horticulture Agent  
lwwiens@ksu.edu



### Helping TPD with Plant ID

In June, the horticulture agent and Master Gardener volunteers hosted seven new Code Enforcement officers with the Topeka Police Department—Property Management Unit for training on identifying various types of plants. The training focused on identification of noxious and invasive plants, and strategies to eradicate these from properties across the cities. The officers were also given strategies on identifying native plant gardens and weed patches.



*Seven Code Enforcement Officers receiving training on identifying noxious and invasive plants.*

**308**

The number of direct interactions made through programming and individual communications during 2024

**181**

The number of students reached at the Topeka Water Festival

**126**

The number of individuals who stopped by the Topeka Farm Show Booth and had a conversation or received publication

**\$1,900+**

The number of dollars saved through generous in-kind donations

**443**

Pounds of produce donated by the Demonstration Vegetable and Community Garden

**116**

Active Master Gardener Volunteers

**44**

Questions submitted to the Response Line Online Question submission survey

**2,576**

Contacts made by the Shawnee County Extension Master Gardeners

# EFNEP and SNAP-Ed Nutrition Education

Sofia Diaz Buezo, RDN, LD  
EFNEP/SNAP-Ed Agent  
ansdb24@ksu.edu



## Southside Filling Station PSE

In November of 2023, our SNAP-Ed nutrition educators Brenda and Hannah met with SENT to assist them with starting a food pantry. With a vision to start this food pantry in less than a year, our educators and the team at SENT met monthly to tackle the work that needed to be done to make the opening of the pantry successful.

By going through a Policies, System, and Environmental changes training, our SNAP-Ed educators learned to complete the Nutrition Environment Food Pantry Assessment Tool to better understand the needs of the organization and the goal of the pantry.

The educators played a supportive role in the whole process. From introducing the healthy choice pantry concept, to providing the pantry coordinator assistance with finding a place within Avondale East. Researching refrigeration/freezer and shelving, researching food pantry operations and creating a budget for food and first year of operations to serve 50 families per month were some of the things that the educators were heavily involved in.

On August 27th, the pantry became operational, serving a total of 150 families in the first week. Our educators were able to reach 35 families during the first day and promoted our Create Better Health class that is scheduled to start in October.



## Success Story – Southside Filling Station Testimony

Our SNAP-Ed nutrition educator Hannah was walking one of the guests out to her car. They started chatting about how her experience was at the pantry. She had originally shown up at CRC to get help with the Water Assistance program when she stumbled upon Brenda and Hannah at the front table. They explained the food pantry process and how we serve anyone who needs food assistance. She quickly jumped in line to shop.

When they were walking her out, she told Hannah that she had said a prayer in her car on the way to CRC because it was the end of the month, and she did not have enough money to cover food for the next week and a half. She told her when she was greeted at the front door with an option of a food pantry, she felt like her prayer was truly answered, and she has not felt that blessed in a long time.”

## EFNEP—Success Story

“Thank you for everything. You and Peggy have been amazing. I have been trying new things at home from what I have learned from the lessons.” - Participant from Families Eating Smart and Moving More class.



# Youth Entrepreneurship Education Efforts

This year our youth entrepreneurship efforts grew from The Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge and the Youth Pitch Contest, to adding a Youth Market Contest.

With help from partners at Go Topeka and Omni Circle, our desire to add to the education we were doing for youth 7th through 12th grade became a reality. The first contest Shawnee County participated in was the Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge (YEC), which is sanctioned by Network Kansas. The winners of local YEC’s advance to a state competition in Manhattan, KS.

YEC has three judged parts: an executive summary, a pitch and a tradeshow or market booth. We used those three judged parts to grow our education in Shawnee County. Our hope is youth will participate in the market or pitch contest and be more prepared and willing to do the larger contest.

## Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge 2024

In February, we had our annual YEC and eight youth participated. Four of the participants attended the learning sessions offered before the contest to help them prepare. We had a session for each part of the contest.



YEC was held at Washburn University, and we had many volunteer judges from the business community. We had students from the following grades: three youth in 7th grade, two youth in 8th grade, one youth in 9th grade, one youth in 10th grade and one youth in 11th grade. They did great!

Our first-place winners advanced to the Kansas Entrepreneurship Challenge in Manhattan, KS in April.

Candis Stiles  
County Extension Director  
candism@ksu.edu



## Youth Market Contest

This July, we had our inaugural Youth Market Contest at Every Plaza before a Friday Movie Night. We had seven youth set up booths to sell their products. They had a great crowd as people came out to enjoy the fountains, food trucks and wait for the movie.

There was a learning session offered before the contest, where guest speakers Nick Xidis of Hazel Hill Chocolate and Mary Tyler of Breadbasket Farmers Market spoke of their experiences. The youth learned from the professionals about what makes for a good market booth, pricing strategy and connecting with your customers.

At the Market Contest, youth were judged on their displays, how well they knew their products, and how they were able to complete a sale. How much they sold that night was not a factor in judging, but they were allowed to keep all the proceeds of their sales. One youth reported she sold over \$200 in product! Some of the products available were jewelry, car freshies, sketches, ceramics and floral arrangements.

We saw students from all over the county. The following schools were represented at the Youth Market Contest: Rossville High School, Rossville Junior High, Seaman High School, Topeka West, Avondale Academy and Mater Dei School.



78%

of EFNEP graduates use a meat thermometer more often for food safety

88%

of EFNEP graduates are making better choices with their food dollars

369

Participants were reached by our SNAP-Ed educators through 26 program activities

Food Distribution Map:  
[https://www.shawnee.ksu.edu/food\\_distribution\\_map/index.html](https://www.shawnee.ksu.edu/food_distribution_map/index.html)

\$3,500

Amount of money provided by Go Topeka for Youth Market Contest prizes

11

Number of Facilitation sessions offered to Shawnee County and Kansas Partners

720

Number of Shawnee County 2nd graders that attended From Farm to You

28

Loans dispensed by Shawnee County E-Community since its start in 2017

## Family & Consumer Sciences

### K-State Research & Extension, a Leading Institution in the Area of Food Safety and Food Preservation

According to NIFA (National Institute of Food & Agriculture) each year, millions of American's suffer and thousands die from foodborne illnesses. Many of these illnesses can be avoided if proper food safety techniques are followed.

I receive training from KSRE on science-based principles related to food safety and food preservation. KSRE also has a variety of publications and resources available to the public to help educate about the different aspects of food safety.

Each year I receive about 50 questions related to food safety and preservation. Popular questions this year were related to power outages and keeping refrigerated food safe. I was even a part of a WIBW news story on the topic. Other questions were about proper canning techniques and storing produce for longevity. Getting the right answer can mean the difference between getting sick or not and can also help people make best use of their grocery dollars.



**Susan Fangman**  
Family & Consumer Sciences Agent  
sfangman@ksu.edu



We are also able to test most brands of dial gauge pressure canners in the office. We recommend you do this each year. Testing can insure the canner is processing foods at the proper temperature. If the pressure is lower than that recommended for processing, the internal temperature of the food will not be adequate to kill all the bacteria and spores. Spores that survive can produce harmful toxins that can cause illness or death. This past year I tested 12 gauges helping clients preserve healthy foods for their families.



## 4-H Youth Development

### Topeka Way to Work Program Provides Career Readiness Education for Shawnee County Youth

Skills like communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and flexibility have always been important for work and life. But they will be even more crucial for future generations. Rapid advances in technology are transforming the world of work, and by 2020 an estimated 83 million jobs around the globe will go unfilled due to lack of skills.

Topeka Way to Work is a teen employment program that connects teens with summer job opportunities and offers continuing professional development opportunities through the length of the program. There are two other community partners for this program: The City of Topeka and Fellowship Hi-Crest. 4-H Agent Grace Wiens provides educational opportunities at the April program orientation and the summer professional development days.

**Grace Wiens**  
4-H Youth Development Agent  
wiensg@ksu.edu



29 out of 40 youth in attendance at the orientation learning session reported an increase in the following areas:  
Your confidence level about your ability to complete an interview successfully: 17.3% increase  
Your ability to prepare interview answers ahead of time: 24.6 % increase  
Your ability to realistically evaluate your strengths and abilities: 14.1 % increase  
Your ability to describe your skills and experiences in a clear and concise answer: 20.4% increase



**2,118**

Federal tax returns filed by VITA volunteers

**200**

Different diseases caused by unsafe foods

**50**

Questions related to food safety answered this year

**12**

Dial gauges pressure canners tested for safety

**\$88,228.60**

Amount of in-kind donations and grants given to the Shawnee County 4-H Program in 2023-2024

**11**

4-H Community and Projects in Shawnee County

**4x**

More likely to give back to their communities than their non-4-H peers.  
\*Tufts Study of PYD

**1793**

Number of direct educational contacts made by the 2024 Summer Engagement Grant Education inters