

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE



## Grand Challenges

K-State Research and Extension develops and delivers practical, research-based solutions to challenges faced by all Kansans, which includes the grand challenges:

- Global Food Systems
- Water
- Health
- Community Vitality
- Developing Tomorrow's Leaders

Find more stories like this and more at :  
[www.ksu.edu/solutions](http://www.ksu.edu/solutions)

K-State Research & Extension  
Shawnee County  
1740 SW Western Ave  
Topeka, KS 66604  
785-232-0062  
[www.shawnee.ksu.edu](http://www.shawnee.ksu.edu)



## Grand Challenge: Community Vitality

### Title: Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge

#### Why is this issue important?

According to the Kansas Department of Commerce, small businesses are a vital engine for Kansas's economy, contributing significantly to job creation, economic growth and community development. The department reports that 99% of businesses in Kansas are small businesses.

#### How did Extension address this issue?

Through a partnership with Shawnee Startups, Network Kansas and Go Topeka, Shawnee County Extension Agent Candis Stiles organized the Shawnee County Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge (YEC) in February. YEC helps young people learn how to be entrepreneurs and small business owners. YEC is a three-part contest where students in 7th through 12th grade are judged on a business concept through a business plan, formal presentation and a trade show booth.

Some of these youth businesses are already functional entities while some are still in the idea phase. Candis offers learning sessions on each part of the contest. These sessions are optional as some students may be learning these things in their classes.

#### What was the impact?

In 2025 Shawnee County had six entries from 5 different Shawnee County schools. Districts represented included Topeka 501, Auburn-Washburn 437 and Rossville 321. \$3,250 in prize money was awarded and our top finishing business will compete at the Kansas Entrepreneurship Challenge in April. There will be 80 entries at that contest hosted by Network Kansas.

