



February 2025

# THE EXTENSION CONNECTION

Wyandotte County K-State Research and Extension

## Director's Note

**Denise Dias**

Wyandotte County Director

Greetings Extension Friends!

Conversation Candy Hearts with their clever sayings on them have been around since the early 1900's. These little heart shaped confections are considered the most popular candy of Valentine's Day. Just like this fun treat, our staff have a passion for what they do but most of all a Big Heart for Wyandotte County!

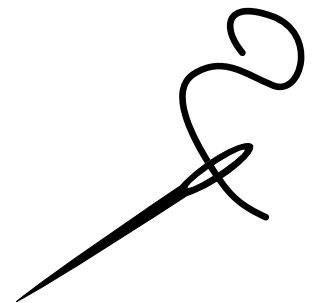
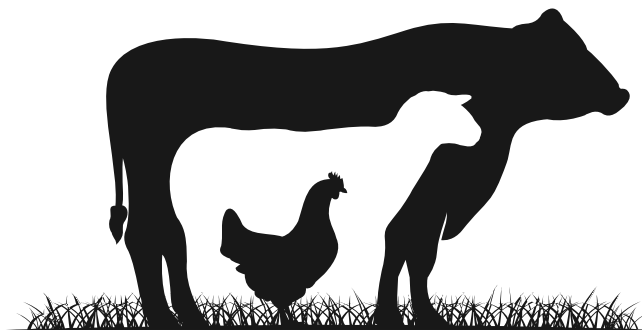
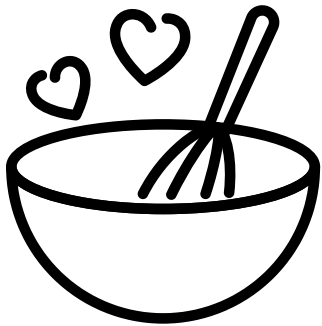
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# FIND YOUR SPARK THROUGH 4-H PROJECTS

Stop and think for a minute... What makes your life have meaning and purpose? What is something that you are passionate about? The hidden flame that motivates you? In the world of positive youth development research, there is growing evidence of key developmental assets that help youth thrive rather than simply "get by." Dr. Peter Benson from the Search Institute describes this passion as one's "spark." Sparks are activities and interests that bring out a person's energy and joy, allowing them to express their personality and contribute to the world. A spark can be something you are good at (like playing the piano or painting), something you care a lot about (like the environment), or a quality (like helping others). But how does someone find their spark?

The path to finding one's spark starts with exploration. Exploration of projects, relationships, or values. One can find their spark by spending time with other youth and adults, by immersing themselves in the community, and exploring a variety of interests. 4-H'ers have an opportunity to explore and find their spark through their 4-H club and project work. Through the club, they spend time with others of varying ages in the community. With over 30 different project areas, 4-H helps youth find their spark in different areas of interest from citizenship to STEM to animal science.

To learn more about the Wyandotte County 4-H program and to find your spark, go to <https://www.wyandotte.k-state.edu/>.



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## A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP IN SEVEN STEPS

We may all have an idea of what makes a great relationship. Here are some thoughts: Do you think of an intense romance complete with dramatic gestures? Do you fantasize about finding a preordained “soulmate”? Maybe you know two people you think of as “the perfect couple” and wish you could have what they appear to have. Good relationships with strong foundations generally share many basic features in real life. While you may not have thought about these qualities before, you might recognize that couples you admire promote the use of the steps below! Let’s explore some opportunities by examining these seven steps.

### **1. So, what behaviors are we talking about? In a healthy relationship, couples...**

Can you talk to each other about challenging issues and share your real feelings? Communicate openly and honestly.

### **2. Respect each other’s limits and boundaries.**

If one of you asks the other not to do something, or if someone is unavailable, does your partner respect that? Having a deeper understanding of why respect is critical in any relationship is highly important.

### **3. Disagree constructively.**

When there’s a problem, can you work things through without screaming, name-calling, threats, or emotional or physical violence? The threat of power and control in relationships creates a need for balance.

### **4. Don’t try to control or manipulate each other.**

Does anyone say things like, “If you loved me, you wouldn’t.” or try to forbid the other person from doing certain things or seeing certain people? (If so, that’s a danger sign and an invitation to produce harm!)

### **5. Trust each other.**

Do either of you tend to get jealous and upset about the other person talking to or spending time with other people? (Red flag!)

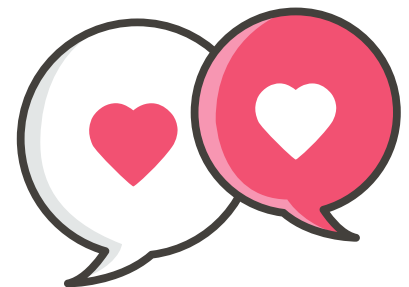
### **6. Support each other’s interests and aspirations.**

Do you know what your partner’s hopes and dreams are? Do you support one another as you each pursue your interests and goals?

### **7. Encourage each other to succeed and do well.**

Do both of you encourage each other to meet goals and achieve in school, work, and other pursuits? As we reflect, not every good relationship will always have all these strengths, but that’s usually okay (unless there is abuse). Remember, though, we all deserve to experience a partnership that embodies most of these qualities. Though it may take time, effort, and patience, it’s definitely worth it.

Courtesy of University of Florida UF/IFAS Extension. For more relationship articles, visit <http://smartcouples.ifas.ufl.edu>



# Nutrition and Food Safety

## FEBRUARY IS AMERICAN HEART MONTH!

The month of February is commonly associated with Valentine's Day, where heart-shaped chocolates and flowers take over, and we get to celebrate the people we love. But did you know that in the month of February, there is an additional meaning that we can give to all the heart-shaped goodies we see at the store? That's right, February is American Heart Month! Since February of 1964, American Heart Month has given us the opportunity to come together to talk about and bring awareness to heart disease, the leading cause of death in the United States.

### Heart Disease Facts

- Heart disease has been the leading cause of death in the U.S. since 1921. That's over 100 years!
- Reports published in the 2024 AHA Statistical Update on Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics state that almost half (48.6%) of all U.S. adults have some form of cardiovascular disease (including hypertension, stroke, heart failure, and more).
- High blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke and affects about 47% of U.S. adults.
- Out of the approximately 47% of U.S. adults with high blood pressure, 38% of individuals with high blood pressure are unaware that they have it.

So, in the spirit of American Heart Month, let's discuss some heart-healthy tips to help us focus on our cardiovascular health this month!

1. Limiting the amount of unhealthy fats (saturated fats and trans fats) in your diet, such as butter, lard, fried foods, and margarine, can help lower your risk of heart disease by decreasing bad (LDL) cholesterol levels. Replacing these unhealthy fats in your diet with healthier, unsaturated fats can provide additional heart health benefits. Some examples of unsaturated fats include avocados, walnuts, salmon, olive oil, and sunflower oil.
2. Reducing the amount of salt you consume and an overall healthy diet can play a big role in lowering blood pressure levels. The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating plan, for example, emphasizes including more fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy products, whole grains, and lean meat in your diet while reducing the amounts of salt, saturated fat, and added sugar added to your diet. This eating plan has been shown to help lower blood pressure levels and reduce the risk of heart disease. For more information on the DASH Eating Plan, visit [DASH Eating Plan | NHLBI, NIH](#)
3. Regular, moderate- to vigorous-intensity exercise strengthens the muscles of your heart and can decrease your risk for heart disease. Moderate- to vigorous-intensity exercise can include physical activities such as walking, jogging, bicycling, tennis, swimming, weight training, yoga, and more. The American Heart Association recommends getting at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity exercise per week. Go to [American Heart Association Recommendations for Physical Activity in Adults and Kids | American Heart Association](#) for more heart-healthy exercise information.

In 2004, due to the prevalence of heart disease-related deaths in women across the U.S., the American Heart Association created the Go Red for Women movement. This movement aims to raise awareness of heart disease as the number 1 killer of women in the U.S. while also supporting research, education, community programs that help women reduce their risk of heart disease. To learn more about Go Red for Women, go to: [Go Red for Women | The American Heart Association's signature women's initiative](#) and make sure to wear red on February 7th for Go Red for Women's "National Wear Red Day" to raise awareness of the issue of women and cardiovascular disease! For some delicious heart healthy recipes, visit: [Recipes | American Heart Association Recipes](#)



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## EXPLORING FOODS WITH KIDS!

As children grow and develop, their food preferences may change. As a parent, you might find this “picky eating” a challenge. But there are some things you can do to help your child try new foods—and learn to love the same food your whole family enjoys.

Offer your child a variety of foods, starting from an early age. It can take up to 15 tries for a child to accept a new food. Help your child develop healthy eating habits by establishing roles for yourself and your child.

Parents’ job is to decide what, when and where foods are offered. Also, be a role model. Only offer water between meals and snacks.

### The child’s job is to decide how much to eat.

- Do: offer small portions of new foods.
  - Do: serve new food with one or more foods your child already likes.
  - Do: offer new foods first. Your child is most hungry at the beginning of a meal.
  - Do: make the dish look fun/colorful.
  - Do: eat together each day.
  - Do: be a healthy role model. Eat healthy food yourself.
  - Do: serve everyone in the family the same healthy foods.
  - Do: involve your children. Plan meals, shop, and cook together.
- 
- Do not: bribe your children with treats or dessert if they eat healthy foods.
  - Do not: force your child to clean their plate.
  - Do not: force your child to try new foods. But encourage them to take a taste. Let the child politely take the food out of their mouth with a napkin. —It may be the flavor, or it may be the texture they do not like. If they do not want to try it, offer the food again another time.



## Horticulture

# K-STATE TOMATO AND PEPPER VARIETY TRIAL – 2024

In 2024, Kansas State University (K-State) Extension Master Gardener programs were invited to participate in the Tomato and Pepper Variety Trial. The goal of this trial is to evaluate and identify varieties that perform best in the state of Kansas.

A rubric was provided to help growers evaluate each species on the following characteristics: plant vigor, disease resistance, fruit flavor and fruit appearance.

### Tomatoes

Variety (Yield-weight)	Plant Vigor	Disease Resistance	Fruit Flavor	Fruit Appearance
Celebrity (428 lbs)	3.7	4*	4.4*	3.7
Darkstar (314 lbs, 7 oz)	3.6	3.6	4.1	3.5
FL 91 (384 lbs, 2 oz)	3.1	3.6	4.2	3.5
Grand Marshall (395 lbs, 8 oz)	3.4	3.7	4.4*	3.8
Jetstar (426 lbs, 10 oz)	3.8*	3.8	4.4*	4*
Loki (443 lbs, 3 oz)	3.8*	3.9	4	3.9
Patsy (310 lbs, 4 oz)	3.1	3.4	3.8	3.7
Rubee Dawn (326 lbs, 4 oz)	3.3	3.6	4	3.3
STM 2255 (345 lbs, 4 oz)	3.2	3.6	3.8	3.4
Tough Boy Gold (245 lbs, 11 oz)	3.5	3.6	4.3	3.8

\* Indicates highest ranked variety in respective category

### Hot Peppers

Variety (Yield-weight)	Plant Vigor	Disease Resistance	Fruit Flavor	Fruit Appearance
Anaheim (113 lbs, 12 oz)	4.4*	4.6*	4.4	4.4
Astry (144 lbs, 9 oz)	3.6	4	3.9	4.1
Baluarte (189 lbs, 7 oz)	4.4*	4.6*	4.5*	4.4
Black Magic (161 lbs, 8 oz)	4.2	4.6*	4.4	4.4
Charger (119 lbs, 6 oz)	4.3	4.6*	4.2	4.1
Desperado (166 lbs, 5 oz)	4.3	4.5	4.5*	4.3
Everman (173 lbs, 2 oz)	4	4.6*	4.5*	4.5*
G76 (156 lbs, 6 oz)	4.1	4.4	4.1	4.1
Green Festa (276 lbs, 6 oz)	4.2	4.5	4.4	4.3
Mariachi (38 lbs, 15 oz)	3.4	3.7	3.3	3.8
Mucho Nacho (140 lbs, 3 oz)	3.8	4.4	4.5*	4.2
Paquime (166 lbs, 2 oz)	4.4*	4.5	4.5*	4.5*
Sahuaro (150 lbs, 10 oz)	4.1	4.2	3.7	3.8

\* Indicates highest ranking in respective category

### Sweet Peppers

Variety (Yield-weight)	Plant Vigor	Disease Resistance	Fruit Flavor	Fruit Appearance
Cal Wonder (153 lbs, 3 oz)	3.4	4	4.3	4.1
Carmen (243 lbs, 15 oz)	3.8	4.3	4.3	4
Cavalcade (286 lbs, 11 oz)	3.8	4.3	4.1	4
Flavorburst (185 lbs, 12 oz)	3.7	4.3	4.4*	4
King Arthur (211 lbs, 15 oz)	3.9*	4.2	4.4*	4.1
Outsider (198 lbs, 1 oz)	3.5	4.1	4	3.8
Sailfish (245 lbs, 10 oz)	3.8	4.4*	4.4*	4.2*
Standout (296 lbs, 1 oz)	3.9*	4.2	4.2	3.8
SVPB8415 (184 lbs, 3 oz)	3.6	4.2	3.8	3.8
Sweet Deililah (201 lbs, 5 oz)	3.8	4.3	4.1	4
Trilogy (215 lbs, 11 oz)	3.8	4.4*	4.3	4.1
Vanguard (232 lbs, 7 oz)	3.9*	4.3	4.3	4.2*

\* Indicates highest ranked variety in respective category

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# Community Development

## LOOKING AT OUR CRITICAL ISSUES BY FORMING A DISTRICT

A critical Issue is a significant topic that needs thought and care when seeking a solution. Many crucial issues quickly come to mind, such as hunger, safety, shelter, jobs, and the list could go on and on. Critical Issues affect people and their way of life, including everyday needs and resources for living.

Last year, Kansas State University hosted focus groups across the state to identify the 10 most critical issues facing Kansans that K-State could work to address. In no particular order, they are Child Care, Water, Broadband Access, Volunteers, Disaster Preparedness, Climate Resiliency, Housing, Leadership, Workplace Health, and a Hunger-Free Kansas.

Some of these topics are very broad and may take time to solve. Still, as Extension Agents, we are working to find partnerships within our communities to help connect and educate our residents to support positive change.

Recently, we had a combined staff meeting with Leavenworth County Extension. As part of our meeting, we identified and brainstormed potential ways we could expand the work we are currently doing as a district to make a more significant impact on these critical Issues. These are some of the initial thoughts our group came up with.

- As a district, we would have the capacity to coordinate a more extensive “48 hours of 4-H” event to collect food to help our neighbors not go hungry.
- Along with this idea, we would be able to expand our Limited Resource Nutrition Programs (EFNEP and SNAP-ED) to educate families on how to make the most of the money and food resources available to them. These initiatives empower individuals and families to make nutritious choices and enhance their culinary skills, leading to healthier lifestyles and improved well-being.
- Our Horticulture program would be able to increase educational opportunities to help families learn to enjoy gardening, grow food, and beautify their homes. On a side note, this volunteer group of Extension Master Gardeners would more than double, helping us expand our reach across two counties.
- A district would allow us to expand our outreach into local schools and other non-traditional youth settings. Studies have shown that youth who participate in 4-H programs become future leaders and volunteers in their communities as adults.
- Chronic Disease plagues our communities; with more intentional work to address diabetes, hypertension, lack of physical activity, obesity, heart disease, and other chronic ailments, we can help our citizens to be healthy and productive members of our society.

These ideas are not new, but we are taking a new look at them through the lens of forming an Extension District.

# Upcoming Events



**Feb 4:** Grant Writing Workshop

**Feb 6:** Prepara Rápido, Comiendo en Casa

**Feb 11:** Serv Safe

**Feb 13:** Haciendo Mejores Elecciones Cuando Comes Fuera de Casa y Haciendo Mejores Elecciones Cuando Comes Comida Rápida.

**Feb 20:** Como Elegir Bien las Bebidas.

**Feb 24:** Med Instead of Meds

**Feb 27:** Eligiendo Moverse Más Durante el Día/ DÍA DE GRADUACIÓN.

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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