



January 2025

THE EXTENSION CONNECTION

Wyandotte County K-State Research and Extension

Director's Note

Denise Dias

Wyandotte County Director

Happy New Year! Instead of resolving, why not choose one word to become your theme for the year? A word that is encouraging, hopeful, and spurs you to action. I challenge you to choose your word and start to bring about positive change for 2025!

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4-H Youth Development

WYANDOTTE 4-H IN THE COMMUNITY

The 4-H youth program emphasizes preparing our youth to become tomorrow's leaders. 4-H youth are encouraged to engage with their communities by participating in service projects and learning experiences that help them grow as individuals. Between food drives, fundraisers, and sharing lifesaving information, members of the Wyandotte County 4-H program have been busy helping their community this fall!

The Piper and Wolcott Wanderers 4-H club held a community service food drive. The club packed over 40 holiday boxes for Harvesters of Kansas City. The 4-H club president, Cameron M. is pictured delivering the donations.

The Nearman 4-H club worked with the KCK Police Department to hold a DUI Pedal Car Demonstration. This demonstration taught youth about the dangers of driving under the influence. Pictured is Amber Y. participating in the drunk driving simulation.

The Prairie Fire 4-H club opened club meetings to other 4-H members in the county to learn about the 4-H shooting sports program. At this meeting, 4-Hers were able to learn about gun safety and ask questions that were answered by trained and certified adult volunteers.

The Homestead 4-H club held a community service project that raised funds to help animals affected by Hurricane Helene in North Carolina.



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PREPARE FOR TAX FILING SEASON

As the tax season is fast approaching, the Internal Revenue Service is reminding people of simple steps they can take now to prepare to file their 2024 federal tax returns. Below are some helpful steps to create seamless tax preparation.

Gather and organize tax documents

Having well-organized tax records can make filing a complete and accurate return easier and help avoid errors that can delay refunds. This may also help identify deductions or credits that may have been overlooked. Most income is taxable, including unemployment compensation, refund interest and income from the gig economy and digital assets. Taxpayers should watch for and gather essential forms, such as Forms W-2, Wage and Tax Statement, and other income documents. It's also important to notify the IRS of any address changes and the Social Security Administration of any legal name changes.

Check withholding before the end of 2024

The IRS Tax Withholding Estimator on IRS.gov can help taxpayers make sure the correct amount of tax is withheld from their paychecks. This tool is especially useful for individuals who owed taxes or received large refunds last year, or those who have experienced life changes such as marriage, going through a divorce, or the welcoming of a child. Taxpayers who need to adjust their withholding can update their information with their employer using Form W-4, Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate.

Get refunds faster with direct deposit

The fastest and most secure way to receive a tax refund is through direct deposit. Taxpayers can direct their refund to a bank account, banking app or reloadable debit card by providing their routing and account numbers. If the routing and account number cannot be located, taxpayers should contact their bank, financial institution or app provider.

Choosing a tax professional

Tax professionals play an essential role in the U.S. tax system. Certified public accountants, Enrolled Agents, attorneys and others without formal credentials are just a few of the professionals who help taxpayers file their returns accurately.

One of the last important steps, is giving back to your community by volunteering. Volunteering to help others with their taxes. The IRS and its community partners are seeking volunteers from around the country to join the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE). For up to date information on filing your 2024 taxes, see the link below or contact a certified tax preparer for assistance.

[IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov) is a valuable resource for taxpayers, offering a variety of online tools like the Individual Online Account available 24/7.



10 WAYS TO ADD FIBER TO YOUR DIET

It's a 2 for one nutrition special! January is both Fiber Focus Month and Oatmeal Month.

Fiber is an important part of a healthy diet and is found in many of the plants we eat- fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and nuts. Fiber helps to regulate bowel movements, makes us feel full, lowers blood sugar and cholesterol, and may reduce the risk of getting certain types of cancer. There are two types of dietary fiber, insoluble and soluble.

- Insoluble fiber ("roughage" or "bulk") does not dissolve in water. Insoluble fiber keeps your intestinal tract healthy by reducing the amount of time that food sits there. Which, if it did, could cause constipation. Sources of insoluble fiber are wheat bran, whole grains, fruits, and vegetables.
- Soluble fiber may be helpful in removing cholesterol from the blood. Lowering cholesterol can reduce your risk for heart disease. Sources include dried beans, peas, lentils, oats, barley, fruits, carrots and squash.

It is suggested to aim for 25-35 grams of fiber by eating at least 3 servings of vegetables, 2 servings of fruits, and 3 servings of whole grains each day. *Make sure to increase fiber gradually and drink plenty of fluids.*

10 Ways to Add Fiber to Your Diet

1. Eat more legumes, such as dried beans, lentils and split peas.
2. Choose romaine lettuce or spinach instead of iceberg lettuce.
3. Include fruits such as berries for breakfast or snacks.
4. Enjoy 100% whole-wheat or whole-grain bread.
5. Choose breakfast cereals that have a whole grain listed as the first ingredient. A bowl of oatmeal is wonderful on a cold morning. Oats are whole grains with both bran and germ intact. They are a good source of soluble fiber. For recipe ideas go to, <https://food.unl.edu/food-calendar/january/oatmeal-month>
6. Choose brown rice instead of white.
7. Eat the skins on fruits and vegetables, such as apples and potatoes.
8. Substitute whole grain flour for $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ of the all-purpose flour in recipes.
9. Snack on dried fruit, popcorn, whole grain crackers or fresh vegetables.
10. Eat whole fruits and vegetables instead of drinking 100% juice.

Check out the following for fiber rich recipes...

<https://www.veteranshealthlibrary.va.gov/HealthyLiving/EatWisely/Tools/Recipes/HighFiber/>

(Source: Nebraska Extension, UNL Food)



Nutrition and Food Safety

MEET OUR SNAP-ED AND EFNEP TEAM!

The Extension Nutrition Programs (Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program and SNAP-Ed) assist families and individuals with their journey to better health.

Our free program is hands-on and teaches new skills that you can use at home every day—

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



My name is Liz Bryden, The SNAP-ED Nutrition Assistant with K-State Research and Extension Wyandotte County.

I received my Nutrition Sciences bachelor's degree through Kansas State University and have been working in the fitness industry for five years. I love to move my body any chance I get, and I am passionate about building community in a gym setting and excited to do this in my nutrition classes. I love to take risks such as skydiving and I am intrigued by anything that challenges me mentally and physically.



My name is Eli Garcia Aguilar, an EFNEP Nutrition Assistant with K-State Research and Extension Wyandotte County.

Originally from Mexico, I lived in Houston, Texas, for twenty-nine years before moving to Kansas, where I have resided for over five years.

I have served on various committees, including the Wyandotte County Program Development Committee, the Spanish Programing Advisory Committee at Keeler Woman's Center, and committees at the Sanctuary of Divine Infant Jesus. In my personal life, I cherish visiting my daughter, her husband, and their affectionate German Shepperd named Kenzo. I help my husband in a non-profit organization community. My hobbies include reading, making handmade cards, embroidery and cooking.



I am Laura Debus, an EFNEP Nutrition Assistant with K-State Research & Extension Wyandotte County.

I have lived in Kansas City, Kansas, my entire life. My family owned Walter's Bakery & Deil for almost 30 years. I received a bachelor's degree in Business Management from American InterContinental University in 2016. I am married with three Boys. In my spare time, I enjoy Loom knitting, Cooking & watching a good movie.

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Horticulture

JOIN US FOR THE K-STATE GARDEN HOUR IN 2025

These timely horticultural topics are hosted, presented, and moderated by K-State Research and Extension Horticulture Professionals across the state. Webinars are held on the first Wednesday of the month (except for January), from noon - 1pm CST and include a 45-minute presentation with 15 minutes for questions.

Register for free just one time to be notified of every session in 2025! You may cancel your registration at any time.

January: Sowing Success: Research-Based Gardening for Beginners

February: Maximizing Water Efficiency Through Drip Irrigation

March: Establishing a Native Prairie Stand at Home

April: Methods to Increasing Vegetable Yield

May: Heat-Loving Perennials for Kansas

June: Native and Ornamental Grasses of Kansas

July: A Look at Kansas Demonstration Gardens

August: Innovations in Horticultural Research with K-State Research and Extension

September: Shrubs that Thrive in Kansas

October: Starting Public Garden Spaces 101

November: Climate Resilient Garden Plants

December: Gifts for Gardeners

Registration can be found at the [following link](#) or by using the QR code. All sessions are archived and [posted here](#).



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Community Development

WYANDOTTE COUNTY RESIDENTS RALLYING AROUND PROJECTS THAT PROMOTE HEALTH

The extension office is helping to foster community improvements.

Residents and extension staff in Wyandotte County are sowing seeds of hope for a healthier future in an area of Kansas that often falls near the bottom of the state's health rankings.

Denise Dias, Director of K-State Research and Extension's office in Wyandotte County, said a series of focus group meetings opened new opportunities to improve life in the county.

"We asked people to come and discuss their concerns around health and community, and a common thread in everything we heard was funding," Dias said. The result: Residents are leading a renewed focus on health in the county's neighborhoods, discussing projects aimed at improving such things as cleaning up run-down neighborhoods, building walking trails, establishing community gardens, improving sidewalks, and more.

"Some areas of our city are very run down," Dias said. "An area that we're especially focusing on is an older part of the county where the neighborhoods need to be lifted." In just a few months, Dias notes that a new energy source is being built among an increasingly growing number of residents.

"People are realizing that they don't have to wait for someone else to make change or to take care of them," Dias said. "They feel empowered to believe they can make choices to improve their community." Dias hopes the momentum building in Wyandotte County will become a success story in an initiative led by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment called Healthy Kansans 2030.

Extension agents in Kansas are actively involved in that initiative, hoping to be a local link in making positive changes in communities across the state.

"It's a great fit for extension professionals," said Elaine Johannes, the Kansas Health Foundation's Distinguished Professor of Community Health at Kansas State University.

"Extension units around the state - like Denise's group in Wyandotte County - understand their community. They understand the partnerships that can help the community improve their health, preventing diseases and building good places where residents can thrive."

In Wyandotte County's case, early focus group discussions led to a pair of very popular grant writing workshops. In these workshops, residents learned where to find the money and how to write applications to bring those funds to their community. Dias said 65 residents have been trained to write grants.

"We've started with little grants of just a couple thousand dollars to do something nice in their neighborhood, but those little pieces add up to helping the entire community improve," Dias said.

Johannes notes that it has also opened opportunities for additional partnerships between extension agents and county residents.

"Denise and her team are building the capacity for the community to take on other health-related issues, such as hypertension, creating local gardens and play areas, or offering other classes," Johannes said. "It's an opportunity to show that health doesn't always reside in a doctor's office; it resides in a community where people work together."

The weekly radio program Sound Living, produced by K-State Research and Extension, features a longer discussion with Dias and Johannes on Healthy Kansans 2023.

Denise Dias,
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Upcoming Events



- Jan 1:** Office Closed
- Jan 8:** K-State Garden Hour
- Jan 9:** Familias Comiendo Inteligentemente y Movindose Más- Introducción
- Jan 11:** Cake Decorating
- Jan 16:** Eligiendo más Frutas y Vegetales y el Tamaño Inteligente de sus Porciones
- Jan 23:** Planifica Saber Qué para Cenar
- Jan 30:** Compras: Compra lo Mejor por Menos, Compra por Calidad y Revisa los Datos de Nutrición.
- 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 27:** Eligiendo Moverse Más Durante el Día/ DÍA DE GRADUACIÓN.

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.

Connect with us!



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