



March 2025

# THE EXTENSION CONNECTION

Wyandotte County K-State Research and Extension



## Director's Note

**Denise Dias**

Wyandotte County Director

March provides us with some unique opportunities to celebrate. Notable holidays this month include St. Patrick's Day, Employee Appreciation Day, National Peanut Butter Day, National Napping Day, and Pi Day. Regardless of which holiday you choose to observe, we always celebrate Extension, dedicated to helping you live your best life!

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# 4-H COUNTY CLUB DAY HELPS YOUTH BUILD PUBLIC SPEAKING SKILLS

Admit it: the thought of speaking in front of an audience makes your palms sweaty, maybe even your knees buckle. While nervousness speaking in front of a crowd is totally normal, public speaking is a skill that can be learned and practiced. Learning to speak or perform in front of a crowd is one of the many great things the 4-H program has to offer its youth members.

4-H County Club Days are held every year in February and allow 4-H youth to practice and showcase their abilities in public speaking. County Club Days also give 4-Hers the opportunity to perform in front of a crowd through instrumental and vocal solos, dance, acting, and mock job interviews, among many other skills. 4-Hers are judged on their performance and receive constructive feedback and a ribbon for their efforts. This year Wyandotte 4-H partnered with Leavenworth 4-H to put on the County Club Days event. 4-Hers who earned a purple or blue ribbon placing in their category and were selected by the judges are able to advance to the Regional County Club Day. Wyandotte 4-Hers will compete alongside 4-Hers from Douglas, Shawnee, and Johnson counties, and the Extension Districts of Marais des Cygnes District and Frontier District.

### Wyandotte 4-H 2025 County Club Days Contestants:

Ellie- Project Talk- Blue

Ellie- Flute Solo- Red

Anson- Demo/Illustrated Talk-Purple

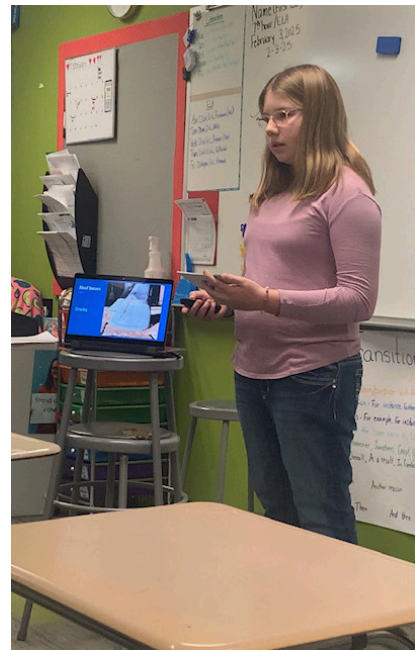
Michael- Vocal Solo-Blue

Ruby- Piano Solo-Blue

Amber- Piano Solo- Purple

Amber and Ruby- Dance Team- Purple

Amber and Ruby- Demo/Illustrated Talk Team-Blue



## STAYCATION IDEAS FOR SPRING BREAK

Exploring ways to spend Spring Break has often encouraged individuals and families to research a variety of options. With busy schedules and family dynamics, the need to plan may offer differences based on multiple factors. Perhaps your kids are on break, but you have to work. Or maybe you are off work but can't afford to go anywhere. Or maybe your significant other has to work while you and the kids get a break. What can you do to make your spring break staycation fun for the entire family? Whether you are able to take a trip or not, you want to make the most of any time off. You may have scheduling problems or other challenges that may be hindering you; don't let it dampen Spring Break totally. The All Pro Dad shared some awesome spring break staycation suggestions:

1. Be sure to have a plan.

"Fail to plan, plan to fail." That old adage is true when it comes to staycations as well. Be sure you sit down with your family and decide what you will do. Create some ideas and make a budget.

2. Set some guidelines.

Set clear guidelines of technology use during your staycation, as well as working hours if you don't have to physically go to work.

3. Get creative and be different.

One important idea of a staycation is to get away from the normal day-to-day. Physically or geographically, you may not be able to get away, but you can get away from the regular routine.

4. Act like it is a "real" vacation.

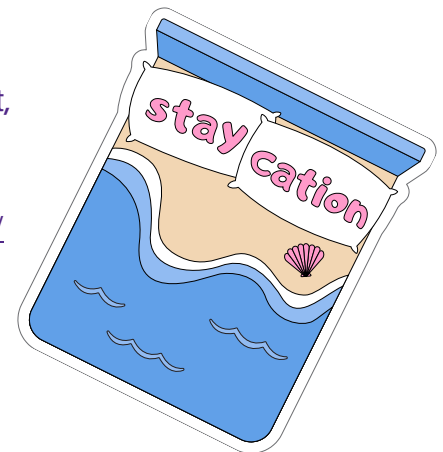
Think about things you normally do on vacation. You take pictures; you hang out a little later than normal, and you may even sleep in a little longer. Document your staycation in pictures, videos, or scrapbooking just like you would a vacation in a different geographic area.

5. Carve out family and individual time.

Creating time for the kids to do "their thing" while mom and dad get to do "their thing" on vacation. A staycation can include this as well. Arrange childcare or a playdate with relatives or friends who have kids your kids' ages while you go on the special date or guy's night. Whatever you do, don't let the fact you will not be taking a trip dampen you or your kids' spring break fun.

Be creative in spite of the obstacles you face. Your kids will really appreciate it, and it will create great memories for your entire family. Use the info below to create an awesome spring break staycation!

<https://www.allprodad.com/5-staycation-ideas-for-an-awesome-spring-break/>



## Nutrition and Food Safety

# DEVELOPING HEALTHY HABITS DURING NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH®

During the month of March, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics promotes its annual National Nutrition Month® campaign. This campaign focuses on achieving an overall healthy and balanced lifestyle through physical activity, eating a balanced diet, and more. Although we normally talk or think about an overall healthy and balanced lifestyle in terms of food choices or exercise, truly achieving a balanced and healthy lifestyle goes much deeper than that. To celebrate National Nutrition Month®, let's talk about some different ways we can achieve a healthy lifestyle by focusing on its different elements, better known as the "Dimensions of Wellness".

1. **Physical Dimension:** Taking care of your body through healthy habits such as exercise, nutrition, and adequate sleep. Focusing on the physical dimension may include aiming to get an adequate amount of exercise each week, making your diet as nutrient-dense as possible, limiting unhealthy fats, added sugars, and sodium, limiting or avoiding alcohol, and getting adequate sleep every night.
2. **Intellectual Dimension:** Growing intellectually, finding the value in lifelong learning, and welcoming intellectual challenges. Some ways you can focus on the intellectual dimension include taking a new class, reading a new book, or incorporating crossword puzzles into your daily routine.
3. **Emotional Dimension:** Focuses on optimism, self-esteem, and the ability to experience, manage, and respect your feelings along with others. Giving attention to the emotional dimension could include practicing self-care, finding unique ways that help you cope with stress, being realistic about expectations and time, or knowing when to ask for help.
4. **Social Dimension:** Primarily focuses on your relationships with others but can also include contributing to your community. Focusing on the social dimension could include developing new friendships, maintaining healthy relationships, taking an active role in helping to improve your community, or creating inclusive spaces.
5. **Spiritual Dimension:** Finding and having a meaning, value, and purpose in your life with or without an organized religion. Some ways you can focus on the spiritual dimension include practicing activities that are consistent with your own beliefs and values, practicing gratitude and self-reflection, or working to be mindful of both your internal and external environment.
6. **Vocational Dimension:** Involves engaging in work that is meaningful, personally satisfying, and aligns with your lifestyle, values, and goals. Giving attention to the vocational dimension could include considering different volunteer opportunities within your community, taking a thoughtful approach to career planning, or leading a service activity within your community.
7. **Financial Dimension:** Our relationship with money and awareness that everyone's financial needs and circumstances are unique. Focusing on the financial dimension could include making informed financial decisions, being aware of potential fraud and scams, making sure that the financial goals you are setting are realistic, creating budgets, or searching for and utilizing discounts and coupons.
8. **Environmental Dimension:** involves considering the effect that all environments (natural, built, and social) have on our health and well-being. Some ways you can focus on the environmental dimension include spending time outside, demonstrating our commitment to keeping our planet healthy, awareness of how our daily actions can affect the earth, and living sustainably.

Making sure we give attention to each of the Dimensions of Wellness listed above seems like a challenging task, but, keep in mind that although we should pay attention to each of these dimensions, the goal is to find your own personal balance that works best with your schedule, ideals, priorities, and goals to achieve overall wellness. Use this printable checklist linked below to see how you are doing on giving daily attention to the different dimensions of wellness: <https://www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/sites/default/files/2024-09/fn2246.pdf>

The theme for National Nutrition Month® 2025 is "Food Connects Us". You can learn more about National Nutrition Month®, their 2025 theme, and ways to get involved by going to <https://www.eatright.org/national-nutrition-month>

### References

[National Nutrition Month®](#)

[Staying Well: Exploring the Dimensions of Well-Being \(FN2246\)](#)

[Dimensions of wellness: Change your habits, change your life - PMC](#)

[8 Dimensions of Wellness | Live Well @ UMD](#)

[How Can I Eat More Nutrient-Dense Foods? | American Heart Association](#)

**Lori Wuellner**  
FCS Agent  
lwuellne@ksu.edu

**Lauren Woody**  
Nutrition Assistant  
lwoody2000@ksu.edu

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# Nutrition and Food Safety

## 7 TIPS TO MAKE COOKING AT HOME A BREEZE

Thinking about how to make your family healthier? How about having more healthful meals? Cooking meals at home can help you meet nutritional and financial goals. Meals eaten at home tend to be lower in calories and fat, and higher in fiber, vitamins and minerals.

You might think you have no time to cook. However, these tips can make cooking a breeze.

1. Organize your kitchen. Keep frequently used items, such as cooking oils/sprays, spatulas, cutting boards and spices, within easy reach. Then you will not have to search for them later.
2. Clear the clutter. Before you start cooking, clear off your counters. This allows more room to prepare food.
3. Have everything in place. Read through the recipe and gather the needed ingredients. Organizing your ingredients helps you spot missing items and avoid skipping steps. Prep ingredients by draining and rinsing canned beans or vegetables, washing fruits and vegetables, and chopping what you need.
4. Invite family members to help you in the kitchen. Children can learn valuable food preparation skills. Plus, cooking together is fun! Eating family meals has many benefits, too. Browning ground beef? Double the amount and freeze half for another day.
5. Chop extra. When chopping veggies for a meal, chop more than you need and refrigerate the extras for use later that week. For example, chop an extra onion and refrigerate it in an air-tight container. The next time you need it, you can skip a step. For longer storage, you also can freeze most vegetables.
6. Double your recipe. For your next casserole or stew, try doubling the recipe and freezing the extra. You'll save time and make cooking dinner during a busy evening a snap.
7. Clean as you go. Fill the sink with soapy water and wash the dishes as you cook.
8. Save some for later. Freeze leftover soups, sauces or gravies in small reusable containers. Be sure to mark the container with the name of the recipe and date you froze it.



# Horticulture

# IT'S TIME TO PREPARE YOUR GARDEN!

As the seasons transition, it's the perfect time to prepare your garden for the growing months ahead! Follow these tips for pruning, planting, and maintaining healthy plants.

## Pruning & Tree Care

- General Tree Pruning:
  - Pruning apple and other fruit trees should happen when the wood is not frozen, and no later than the end of March.
  - Take out broken, damaged or diseased branches.
  - If two branches form a narrow angle, prune one out. Narrow angles are weak angles and tend to break during wind or ice storms.
  - Take out all suckers, or branches that grow straight up.
  - If two branches cross and rub against one another, one should be taken out.
  - Cut back or remove branches that are so low that they interfere with harvest or pruning. If cutting back a branch, always cut back to another branch or bud; do not leave a stub.
  - Cut back branches to reduce the total size of the tree, if necessary.
  - Thin branches on the interior of the tree.
  - Do not remove more than 1/3 of the tree.
- Oak Trees:
  - Prune only before mid-March.
  - Avoid pruning from mid-March to late June to prevent oak wilt disease.
- Shrub Pruning:
  - Prune summer-blooming shrubs before new growth appears. Flowers bloom on new growth, which this will encourage.
  - Wait until after flowering to prune spring-blooming shrubs. Flowers are already formed and pruning early will harm blooming.

## Soil Preparation & Fertilization

- Test Your Soil:
  - Soil tests can be dropped off at the Wyandotte County Extension Office, and we have soil probes available to check out, which makes taking a soil test easier and more accurate. The results from this test can help you amend your soil properly. KCK residents receive one soil test free of charge each year.
- Fertilize Fruit Trees:
  - Apply fertilizer as soon as the ground thaws, following manufacturer instructions.
- Mulch Management:
  - Gradually remove mulch from strawberries as temperatures rise to prevent rot.

## Seed Starting & Planting

- Indoor Seed Starting:
  - Begin summer vegetable seeds (tomatoes, peppers, eggplants) by mid-to-late March.
  - Use grow lights or sunny windowsills for healthy seedlings. Newer LED grow lights are available with both lower heat output and energy usage.
  - Heating pads may be needed for plants such as tomatoes or peppers.
- Outdoor Planting:
  - Sow cold-hardy crops (peas, spinach, lettuce, radishes) as soon as soil is workable.
  - Plant trees, shrubs, and perennials as they become available at garden centers

# Community Development

## WHY FORMING AN EXTENSION DISTRICT MAKES SENSE

1. Financial Savings for Taxpayers - This reduction is possible because district funding leverages economies of scale, reducing administrative costs and maximizing taxpayer dollars.
2. Expanded Services and Benefits - A Wyandotte-Leavenworth Extension District will allow us to expand programs that are already making a difference. For example:
  - a. Youth Development: 4-H programs that teach leadership and life skills to hundreds of local youth.
  - b. Health Initiatives: Nutrition education that addresses food insecurity and chronic disease prevention.
  - c. Economic Impact: Agricultural and small business support that strengthens local economies.
3. Local Success Story - "A new project I started this year was the Salvation Army Homeless Veteran Project. I have been teaching these veterans basic information about gardening. They each planted vegetables or flowers in buckets and harvested the vegetables. I also helped them plant tomatoes in their raised beds. Seeing these veterans' interest in the gardens and listening to my presentations was very rewarding. I hope they will take the information and use it to grow their gardens." Don Crim, Extension Master Gardener Volunteer
4. Governance and Accountability - The district will be governed by an elected board, ensuring accountability and local representation.
  - a. Annual financial audits and transparent reporting will inform taxpayers how their dollars are spent.
5. No Risk of Tax Increases - While there is no district budget cap in Kansas Extension District law, all Kansas Extension Districts have historically demonstrated cautious spending and a conservative approach to ensuring financial discipline.
6. Building on Proven Models - This isn't a new idea. Similar districts across Kansas have successfully lowered taxes while expanding services. For example, the Rolling Prairie Extension District has lowered its mill levy by .846 since it formed a district in 2009.
7. Avoiding Missed Opportunities - If we delay, Wyandotte County risks falling behind neighboring regions already reaping the benefits of Extension districts.

# Upcoming Events



## **March- National Nutrition Month**

**March 4:** Walk Kansas Registration Opens

**March 7:** Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge

**March 18-19:** Love Notes Spring Break Camp

**March 20:** Create Better Health

**March 22:** Beef Tag In

**March 24:** Med instead of Meds

**March 27:** Create Better Health

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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