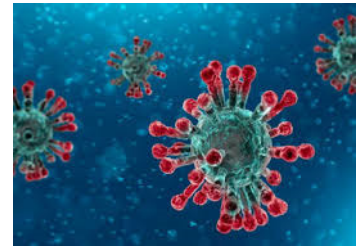




Southwind Extension District - Figuring Out the “New Normal”

In the January issue of the “Making a Difference” report, it was stated that we would “continuously adapt to changing times and landscapes”. Little did we know how much the times and landscapes were about to change, and just how much adaptation would take place!

The Covid-19 pandemic compelled many governors across the country, Kansas’ Laura Kelly included, to issue a “Stay at Home” order, forcing District and County Extension offices to close. Southwind Agents and Office Professionals had “offices” in their bedrooms, kitchens, and living rooms. We quickly learned to embrace new technology and new ways to present information to our constituents. Now back in the offices, we are getting back to the new normal.



Embracing Change

The Covid-19 pandemic made the Southwind Extension District become more resilient and reliable than ever, and connecting communities continues to be our focus. Ready or not, technology has become the vehicle to keep students and communities engaged. With the traditional face-to-face settings still not an option for everyone, community boards, faith-based organizations, and not-for-profit groups have turned to Carla Nemecek to facilitate Zoom meetings to continue their missions. Not only was this service vital for community connectedness, but seeing other member’s faces during a difficult time has been uplifting for all.



During disasters and times of uncertainty, scams seem to run rampant. Barbara Stockebrand focused her energies on warnings for potential scams related to the pandemic. Finding routes to reach our older adults during this time has been challenging, but not impossible. She has disseminated her information by way of social media, news articles, and newsletters.



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Many of the families in our district have been affected financially by the virus. Financial strain is a real issue for our friends and neighbors as they struggle to pay their bills and feed their families. Trying to make sense of the overload of information from the news, social media and other sources is challenging, and a person’s reading level and ability to make good decisions decreases during disasters. Joy Miller has educated through social media, newsletters and news columns on “When Your Income Drops”, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. She has explained who is eligible, what they need to know, and where to find more information on the various provisions such as the stimulus check, mortgages, unemployment, student loans, tax deadlines, and retirement distribution changes.

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Embracing Change (continued from page 1)

Kathy McEwan has become quite experienced with Zoom. She hosted Allen County GROW Food and Farm Council meetings, as well as local church groups and organizations. One of Kathy's priorities has been communication with our SNAP-Ed program partners and Southwind SNAP-Ed staff to assess need and provide assistance. She completed the Southwind SNAP-Ed grant proposal that if fully funded will bring \$147,127.75 into Southwind District. Her Facebook Live posts have focused on Food, Nutrition, Health, and Wellness. She has also helped her local community by assisting with the school meal program by helping to deliver meals to school district families. It was done safely by practicing social distancing protocol.



Jennifer Terrell and MaKayla Stroud have been impressed by the creativity and dedication of the local 4-H Club leaders. Jennifer's primary concern has been to make sure that we stayed consistent for families and volunteers regarding their monthly 4-H club meetings. Thankfully, the Zoom conferencing subscription through K-State was encouraged to be used by community organizations. While some club leaders were unsure about this virtual option, many instantly embraced the opportunity and the meetings have been successful. MaKayla has provided "brain break" videos on Facebook to promote fun break times to help refocus and boost productivity. She also published posts on healthy snack recipes and social distancing activities that families can do together. Graduating high school seniors were recognized on Facebook. MaKayla and Jennifer are proud of our 4-H Volunteers and families in the Southwind District.



Horticulture programming this spring was turned upside down, as gardening presentations and programs, and school enrichment programs had to be cancelled. Krista Harding continued to reach her clientele through social media postings, as well as her monthly newsletter, radio spots, news columns and phone/e-mail. She created Facebook live videos pertaining to container gardening, succession gardening, useful Extension gardening resources, soil sampling and proper mulching. She also revamped her earthworm school enrichment program and offered it via Facebook live. Krista modified and completed the Ronda Lane container gardens for low-income residents. Although she could not convene with the residents nor her Master Gardeners as originally planned, she prepared 22 containers, delivered the soil and plants and worked with the community manager via phone and messenger to get the containers planted!

Perhaps the biggest change made during this pandemic has been the way the Woodson County Sheep Auction functioned. Started in 1989 by Dale Lanham, the auction has moved over 330,000 head of sheep and goats through the sale ring. With numbers like that, and the number of people that count on that sale for both income and product, the sale couldn't just come to an abrupt halt. Dale organized a few major buyers for a buying station, and one truck at a time in April, May, and June sold 2573 head from nearly 100 consignors in 3 states. The animals were shipped to Texas, Indiana, Georgia, Oklahoma, and Pennsylvania. Finally, in July, with approval from the proper channels, the regular auction was held, much to the delight of both buyers and sellers.

Embracing Change (continued from page 2)

All four Office Professionals brought their work home, as well. 4-H Newsletters were written, Facebook posts were posted, bills were paid and finance reports completed, and the Southwind website was kept updated, especially with Covid-19 information. Office phones were forwarded so that our constituents could stay in touch with the OPs and Agents.

The New Face of our County Fairs, and New Faces in Southwind District

Uncertainty seemed to be the key word to describe going in to our county fairs this year, but with hard work and perseverance, all four counties had successful fairs. They were not the fairs that our communities and 4-H youth were used to having, but they were fairs, and darned good ones in spite of the challenges. They were fairs that we should all be proud of. And although the Kansas State Fair will be unlike any in the 100+ years that it has been running, there will be a virtual showcase of indoor events, and a pared-down version of the livestock shows. As they did with their county fairs, our 4-H members will embrace and adapt to the changes that are being made to ensure the safety of participants.

We were pleased to welcome back Cassidy Lutz this summer. Her help was invaluable during ALL of the fairs. She helped in all four counties. She is staying with us as a new 4-H Program Assistant, based primarily in the Woodson and Allen county offices. She can be reached via email: celutz@ksu.edu, or call the Iola or Yates Center offices.

We have also welcomed James Coover, the Crop Production Agent from Wildcat Extension District. James is working between both districts, serving each half-time. He is with us following the resignation of Chris Petty, who left to work for the USDA. To reach James, email him at jcoover@ksu.edu.



We've all changed. The world has changed. The face of Extension has changed. And through these changes, we have grown. We will continue to grow, as will Extension. We look forward to growing with you.



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