

February 2026

# THE EXTENSION CONNECTION

Wyandotte County K-State Extension

## Director's Note

**Denise Dias**

Wyandotte County Director

February may be the shortest month of the year, but it has a lot going for it! Be sure to check out our events page at the end of this newsletter. If you need a speaker for your organization, we have hundreds of topics to choose from!

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## 4-H Youth Development

# RABBIT PROJECT AWARDED BPU GRANT

The Wyandotte County 4-H Rabbit Project, known locally as the WyCo Hoppin Dottes, has been awarded a \$5,000 grant from the BPU Charity Golf Tournament to support youth education and the county fair rabbit show. The funding will help the program expand hands-on learning opportunities and improve resources for participants.

Grant proceeds will be used to purchase grooming and care equipment for instructional sessions and to acquire supplies needed for the rabbit show at the Wyandotte County Fair. Organizers say the new equipment will enhance instruction on proper rabbit husbandry and help ensure the safety and quality of show operations.

The 4-H Rabbit Project offers youth and their families instruction in rabbit care, husbandry, and showmanship. The program provides an accessible livestock experience for participants who may not have the space or resources for larger animals, while teaching responsibility, animal welfare, and competitive skills. The WyCo Hoppin Dottes meet monthly for youth and parents to learn best practices in rabbit care and to connect with other rabbit enthusiasts. For more information or to get involved, contact adult project leader Renee Foster at [mrsrfoster7@gmail.com](mailto:mrsrfoster7@gmail.com).



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## Family and Consumer Sciences

# DON'T GET STRANDED OUT IN THE COLD - MAKE YOUR OWN WINTER CAR SURVIVAL KIT.

You probably already have a few of the items in this winter car survival kit in your garage but they, and few other things belong in the car! All you need to do is put them together in a box, in your car during winter for roadside emergencies.

With this equipment, you'll be ready to deal with most winter roadside breakdowns, and avoid getting frostbite or freezing to death in the process! This is particularly true for anyone who lives in a remote location or frequently drives through rural, sparsely populated areas where being stuck in a blizzard or similar conditions can cost you your life.

### **Winter Emergency Preparedness: Vehicle Emergency Kits**

With winter storms posing risks such as dangerous roads, frostbite, hypothermia, and carbon monoxide poisoning, this article emphasizes the importance of preparing a vehicle emergency kit.

#### **Recommended items include:**

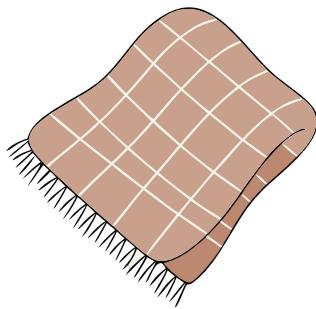
- Warm clothes (extra socks, gloves, hand warmers)
- Blankets
- Ice/snow scraper
- Bottled water & high-protein snacks
- Flashlight & Battery Power Pack for Electronic Devices
- Jumper cables or a battery-powered jump starter
- Sand or kitty litter (for traction on ice/snow)
- Collapsible shovel
- Roadside flares or glow sticks
- Flat tire inflation canister (non-explosive)



#### **Additional safety tips:**

Always keep your gas tank full in winter.

If stranded, only run the engine 10 minutes per hour for heat while cracking a window to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.



# Nutrition and Food Safety

# FEBRUARY IS AMERICAN HEART MONTH

High blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart disease, which is the leading cause of death in the United States. Consistent high blood pressure can cause health problems such as heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, and dementia.

According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood (NHLB) Institute, a healthy lifestyle is important in preventing and managing high blood pressure, including a healthy weight, balanced eating, regular physical activity, reduced dietary sodium, limited alcohol consumption, sufficient sleep, stress management, and smoking cessation.

## Here are a few tips:

**Move More.** Regular moderate physical activity, such as walking briskly for 30 minutes on most days of the week, can help lower and control blood pressure. Consult your healthcare provider if you have a preexisting condition.

**Aim for a healthy weight.** Physical activity may help maintain a healthy body weight, which in turn decreases the risk of hypertension. Even a modest weight loss of ten pounds can help reduce blood pressure or prevent hypertension in many overweight individuals.

**Follow a healthy eating plan.** Blood pressure can be lowered by following the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating plan, <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/education/dash-eating-plan>, which includes consuming more fruits, vegetables, and low-fat dairy products, and fewer saturated fats and total fats. The DASH diet, combined with regular moderate exercise and a healthy weight, provides the most effective reduction in blood pressure. Limiting sodium and alcohol intake can also lower blood pressure.

If you already have high blood pressure, it is crucial to prevent it from worsening or causing complications. You should get regular medical care and follow your prescribed treatment plan. To lower your blood pressure, consider the following steps: set goals in collaboration with your healthcare provider, make gradual, healthy lifestyle changes, and practice mindful meditation. Starting with just 10 minutes will help relieve stress.

The American Heart Association lists 6 blood pressure categories you should be aware of, <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/understanding-blood-pressure-readings>

Learn more about the importance of maintaining healthy blood pressure by attending the Hypertension Awareness and Prevention Program Orientation on April 15 at 5:00 pm. For more information, <https://www.wyandotte.k-state.edu/events/> (Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; and American Heart Association)

## PLANNING FOR SPRING SUCCESS

When it comes to gardens and landscape, chaos can reign before you know it. Between weeds, pests, and planting mismatches things can get out of hand quickly which can lead to grower frustration and leave some wondering how this could be avoided in the future. One way to feel more in control of your projects is to start planning now! Taking the time to think about what crops and ornamentals will fill your garden space, what soil amendments will you add (consider testing first), pest management, and of course what do you want out of your garden or landscape this year? Here are some tips I find helpful to think of when I plan out my garden:

**Soil:** If you are planting a traditional in ground garden or even raised beds, understanding your soil's composition is a game changer. Think of this step as laying a good foundation on the house. Testing soil can reveal concentrations of minerals and nutrients as well as your soil classification type, all these factors should be considered when determining rates of fertilizer, irrigation, and what plants will grow well. (Contact your local extension office to see if you qualify for a free K-State soil analysis)

**Crops:** Unfortunately, spatial constraints can quickly throttle our ambitions when it comes to gardening. Take into account the area of your growing space and start planning what you would like to grow. A fantastic tool for estimating how much space vegetables require, when to plant, and expected harvest dates is K-State Extension publication MF 315 "Vegetable Planting Guide". Pest control is a major factor to plan out rather than be forced to react when an outbreak occurs. If an aphid infestation was to present itself will you treat with an insecticide or will you take a more organic natural approach? How will you deal with weeds when they creep into the crop rows? From preventative herbicides to mechanical eradication it never hurts to have a plan in mind.

**Pruning:** Mid to late February is the ideal time to prune most deciduous trees and is an excellent way to plan the shape of your trees while they are still dormant. Many fruit trees require a thorough pruning in order to maximize fruit production (i.e apples, peaches, pears.) In general proper pruning can help growers control size/shape, promote airflow, and reduce the risk of disease by removing branches that are currently showing signs of decay, are broken, or at risk of rubbing against other branches or the trunk of the tree. Intentionality is key when tree pruning and avoid removing more than one third of the canopy. Lastly, Always have a plan when it comes to pruning, safety is the chief concern and for large jobs, consult with an ISA certified and insured arborist.



# Community Development

# SOCIAL CAPITAL GLUE

Social capital is the glue that holds communities together. If you look closely, you might see it at the grocery store, at your church, or even in the newspaper.

Social capital is characterized by mutually respectful relationships, connectedness, and trust among people. It can also be seen in networks and community involvement. Social scientist James Coleman coined the term social capital to describe community ties, and Robert Putnam further popularized this research in his book, *Bowling Alone*.

Social capital takes many different forms. It can be seen in the neighbor down the street who knows all the children and is willing to help out in an emergency. Social capital can be seen in a local police officer who coaches Little League or in volunteers who come together each year to organize a Relay for Life event. This powerful "community glue" exists in bowling leagues or in families in a local 4-H club. Wherever you find people coming together, building relationships, or networking to get things done, you see social capital at work, creating communities and improving your town.

There are many benefits to strengthening social capital. Research has shown that increased social capital makes lives healthier, safer, and more prosperous. It also makes us better able to govern a just and stable democracy. Here are a few examples:

- Communities with higher levels of social capital produce children with higher SAT scores and higher performance on a broad range of tests. These communities also have lower dropout rates, higher retention, and less youth violence.
- The more integrated we are in our community, the more likely we are to have reduced incidence of health problems, including colds, heart attacks, strokes, cancer, depression, and premature death of all sorts.
- Representative government is more responsive in communities with more social capital. Tax compliance is higher and blood donations more abundant.

Each one of us can build social capital. So, offer to mow a neighbor's yard. Volunteer to serve on a committee. Hold lunchtime discussions at your workplace. Organize a community garden. Sing in a choir or have a neighborhood barbecue. Social capital is built through hundreds of actions, large and small, that we take every day. We're all part of the "glue" that makes communities better places to live.

Source Minnesota Extension



# Upcoming Events



**Feb 4-** K-State Garden Hour

**Feb 5-** Victory Gardens Advanced Training

**Feb 6-** Producer Workshop

**Feb 7-** Farmers and Friends Meeting

**Feb 8-** 4-H County Club Days

**Feb 16-** Office Closed

**Feb 21-** 4-H Horse Panorama

Connect with us!



K-State 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 [jol@ksu.edu](mailto:jol@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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