

May 2025

THE EXTENSION CONNECTION

Wyandotte County K-State Research and Extension



Director's Note

Denise Dias

Wyandotte County Director

We are constantly improving and making accessing the information you need easier to live your best life. Check out the new information and videos on our website and lobby; we are proud of our progress. Please stop by, I'm sure you will consider us a friendly space to learn and grow. Here is a sample of some interesting things we are working on for you.

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4-H Youth Development

4-H YOUTH REPRESENTING WYANDOTTE COUNTY AT REGIONAL AND STATE CONTESTS

Abigail S. of the Blazing Bridles 4-H club participated in the State 4-H Horse Judging Contest during Equifest of Kansas in Salina, KS. This was Abigail's first time participating in a 4-H Horse Judging Contest. Abigail earned a Top 10 placing in the Senior Individual Halter division.

4-H Regional County Club Day was held on March 29th in Tecumseh, KS. The regional contest included 4-H members who qualified at their respective County Club Days from Wyandotte, Johnson, Douglas, and Shawnee counties; as well as the Frontier District (Osage, Franklin, and Anderson counties) and Marais des Cygnes District (Miami and Linn counties).

Wyandotte 4-H Member's Accomplishments at Regional Club Days:

Anson G.- Piper Club

Demonstration "Magnificent Mug Cake" - Blue Ribbon

Ellie G.- Piper Club

Project Talk "Holistic Horse Hoof Health" - Blue Ribbon

Micheal S.- Nearman Club

Vocal Solo- Purple Ribbon and Judge's Award Of Excellence

Amber and Ruby Y.- Nearman Club

Dance Team- Blue Ribbon

Team Demonstration- "Diamond Bead Christmas Ornaments"- Blue Ribbon

Amber Y.- Nearman Club

Piano Solo- Purple Ribbon



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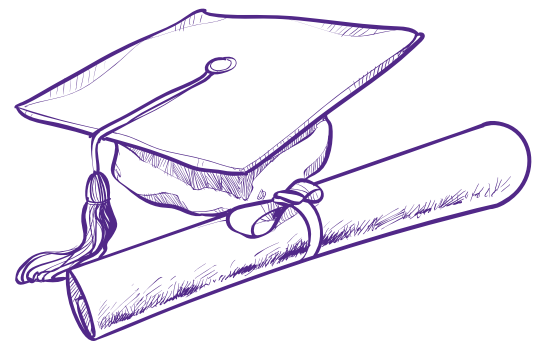
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12 WAYS TO CREATE A BUDGET FRIENDLY GRADUATION PARTY

A graduation party is a great way to celebrate a new diploma or degree – but it doesn't have to cost as much as one. Whether you're celebrating a kindergarten graduation, high school diploma or college degree, there are many ways to save on your next celebration. Here are some helpful tips to help you create an awesome graduation party:

1. Create a budget. Know what you're willing to spend, and set a limit you're comfortable with.
2. Consider co-hosting. If the graduate has friends or family members who are celebrating the same milestone, consider blending parties!
3. Plan for a mid-day open house. An open house is a great way to entertain a large number of guests on a budget.
4. Selecting the right venue. Room rental fees can put a dent in your budget if you're not careful.
5. Sending digital/DIY/discounted invitations. A party isn't a party without at least a few guests. Invitations are typically an easy place to cut costs early in the planning process.
6. Why not serve a buffet lunch or appetizers only. Who says every party has to include an expensive meal?
7. Go with cake or cupcake alternatives. Sure, you can try to make your own graduation cake, or just go with a sheet cake from your local grocery store or bakery.
8. Create your own decorations. Decorations don't have to be over the top to be impressive or memorable.
9. Do you really need a professional photographer or videographer, especially if you want or need to save money.
10. Can you become your own DJ. Decide if you need to hire a band or DJ to play your graduation party.
11. Although party favors have become commonplace and are a nice way to thank guests for coming, they are by no means necessary.
12. Do not be afraid to ask for help. Why are you stressing yourself out trying to host a graduation party all by yourself? Having a graduation party on a lower budget is possible. You have to be a little creative and think outside the box. Hopefully, these tips will help you create an amazing graduation party on a budget without giving up too much.

<https://moneypantry.com/graduation-party-budget/>



WHY STRENGTH MATTERS

Walking and other types of aerobic activity provide many health benefits but don't make muscles strong. Strength training does. You can feel a difference when your body is stronger. Strengthening exercises also improve balance, coordination, and agility, making everyday movements much easier. People start losing muscle around age 30, and the rate of muscle loss accelerates around age 50. Muscle loss is part of aging, but inactivity accounts for the rest. The good news is you can prevent muscle loss and increase your strength — no matter your age.

There are many benefits from strength training. Strong muscles lead to strong bones and connective tissue, which will help you avoid injuries and improve your balance. Muscle burns more calories than fat, so this is a bonus. Strengthening exercises can improve heart health and lower blood pressure, reduce back pain, help you sleep better, and ease symptoms of arthritis and fibromyalgia. Other benefits include improved mood and a boost of confidence!

Do muscle-strengthening activities two to three days a week, with a rest day between. Work all major muscle groups, including the legs, hips, back, stomach, chest, shoulders, and arms. Following are strengthening exercises you can do at home or in a gym:

Free weights or dumbbells. These are classic tools used to strengthen your upper body. They are inexpensive and available in many sizes. Start with 2- to 5-pound weights and gradually work up. Body weight exercises. These require little or no equipment since they use your body weight for resistance. Try push-ups, pull-ups, abdominal crunches, lunges, and leg squats.

Resistance tubing or bands. These offer weightlike resistance when you pull on them. They are inexpensive and good for building strength in arms and other muscles, and they are available in varying degrees of resistance.

If you are new to strength training, start slowly. Warm up with 5 to 10 minutes of stretching or walking, and always work both opposing muscle groups, right and left sides. When you try a new exercise, learn the proper form. Once you feel confident with your form, challenge yourself by increasing weight and repetitions.

For some delicious heart healthy recipes, visit: [Recipes](#) | [American Heart Association Recipes](#)

Walk Kansas Muscle Strengthening Videos: <https://www.walkkansas.org/activity/strength.html>
At Home Beginner Strength Training: <https://spendsmart.extension.ksstate.edu/video/at-home-workout-beginner-strength-training/>
(Source: Walk Kansas Newsletter, 2024 Week Two)



Nutrition and Food Safety

FOOD AND MOOD...HOW DO THEY CONNECT?

Posted on January 22, 2024 by Kelly Nordby, RDN, LDN

Have you ever thought about how the food that we eat can affect our mental health, either positively or negatively?

Much research has been done recently on the connection between food and mood. The Food and Mood project, led by several large government agencies, is an effort to examine this connection to improve the emotional wellness of our youth.

I recently witnessed this connection first-hand with my granddaughter. I picked her up from a friend's house and noticed her on edge and ravenously hungry. When I asked what she had eaten for breakfast, she mentioned waffles with maple syrup. 'Ok, she did have breakfast, that is good!' My next thought was, 'What she ate had little staying power.' Her breakfast contained virtually no fiber, protein, or fat, the three components in food that help us feel full longer and stabilize our blood sugar. She spiked her blood sugar with refined carbohydrates in the white flour waffles and sugar in the maple syrup, which then came crashing down a short amount of time later, leaving her feeling hungry and irritable. The food she ate most definitely affected her mood, not in a good way.

If we take this example of my daughter back to a larger and more long-term scale over many years, we can see why a poor diet can be linked to poor mental well-being. Researchers at the Center for Innovative Medicine at Johns Hopkins University are looking at the connection between food and mood at the microscopic level to examine the brain-gut connection and its effects on mental health. Researchers have found that the enteric nervous system (ENS), also called the "brain in the gut," is essential for understanding how food affects our mood and, conversely, how our mood affects everything in our gut. They note that "the gut produces 90 percent of the body's serotonin and half of its dopamine." These two "powerful neurotransmitters that affect mood help the mind stay calm and focused, and are natural anti-depressants."

One of the most important ways that we can take care of our gut so that it can do its job to affect our mood positively is to keep it in the right balance of different types of bacteria. These bacteria also help us digest our food, prevent infection and inflammation, manage our weight and blood sugar and maintain healthy liver function.



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Horticulture

PROMOTING POLLINATORS

As Kansas City gardens shift into full bloom, it's not just about flowers and vegetables—it's about who you're inviting to your space. Bees, butterflies, moths, beetles, and even flies all play critical roles in pollination, yet their populations continue to face threats from habitat loss, pesticide use, and climate shifts. The good news? Your garden can help.

Start with Native Plants

Pollinators have co-evolved with native species, so those natives fill a space in the landscape that is ready to be used, not just seen. Consider planting coneflowers, milkweed, bee balm, yarrow, golden alexanders, and wild bergamot—many of which begin blooming in May and carry on through summer. Aim for overlapping bloom times so there's always something on the menu.

Avoid Pesticides During Bloom

Even “natural” or organic products can be harmful to pollinators if applied while flowers are open. If you must treat for pests, do it early in the morning or late in the evening, when pollinators are less active, and always read the label carefully (it is the law). Better yet, encourage beneficial predators and practice integrated pest management (IPM) to reduce the need for chemical control.

Add a Water Source

Bees and butterflies need accessible sources of water, because like most insects, they are vulnerable to dehydration. A shallow dish filled with pebbles and water can serve as a bee or insect watering station. Keep it refreshed and refilled, and place it somewhere safe from pets and strong winds. For butterflies, a damp patch of bare soil or a sponge soaked in water can work as well. Just make sure not to leave any large amount of standing water for too long, or you risk breeding mosquitos.

Think Beyond the Garden Bed

Consider letting a few “weeds” grow a little longer this spring. Clover, violets, and dandelions provide early nectar when little else is blooming. You can also build or buy pollinator “hotels” for solitary bees, or leave some bare patches of soil for ground-nesters. Just make sure to clean out those “hotels” every year, to protect the bees from pest and disease.

Pollinator Importance

But helping pollinators isn't just, trendy it's important. Over 75% of flowering plants and about 1/3 of our food crops rely on them. By planting with a purpose and cutting back on chemicals, we can each create small pockets for pollinators across the Kansas City area, and beyond.

Community Development

NEIGHBORHOOD GROCERY STORES BUILD COMMUNITY!

In hundreds of neighborhoods nationwide, nutritious, affordable, high-quality food is missing. Studies show that measuring food store availability and the availability of healthy foods in nearby stores finds significant disparities in food access by race, income, and low-density areas. The presence of stores selling healthy, affordable food makes it possible for neighborhood residents to eat and consume a healthy diet. While the grocery store is just one strategy in enhancing access to nutritious food, it is perhaps the most potent and equitable food system strategy for improving healthy food access.

This is because:

- Most community or neighborhood residents do their food shopping at grocery stores.
- Grocery stores offer the most incredible variety of nutritional food at the most reasonable prices, and healthy foods all year round.
- Unlike food pantries, blessing boxes, or faith-based free meals, residents can shop as grocery customers equally and are not recognized as need-based consumers.
- Grocery store hours of operation are more expansive than other places of food access, thereby more fully accommodating residents' work and child-care obligations.
- Grocery stores support a broader use of SNAP and WIC nutrition assistance programs.

Neighborhood grocery stores serve as anchor businesses for local communities. They provide community members with access to healthy food, support local economies, and weave together the fabric of a community, serving as a place to meet, shop, and make social connections.

Healthy Food Access: Grocery stores are the best local sources of nutritious foods. Locally-owned stores stock healthy foods at lower prices than convenience stores.

1. Independently-owned grocery stores often carry locally-sourced healthy food and may coordinate with local farmers' markets to provide them with space to operate.
2. Economic Benefits: Independently-owned retailers return more than three times as much money per dollar of sales to the community than discount chain competitors.
3. Locally-owned stores impact the local economy through increased employment, generation of tax revenue, utilization of federal food assistance benefits, and returning profits to the community.
4. They contribute \$644,000 to the local economy.

On average, it hires 17 local employees, generates \$135 million in state and local tax dollars across Kansas

For more information, please contact: kansaslocalfood@ksu.edu



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Upcoming Events



- May 2:** Plant Sale
- May 2:** First Friday E-Call
- May 3:** Plant Sale
- May 10:** 4-H Horsemanship Clinic
- May 13:** ServSafe
- May 14:** Remote Work Wednesday
- May 21:** Blue Zone Class
- May 26:** Office Closed
- May 28:** Blue Zone Class

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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