

**KANSAS STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Extension

Southwind
District

Making a
DIFFERENCE

4th QUARTER 2025



What a busy few months it has been! We had lots of great programs and NEW programs this fall, including a homeschool youth day, a six-session homesteading series, and more. We even had a day of fun and fellowship to enrich our relationships with each other. Enjoy this recap of our agents and program assistants making a difference in the communities of Southwind Extension District.



STEM Discovery Day for Homeschoolers

The agents of Southwind wanted to have a day of interactive STEM sessions designed specifically for homeschooled youth. Students rotated through engaging, age-appropriate stations. Agents from Wildcat Extension District and Cherokee County Extension were asked to partner with us to ensure enough classes and help for a full day of learning.



More than 100 youth, along with a parent, gathered at the Neosho Valley Event Center in Erie. This particular audience does not get to experience the programs that we offer at local schools, so we were happy to offer it. Participants rotated through a series of interactive stations focused on science, technology, engineering and math. Agents guided the students through experiments and activities designed to inspire curiosity and problem-solving skills.

Kindergarten through 8th-grade youth were able to explore robotics, chick embryology, cloud formation, pollinators, earthworms, glowing germs, breakout boxes, and our blender bike. The 9th through 12th-graders learned about cow reproductive tracts, grains in everything, DNA extraction, honey bees, plant grafting, and feeding frenzies.

The event successfully fostered excitement about learning and highlighted K-State Extension's commitment to providing quality educational opportunities for homeschool communities in southeast Kansas.

Results from the follow-up survey given to both youth and adults indicated a strong desire to attend another day such as this one.

BACK TO THE LAND:

Traditions & Innovations in Small-Scale Farming



Back to the Land Homestead Series

An idea conceived in March came to fruition in October with the start of a brand new series that covered seven sessions in Fort Scott. 4 sessions were held in October, 2 in November, and a final session in December. There was an amazing turnout, consistently having 25+ at each session, with a total of 197 participants over the course of the program.

The program was designed to help those new to homesteading or

looking to sharpen their small-scale farming skills. Practical, hands-on topics led by our agents and K-State specialists who understand rural life and land stewardship included these subjects:

“Plot Perfect: Garden Planning for an Abundant Harvest” taught garden layout planning and preparation, as well as general garden knowledge.

“Pests, Predators, and Protection” helped participants identify what pests and predators could be killing their livestock, covering the common culprits and how to deter or eliminate the problems they cause.

“Backyard to Barnyard: Small Farm Poultry Essentials” taught about different chicken breeds and their purposes, equipment needed for poultry, and basic care of the birds.

“Deep Roots: Soil and Forage Strategies for Resilient Farms” involved two presenters discussing maintaining healthy soil, and the common cool and warm season forages that are beneficial to livestock.

“Homestead Herds: Practical Livestock for Self-Reliant Living” covered small ruminant (sheep and goats) immunology and parasitology, animal health and reproduction, as well as raising pigs for meat production.

“Pantry Power: Food Preservation for Self-Reliant Living” featured information about the different ways to safely preserve fruits, vegetables, and meat, such as canning and freezing.

“Harvest and Butcher: A Whitetail Processing Program” was the final program in the series. A live demonstration of how to process a deer and get the most common cuts was presented. The cuts would also apply to sheep and goats.

Empowered Caregiver Program

Nearly 1 in 5 Kansas adults serves as a caregiver, and unpaid caregivers provide 85% of all long-term care for older adults. Without training and support, these individuals often experience stress, isolation, and burnout. When caregivers struggle, the health and dignity of older adults decline, creating emotional and social costs for everyone.

To address this need, the Empowered Caregiver Program was delivered to 24 caregivers, offering practical sessions on caregiving foundations, supporting independence, effective communication, dementia-related behaviors, and available care resources.



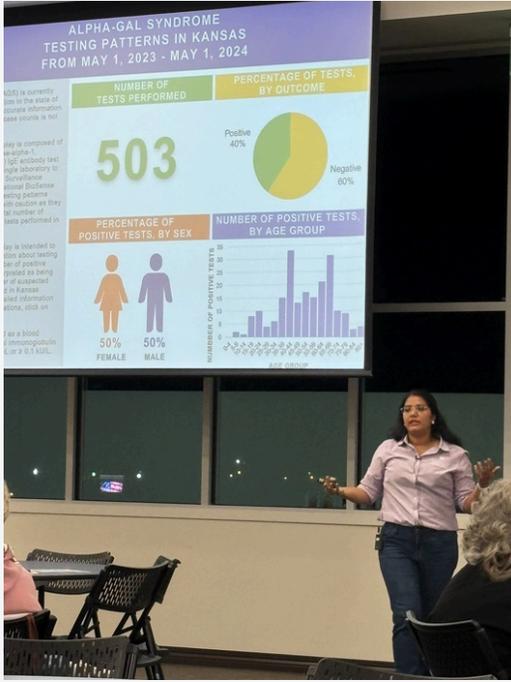
Managing Alpha-Gal Syndrome

Alpha-Gal Syndrome is the mysterious allergy to mammalian products triggered by tick bites. It significantly limits food choices and can lead to nutritional deficiencies and reduced quality of life. Many Kansans living with this condition struggle to find safe, balanced meals.

Southwind Extension partnered with Neosho Memorial Regional Medical Center to host an educational program, "Managing Alpha-Gal Syndrome: Nutritional Strategies for a Better Quality of Life", presented by K-State Extension Specialist Dr. Priscilla Brenes. Dr. Brenes presented practical nutritional strategies for individuals affected by AGS.

The program also featured a NMRMC Physician Assistant, who shared her personal experience with AGS and explained how the condition is diagnosed and treated, since there is no cure.

Nearly 40 participants took part in the program, enjoying an AGS-friendly light meal buffet catered by a Neosho County 4-H family that is also managing AGS. They learned practical strategies for adapting meal plans to their dietary restrictions and how to maintain nutrition without sacrificing enjoyment



MEDICARE PART D IMPACT ALLOWING HEALTH TO BE A PRIORITY



MEDICARE
COUNSELING CONTACTS
154

AVERAGE SAVINGS
PER PERSON
CHANGING PLANS

\$1,719.00

TOTAL SAVINGS

\$111,754.00

Medicare Annual Election Period

During the 2025 Medicare Annual Election Period, 154 individuals received counseling to help them navigate complex drug plan options that often lead to high costs and limited access to medications.

Beneficiaries who changed plans saved an average of \$1719 annually, totaling \$111,754 in savings JUST within the Southwind District.

This assistance improved access to affordable prescriptions, supporting better health and independence for older adults on fixed incomes. By reducing financial strain and promoting informed decisions, Extension strengthens families, eases pressure on healthcare systems, and ensures effective use of taxpayer-funded programs.



District Youth Entrepreneurship Challenges

The Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge (YEC) is a series of community-based Youth Entrepreneurship Competitions organized at the local level. Students in grades 6-12 compete at local events against others of their age division and then have the opportunity go on to compete at the state level. Typically, for students, local events involve writing a business plan/executive summary, sharing their idea at a tradeshow booth (imagine a science fair display about a business concept), and making a formal presentation.

The Grow Neosho County YEC event grew this year by adding St. Paul High School to the competition. Chanute had 18 participants compete in judging on November 18 and their tradeshow on November 19. St. Paul hosted their judging and tradeshow on December 4th with 20 competitors. A county competition will be held to determine who will go to the state-level event.

Fort Scott YEC hosted their event on December 9th with presentations and tradeshow booths with 25 youth present 15 business ideas. The winner of that contest will also compete at the state event in Manhattan.

A program like the Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge helps to teach young people valuable skills such as confidence, communication, eye contact, presentation skills and more. Participants can take real-world applicable skills and apply them to a business concept. Youth gain skills such as identifying and evaluating potential entrepreneurial opportunities. Even if participating students never become entrepreneurs, they can still benefit from thinking entrepreneurially. While the events look different among communities, the outcome is still the same: a better future for Kansas as young people learn valuable, life-long business skills.

Produce Boxes and Partnerships: A Win for Erie Residents

When the Erie Market closed in August 2025, residents lost access to fresh produce. To address this, a meeting was convened with local church leaders, food bank coordinators, and the SEK Area Agency on Aging (AAA). As a result of this collaboration, SEK AAA agreed to join the Harvest Produce Box program, offering boxes of fruits and vegetables for \$22.50, or \$10 for income-limited seniors. The Mayor approved the use of the former market site for distribution, and outreach included door-to-door visits in senior housing and ads in local media. Erie City Hall staff collected pre-paid orders.

On December 11th, 98 boxes were distributed in Chanute and Erie, with Erie residents receiving 55. Each box, valued at \$35, included items like cabbage, cauliflower, apples, oranges, and blueberries. The SEK AAA board will review the program to determine if this can be offered on a quarterly basis.



KANSAS STATE

U N I V E R S I T Y

Extension
Southwind District