

Johnson County Extension Receives Grant Funding

Total Grants Received for 2020



\$100,684.³⁶

At Johnson County K-State Research and Extension, there are always new opportunities for community members, volunteers and partners to learn and participate. With help from grants, more opportunities are possible. Johnson County Extension received three large grants this year making an impact for Johnson County.

Research and Education for Local Orchards

In 2019 Johnson County Extension received a \$35,000 grant from the Kansas Department of Agriculture to conduct on-farm trials at Gieringer's Orchard and South Baldwin Farms. This research and education project started in the

2020 growing season to assess the feasibility of protective drape netting form sunburn protection and improvement to fruit quality for local high-density apple production.

Drape Net is a large woven mesh that can be draped over the tops of fruit trees and trellises protecting fruit from hail, birds, pests and sun damage. However, the mate-

rial and labor costs required to lift and cover large orchard sections are a major barrier for commercial growers in Kansas. Hydraulic mast applicators can increase the efficiency of this practice, but the specialized machinery is expensive for small growers.

In spring 2020, Johnson County Extension used the KDA grant funds to purchase a net applicator and drape netting for on-farm research. Trials replicated at both orchards compared plots with netting to others managed with spray protectants, uncovered control groups, and plots lined with reflective ground covers.

Harvest and yield data complemented by analytical testing at K-State Olathe's Post-harvest Physiology Lab to evaluate fruit color, firmness, sugars, acidity, and starch. Results from on-farm trials are being shared through a mix of publications, field days, online videos and extension presentations.



Removing the drape netting for apple harvest at South Baldwin Farm with the hydraulic mast applicator.

4-H Multi-Year Grant Programming

Junior Extension Master Naturalists

The Extension Master Naturalist program has grown steadily over the last 7 years and brings together individuals with a number of backgrounds and skillsets. Volunteers in the EMN program focus on education, outreach and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and areas. The volunteers wanted to involve the youth, thus the idea was born for a Junior Extension Master Naturalist program.

The Kansas 4-H Foundation offered a multi-year grant specifically for new and innovative ideas that needed more than six to eight months to fully implement. The Junior EMN program received a three-year 4-H Innovation Grant for just under \$30,000 to develop six special interest “courses” of four to five hands-on learning experiences. The first class will start as a hybrid model in late January of 2021.

Watch Your Waste

Johnson County 4-H Science Matters team received a grant from National 4-H and Bayer for \$4,200, National 4-H and Nutrien for \$1,000 and Johnson County Extension Education Foundation for \$750. These grants sponsored their #WatchYourWaste movement in Johnson County.

A team of four students wrote and delivered an action plan to help reduce food waste in Johnson County. These students surveyed the community about food issues. They also hosted a booth at a local Agriculture Night, engaging elementary students in a food waste game to learn about what is trash,

recycling or compostable.

During COVID-19 times, these students continued their mission, meeting via Zoom. They educated the community on meal planning to save on waste, eating leftovers and composting.

The team went on to compete with this project at Kansas State University in Manhattan, where they came home with first place for their project.

Silver Clovers

The most recent grant for Johnson County Extension received in September for \$30,000 from the Johnson County Coronavirus Relief Fund Allocation. This grant targeted social isolation in older adults due to COVID-19. The funding created opportunities to host free virtual events to create social connections with other people in a safe environment.

Johnson County Extension created classes via ZOOM and Facebook Live with all different topic areas and free supplies. In just a few short months, leadership courses, cooking demonstrations, horticulture DIY projects and virtual tours have all been conducted.

With each class, there was a free kit or book to make the class more



interactive. These kits were a way to offer hands-on learning and entertainment from a distance. Kits were available for pick-up at our Johnson County Office, as well as delivered to homes by our Extension Master Volunteers. In those three months of classes, there were over 500 people who participated. This was an all hands-on deck program, meaning all the agents are providing classes and virtual learning opportunities.

With very little time to create new events, the agents pulled programs they taught in the past with the help of volunteers. This allowed Silver Clovers to be expedited so classes could start immediately.

This program, although brief, can carry on after the grant money expires. This was a great opportunity to offer programs at no cost to our community in a time where isolation and boredom are at an all-time high. Without this grant, this idea would not have come to life.



Extension Master Food Volunteer, Barbara Bien, hosts Silver Clovers Sweet Potato Class over Zoom.