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2025 Extension Highlights: Value to Local Communities

Extension connects **YOU** with the resources and research of the University of Nebraska



NUTRITION SCHOOL ENRICHMENT KITS (SEK) PROGRAM — To help prevent childhood obesity and chronic disease through healthy habits, Lincoln Public Schools (LPS) asked Extension to develop classroom kits for hands-on nutrition education. SEK initially served three grade levels in 12 schools and is now core health curriculum for grades K–5 in 41 LPS elementary schools. In 25 years, SEK has reached more than **184,000 students** in over **10,000 classrooms**. Pictured are Extension Assistant Hannah Schielke (left) and Extension Educator Alyssa Havlovic (back right).



Photo by Jodi Delozer, Lower Platte South NRD

NITROGEN ON-FARM RESEARCH — Waverly farmer Dick Dames (center) collaborated with Extension Educator John Nelson (right) to conduct on-farm research testing lower nitrogen application rates. The study showed reducing nitrogen applied on a cornfield **saved input costs and didn't affect corn yield**. In addition, the amount of **nitrate entering the water supply was reduced**. Also pictured is Tyler Bena of Lower Platte South Natural Resources District (left).



ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARD TRAINING — Lincoln Electric System (LES) reported environmental injuries in recent years totaled nearly \$5,000 in medical expenses, as well as lost work time. At LES' request, Extension Horticulturist Rachel Anderson (left) and Extension Urban Entomologist Kait Chapman (right) presented a training to nearly **500 employees** on how to identify and avoid poisonous plants and biting bugs. Feedback included, "One of the most **engaging and interactive safety meetings** we've had, generating numerous questions and discussions."



EARLY CHILDHOOD WELLNESS PROGRAM — Extension Educator Jaci Foged (standing) and Julie Jones-Branch of Lincoln Littles co-developed a pilot program, Healthy Habits: The 8 Dimensions of Wellness. In this yearlong program, **100 childcare providers** learned strategies to address burnout, build resilience and foster healthier environments for both children and educators. Feedback included, "Even small **improvements can lead to significant long-term benefits**."

Extension helps people solve real-world problems

SHARING IMPACT

"The School Enrichment Nutrition Kits and the Nebraska Extension Educators have been a tremendous resource for providing incredible nutrition education to over 18,000 students annually in LPS."

—Dr. Matt Avey, Lincoln Public Schools Curriculum Specialist for K-12 Health and Physical Education



"We learned from our On-Farm Research we can decrease the amount of fertilizer applied and still obtain the same or respectable yields."

—Dick Dames, Waverly producer



"Thank you for the valuable education. It has already had a direct benefit to our organization. We look forward to seeing the positive results of this effort in the future."

—Jim Rigg, Lincoln Electric System Safety Manager



"Being reminded that I am not alone in this profession has actually been a life and career saver."

—April Bell, early childhood educator participating in Healthy Habits: The 8 Dimensions of Wellness

MORE HIGHLIGHTS ON NEXT PAGE

SHARING IMPACT

"4-H has helped spark an interest in me in poultry to start a career in them, and I've already started breeding and selling my own birds."

—Lathan Huntley (aka Chicken Dude), 4-H member



NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM (NEP) —

NEP fosters health and wellbeing for limited-resource families, engaging over **16,000 adults and youth** in over **4,000 hours of health-focused education** at over **80 partnership sites**. NEP fostered **30 policy changes** to increase health accessibility and grew nearly **1,500 pounds of vegetables** for food pantries. Pictured is Extension Assistant Zahraa Rida teaching Good Neighbor Community Center participants.



THE SCIENCE OF GROUNDWATER MOVEMENT —

At the request of Norris High School teacher Katy Dornbos, Extension Associate Becky Schuerman (left) and UNL Professor Troy Gilmore (in background) taught **74 Advanced Chemistry students** about the movement of groundwater and contaminants by using interactive flow models. Student feedback included, "It's our job to clean up after the generations before us so future generations won't have to."

Volunteers Valued at \$789,000

Lancaster County Extension's estimated **2,200 volunteers** gave **25,000 total hours of service** worth **\$789,000*** to our community!

Extension benefits from volunteers such as 4-H club leaders, 4-H Council members, Extension Master Gardener Volunteers and Extension Board members. Additionally, 4-H youth volunteer in numerous community service projects.

*Based on Independent Sector's estimated Neb. value of a volunteer hour in 2024 as \$31.96

4-H Engaged 37,555 Youth

4-H equips youth with skills for the future while meeting them where they are today.



Beyond Ready



4-H CLUBS — Led by adult volunteers, **53 clubs** ranging from **5 to 71 youth members** offer adult-youth mentorship and experiential learning. Youth in 4-H clubs **learn leadership, critical thinking, civic engagement** and more. Pictured are 4-H Teen Council members with move-in kits they created for People's City Mission residents.



EMBRYOLOGY — **3,945 students** in **192 classrooms** from **64 schools** learned about embryo development by hatching chicks in third grade classrooms. Extension staff coordinate the program and give classroom presentations. Pictured is Extension Assistant Madelaine Vanderbeek shining a light on an egg (called candling) to check embryo growth.



4-H AT LANCASTER COUNTY SUPER FAIR — **549 exhibitors** entered **4,765 exhibits** (including static exhibits, animals, contest entries and Clover Kids exhibits). The Super Fair is an opportunity for 4-H youth to showcase projects and skills they've worked on throughout the year. "I have learned resilience and patience," said a 4-H exhibitor. Pictured is the Beef Show.



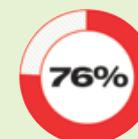
CLOVER COLLEGE — **59 hands-on workshops** led by **75 instructors** were held in **4 days** with **1,047 session registrations**! Emphasis was on science, ag literacy, healthy living, career development and citizenship/leadership. New workshops included Magic Experiments (pictured), Brain Games, Under the Shade Tree and Be Food Smart. "I learned teamwork and creative skills," a 4-H youth said.



TEEN AMBASSADORS TEACH HEALTHY HABITS — Seven teens, led by Extension Educators Tracy Anderson (left) and Kayla Colgrove (right), presented hands-on lessons on how to prevent food loss and waste to nearly **400 youth and adults**. Pictured are Clinton Elementary after-school youth measuring wasted milk. A teen ambassador's parent shared, "It is evident to me this program has really given her the confidence to be a good leader and teacher."

4-H's Positive Impact

The 2024 National Index Study of 4-H Youth shows how high-quality Positive Youth Development fosters youth success and readiness. Key findings include:



76% rated "I fill my time with positive activities" a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale



66% said 4-H is influential in helping them be ready for work and careers



65% said 4-H is influential in their desire to be engaged with their community