

## 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).



**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).

Photo by Jodi Delozier, Lower Platte South NRD



**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.

4-H builds a ready generation in a world of change



**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.



**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.



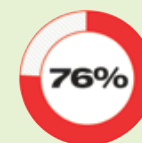
**CLOVER COLLEGE** — **59 hands-on workshops** led by **75 instructors** were held in **4 days** with **1,047 session registrations!** Emphasis was on science, ag literacy, healthy living, career development and citizenship/leadership. New workshops included Magic Experiments (pictured), Brain Games, 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

# “Food, Nutrition & Health” Becomes “Health & Wellbeing”

By Emily Gratopp, MS, ACC, ACTC, Extension Educator in Lancaster County

Nebraska Extension is reaffirming its commitment to helping Nebraskans lead healthy lives. The urgency is clear: national health-care expenditures are estimated to have grown 8.2% in 2024, exceeding \$5 trillion<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, cardiovascular disease remains the nation's top killer, quickly followed by cancer<sup>2</sup>. In our own circles of family, neighbors and co-workers, we can all identify someone who fits into these statistics. Everyone is impacted in some way by increasing health-care costs and disease rates.

To better reflect our efforts to these health needs and trajectories, Nebraska Extension's “Food, Nutrition & Health” program area has been changed to “**Health & Wellbeing**.” This change is not simply re-branding — but expanding our scope of work. We are building on years of work that have shifted toward a broader vision of wellbeing. Nutrition continues to be a core pillar, however, health is much more than what's on our plates.

## The Scope of Health & Wellbeing

Health & Wellbeing includes important concepts for health such as getting sufficient sleep, regular physical activity, stress management, supportive relationships, safe housing and neighborhoods and mental flourishing. Nebraska Extension will continue to expand efforts into health and wellbeing spaces such as cancer prevention and chronic disease management. Research in public health and social determinants of health emphasizes the interplay of health factors that impact health<sup>3</sup>.

This broader scope of work and new name align perfectly with Nebraska Extension's Big 3 Strategic Initiatives, one of them being “Enhancing the Health & Wellbeing of All Nebraskans” along with University of Nebraska–Lincoln's Grand Challenges outlined as “Health Equity.”

By embracing a broader view, Nebraska Extension is stepping fully into its role as a key partner in the local public-health system and population-health initiatives.

## Mental Health

A new venture addresses youth mental resilience. I collaborated with a student I trained as a Community Wellbeing Advocate to engage youth in mental resilience. Resilience is a component of mental health that involves the ability to bounce-back during trials, perform under pressure and maintain gritty goals that enable development over time. Resilience is widely recognized as a protective factor that buffers stress and supports positive youth development<sup>4</sup>. Mental resilience can be strengthened by practicing a growth mindset and fostering supportive relationships.

In fall 2025, I taught more than 400 youth these resilience concepts — and one of the most powerful moments came when I told students, “I believe in you” and “I know you will do great things.” When she asked the classes how it felt to hear those words, students responded: “I feel like I can do anything!” “I feel like you really see me and like you really care.” “I feel more confident.”

These short statements had a surprisingly profound impact — and they illustrate a key truth: we are social beings who flourish when we are seen, supported and connected. Extension's newly-named Health & Wellbeing program area expands the concept of health to include elements like social wellbeing and mental resilience for population health.

As we begin the year ahead, take stock of social-health and include time in your calendar to nurture supportive relationships and meaningful connections. They matter just as much as eating broccoli, getting daily movement and reducing tobacco use.

Together, we can support the health of our community — physically, socially and mentally — and ensure that Nebraska leads the way in wellbeing for all.

### Sources:

1. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). (2024). *National Health Expenditure Data: Projections for 2024*. <https://cms.gov/data-research/statistics-trends-and-reports/national-health-expenditure-data>
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2024). *Leading Causes of Death*.

<https://cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/leading-causes-of-death.htm>

3. American Public Health Association (APHA). (2023). *Social Determinants of Health*. <https://apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-equity>
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2023). *Resilience and Youth Development*. <https://cdc.gov/healthyyouth>



## RECIPE OF THE MONTH

By Emily Gratopp, MS, ACC, ACTC, Extension Educator in Lancaster County

Try this recipe packed with nutrients and antioxidants to boost health and wellbeing and help prevent cancer and chronic diseases.

### ACORN SQUASH, CRANBERRY & KALE SALAD

(Yield: 8 servings)

- 1 cup brown rice, uncooked
- 2 cups no salt added vegetable broth
- 1 acorn squash, scrubbed with clean vegetable brush under running water, cubed
- 2 Tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 2 Tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1 Tablespoon maple syrup
- 1 teaspoon mustard (Dijon or other)
- 4 cups kale leaves, gently rubbed under cold running water, chopped
- 1/2 cup dried cranberries
- 1/2 cup pumpkin seeds
- 1/2 cup crumbled feta cheese (optional)



Photo by Marusa Jonas, Nutrition Education Program

1. Wash hands with soap and water. Wash and prepare vegetables.
3. Preheat the oven to 375°F.
4. Cook rice in broth according to package directions.
5. Mix cubed squash with vegetable oil, salt and pepper. Place squash in a baking dish. Roast squash for 20 minutes or until fork tender.
6. Combine vinegar, vegetable oil, maple syrup and mustard in a small bowl until well combined.
7. Place kale in a large bowl and pour half the dressing over the top. Massage leaves for about 2–3 minutes until softened. Add cooked rice, squash, dried cranberries, pumpkin seeds and feta cheese, if using. Mix until combined.
8. Pour desired amount of remaining dressing and mix.
9. Store leftovers in a sealed container in the refrigerator for up to four days.

Nutrition Information: Serving Size (1 cup): Calories 280; Total Fat 15g; Saturated Fat 3.5g; Cholesterol 10mg; Sodium 210mg; Total Carbohydrates 34g, Fiber 2g, includes 5g Added Sugars; Protein 5g; Calcium 6%; Iron 6%; Potassium 8%

Nutrition Software Used: ESHA Food Processor

# Celebrating 50 Years of Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program

The Nebraska Extension Master Gardener Volunteer program is celebrating 50 years of cultivating knowledge and community impact across the state. Volunteers are dedicated to sharing research-based horticultural knowledge and strengthening their communities with education and stewardship. We look forward to celebrating this milestone and our valued volunteers throughout the year.

If you have a strong interest in gardening and enjoy helping others, you are invited to become a Nebraska Extension Master Gardener Volunteer and be a part of this vibrant program.

To become a Master Gardener volunteer, you must



Master Gardeners working in the People's City Mission garden.

attend all online and in-person training sessions, pass an examination and volunteer for Extension educational programming. Many fun and educational volunteer opportunities are available, including answering gardening questions from the public, teaching youth how to garden, assisting at the county or state fair, hosting a booth at a community event and many others.

Instructors are Extension Specialists, Educators, Associates and horticulture professionals. This training will increase your knowledge and understanding of horticultural topics such as:

- Best cultural practices for growing flowers, trees, vegetables and turf.
- Plant disease and insect pest identification and control.
- Helping beneficial insects, wildlife habitats and more!

The cost for the 2026 training class is \$250 per person. Apply online at <https://go.unl.edu/ne-emgv-app>.

There are two options for Master Gardener training in Lincoln.

## Daytime Training –

The Lancaster County Extension training program will begin in February, training hours are during the day. For more information, call Mary Jane Frogge at 402-441-7180. Application deadline is Friday, Jan. 16.

## Evening Training –

The campus-based training program will begin in January, training hours are during the evening. For more information, contact Terri James at 402-472-8973.

## PROHORT LAWN & LANDSCAPE UPDATE

**MONDAY,  
MARCH 2**

**8:30 a.m.–4 p.m.**  
**Nebraska Extension in  
Lancaster County  
conference rooms,  
444 Cherrycreek Road,  
Suite A, Lincoln**

Workshop for nursery & green industry professionals, public works employees, landscape managers, arborists, tree board volunteers and cemetery & groundskeepers.

Cost: \$35/person

ISA and NAA CEU credits available

**REGISTRATION  
DEADLINE: FEB. 23**

Register at  
<https://go.unl.edu/prohort>  
For more information, visit  
<https://go.unl.edu/prohort>  
or call 402-441-7180.

## EXTENSION Master Gardener Volunteer Spotlight

**GARY WELLS** has been an Extension Master Gardener Volunteer (EMGV) for 14 years and has volunteered over 500 hours. Gary is co-chair of the Youth Committee and has assisted in building compost bins and game boards for Extension programs.

### Why did you become an EMGV?

I was looking for a volunteer opportunity that would allow me to utilize my passion for horticultural and environmental stewardship. I liked the idea of being able to contribute to my community through educating and providing advice on environmental issues.

**What is your favorite volunteer opportunity?** The educational booth at festivals and school events. I enjoy interacting with the public, answering questions and providing information on composting, pollinator habitat and other horticultural topics.

**If you could encourage someone else to volunteer, what would you say?** If you have a passion for horticulture, I encourage you to become a Master Gardener. The program allows you to expand your knowledge through their excellent research-based training, opportunities to contribute to the community and a great vehicle for connecting with other horticultural enthusiasts.



## GARDEN GUIDE THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH

By Mary Jane Frogge, Extension Associate in Lancaster County

Prune fruit trees and grape vines in late February or early March after the worst of the winter cold is passed but before spring growth begins.

Check any vegetables, like potatoes or onions, you have in storage. Dispose of any that show signs of shriveling or rotting.

Do not start your vegetable transplants indoors too early. Six weeks ahead of the expected planting date is early enough for the fast-growth species such as tomatoes. Eight weeks allows enough time for the slower-growing types such as peppers.

January is a good time to order flower and vegetable seeds. Many varieties sell out early.

Check young trees and shrubs for rodent or rabbit damage. Prevent injury with fencing or protective collars.

Late February is a good time to air-layer such house plants as dracaena,

dieffenbachia and rubber plant, especially if they have grown too tall and leggy.

Check all house plants closely for insect infestations. Quarantine gift plants until you determine that they are not harboring any pests.

During the winter, most houses are too dry for house plants. Humidity may be increased by placing plants on trays lined with pebbles and filled with water to within one half inch of the base of the pot.

Avoid heavy traffic on the frozen, dormant lawn. The crown of the plant may be severely damaged or killed.

Brush snow from evergreens as soon as possible after a storm. Use a broom in an upward, sweeping motion. Serious damage may be caused by heavy snow or ice accumulating on the branches.

Analyze last year's planting, fertilizing and spraying records. Make notes to reorder successful vegetable varieties as well as those you wish to try again.

Check all five growing factors if your house plants are not growing well. Light, temperature, nutrients, moisture and humidity must be favorable to provide good growth.

# 2026 Pesticide Applicator Trainings

If you have a pesticide applicators license expiring April 2026 — either private or commercial, or you need to get a new license — classes begin soon. Make plans now to participate in the training option that best fits your needs.

## COMMERCIAL/ NONCOMMERCIAL APPLICATORS

Commercial/noncommercial applicators are professionals who apply restricted-use pesticides for hire or compensation. Anyone who applies pesticides to the property of another person, either restricted- or general-use products, for control of pests in lawns, landscapes, buildings or homes must also have a commercial pesticide applicators license. Public employees (those employed by a town, county or state) applying mosquito control pesticides, whether restricted- or general-use, must also hold a commercial or noncommercial certification.

Commercial/noncommercial applicators have several options to recertify or get a new license.

### Traditional In-Person Training Classes

Visit <https://pested.unl.edu> for dates, locations and registration. Registration is required. Cost is \$95 per online registration. Trainings will be held at the Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County conference rooms, 444 Cherrycreek Road, Suite A, Lincoln.

- **Initial trainings** start at 8:30 a.m., Tuesday — Feb. 17 and March 10.
- **Recertification trainings** start at 8:30 a.m., Thursday — Jan. 29, Feb. 19 and March 12.

In-person trainings are a supplemental learning opportunity; they DO NOT replace pre-class studying of category manuals or flip charts for test preparation. Purchase study materials online at <https://pested.unl.edu>.



### Online Self-Paced Option — Recertification Only

This is a 100% online training, which includes watching the General Standards recertification video, plus a video for each additional category to be renewed. Cost is \$120 per participant. Register at <https://pested.unl.edu>.

### Conference Options: Recertification Only

**Crop Production Clinics** — General Standards (00), Ag Plant (01) or Demonstration/Research (D/R) categories. See related article at right. Registration is required, cost is \$110 per participant.

**Nebraska Turf Conference** — General Standards (00) and Ornamental & Turf (04) categories. Visit <https://nebraskaturfgrass.com> for more information.

**Urban Pest Management Conference** — General Standards (00) and Structural Health (08) categories. Visit <https://nspca.org> for more information.

### Testing-Only Options

**Walk-in Testings** — are closed-book exams given by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA). Visit [https://nda.nebraska.gov/pesticide/applicator\\_testing.html](https://nda.nebraska.gov/pesticide/applicator_testing.html) for a list of available test-only dates, times and locations.

**NDA Computer-based Testing** — provided through the Pearson VUE company. Visit [https://nda.nebraska.gov/pesticide/pearson\\_vue\\_testing.html](https://nda.nebraska.gov/pesticide/pearson_vue_testing.html) for a list of testing sites, exams available,

dates and registration information. There is a charge of \$55 per exam charged by Pearson VUE.

### PRIVATE APPLICATORS

Private applicators are farmers or producers raising an agricultural commodity on land they own or rent or an employee making pesticide applications on their employer's farm.

Private applicators have four ways to recertify or get a new license.

### Traditional In-Person Classes

Lincoln dates will be held at Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County conference rooms, 444 Cherrycreek Road, Suite A, Lincoln on Tuesday, Jan. 27, 1–4 p.m. and 6–9 p.m.; Thursday, Feb. 26, 9 a.m.–Noon and 1–4 p.m. and Tuesday, Mar. 31, 1–4 p.m. Cost is \$60 per participant, collected at the door. To register, go to <https://go.unl.edu/pest26> and search for PSEP and your county.

### Crop Production Clinics

Initial training in General Standards (00) and Ag Plant (01) is available for private applicators. See related article at right. Registration is required, cost is \$110 per participant. To register, go to <http://agronomy.unl.edu/cpc>.

### Online Self-Study Program

This is a 100% online, self-paced training with 10 modules. There are questions within the modules and a score of 100% is needed to pass. Visit <https://pested.unl.edu/training-and-certification> for more information and a link to register. Cost is \$100 per participant.

### NDA Testing Options

Take a written, closed-book exam given by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture. Visit [https://nda.nebraska.gov/pesticide/applicator\\_testing.html](https://nda.nebraska.gov/pesticide/applicator_testing.html) for a list of available test-only dates, times and locations.

## Crop Production Clinics

In January 2026, the Crop Production Clinics sponsored by Nebraska Extension will be presented in person at eight locations across the state. They offer practical, profitable, environmentally sound, high-impact training for agricultural professionals and producers. All clinics will offer pest management topics (meets commercial pesticide applicator recertification requirements and private pesticide certification) and crops, economics, soils and water management topics.

All trainings will be 8:45 a.m.–3:30 p.m. Cost is \$110 per participant, includes lunch and training materials.

The Crop Production Clinics in southeast Nebraska will be:

- **Wednesday, Jan. 14** — Ithaca (Eastern Nebraska Research, Extension and Education Center, 1071 Co. Rd. G)
- **Friday, Jan. 16** — Beatrice (Holiday Inn Express, 4005 N. 6th St.)
- **Thursday, Jan. 22** — York (Holthus Convention Center, 3130 Holen Ave.)

If you are planning to receive recertification as an applicator, arrive early and check in with the Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) at the registration table.

Certified Crop Advisor credits will be available for crop production, nutrient management, integrated pest management, water management and precision agriculture.

For more information and to register, go to <http://agronomy.unl.edu/cpc>.

# Alfalfa Production

**By Water & Cropping Systems  
Extension Educators Matheus Ribeiro,  
Ritika Lamichhane and John Nelson**

For Nebraska producers seeking to improve the profitability of alfalfa as a cash crop, successful alfalfa production begins with proper site selection: deep, well-drained soils and a pH of 6.2–7.5 are ideal, making soil testing essential. Choosing certified, inoculated, disease-resistant seed varieties adapted to Nebraska conditions further enhances stand establishment and long-term performance.

Proper planting involves establishing a firm seedbed and placing seed at approximately 1/4-inch depth during early spring or late summer. Fertility management is based strictly on soil test requirements, particularly

phosphorus, potassium and sulfur. In Southeast Nebraska, spring seeding is recommended between April 1 and May 15. Soil moisture conditions for spring seeding are generally favorable in the region, but weed control in new stands should be managed very carefully. August seeding can help avoid some weed control problems, but fall precipitation and soil moisture limitations can make establishment difficult.

Harvest timing is a major driver of profitability. Cutting at the early-bud stage maximizes forage quality, including protein and digestibility, which, in turn, improves market value. To access premium markets, growers are encouraged to measure and document hay quality through Relative Feed Value (RFV) and protein tests.

Maintaining stand health is also

crucial. Strong new stands typically have 25–30 plants per square foot; when densities fall below 15 plants per square foot, renovation or crop rotation becomes advisable. Yield expectations vary by production system: irrigated alfalfa generally produces 7–8 tons per acre at RFV 150+ and 18–20% protein, while dryland systems yield 4–5 tons per acre with moderately lower quality. Grass-alfalfa mixes yield moderately with more variable quality metrics.

Major production expenses — seed, lime, fertilizer, irrigation, pest control, harvest, storage, transport and land charge need to be examined closely when making the decision to move from grain to alfalfa. Herbicide carryover is another key consideration within corn-soybean-alfalfa rotations; persistent products such as atrazine, imazethapyr,

and metolachlor, acetochlor require long waiting periods before alfalfa can be safely planted. Conversely, some alfalfa herbicides restrict rotation back to row crops.

Stand longevity depends on management practices and soil and environmental conditions. Gradual declines in productivity and plant density can begin in year three, and by year four or five, most stands benefit from renovation or rotation into another crop.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

The American Society of Agronomy's "Alfalfa Production Guide" offers information and strategies for alfalfa establishment, production and harvest. Go to <https://tinyurl.com/mwdfd3y5>

# MINIMIZING CONTAMINATION OF WINTER RUNOFF

**By Becky Schuerman, Domestic  
Water/Wastewater Extension  
Associate**

Often, we do not think of snow and ice as potential stormwater runoff, but they definitely are. With increasing warm spells throughout the winter causing multiple freeze-thaw cycles where the snow and ice begin to melt and shrink, winter precipitation acts as rain does, picking up and transporting contaminants from sidewalks, driveways, rooftops, roads, parking lots and agricultural fields. Ice melt salt, pet/animal waste, fertilizers, vehicle exhaust/oils/fluids and litter are some of the common contaminants picked up as ice and snow melt away. These contaminants can negatively affect our groundwater, surface water, aquatic life, soils and wildlife.

In urban areas, winter runoff, particularly that from hard, impermeable surfaces, often goes to the storm drain/sewer system. The storm water flows directly into local waterways, which means contamination and possible impairment of rivers, streams, creeks and lakes. All winter runoff, whether urban or rural, can potentially contaminate

our soil, surface water and groundwater resources.

## Ice Melt Salt

Traditional ice melt products contain salts such as sodium chloride or calcium chloride. These substances can be detrimental to the landscape plants, lawns, pets and water resources. They can also be corrosive to concrete sidewalks and driveways, anything metal and vehicles. There is no time like the present to look into more eco-friendly alternatives to manage the slick spots throughout the winter.

### Here are some steps you can take to reduce winter salt pollution at home:

- Shovel frequently to the bare surface so snow does not accumulate and turn to ice or melt and refreeze.
- Salt works best on a thin layer of ice; always shovel any excess snow/ice before applying salt.
- Combine the use of physical tools to remove snow and ice with eco-friendly deicing products for best results.
- Overapplying salt does not improve its effectiveness; one 12-ounce coffee mug of salt is sufficient for a 20 foot x 2 foot

swath of sidewalk/driveway. The grains of salt should be about 3-inches apart.

- Only apply salt in places where it is necessary. Remember that most traditional salt products are not effective below 15°F.
- Pay special attention to where water naturally flows in your landscape; clear snow away from those areas to prevent the formation of snow/ice dams.
- Sweep up any excess salt and use it for the next round of winter precipitation.
- Remember that it only takes one teaspoon of salt to pollute five gallons of water!

### Eco-friendly alternatives include:

- Sand or birdseed provide traction on slippery surfaces.
- Wood ash grit provides traction, and the minerals in the ash, as well as its dark color, help to melt ice.
- Plant-based ice melt products are derived from agricultural by-products and are a biodegradable alternative. If applied before a storm, they can be an effective ice preventative.
- There are many non-salt, mineral-based ice melt products available. Some consist of volcanic minerals that



AI-generated image using Google Gemini

provide traction and help break down the ice, while others contain magnesium chloride or calcium magnesium acetate (CMA). Both magnesium products are more effective at low temperatures, are less corrosive on concrete and metal, long-lasting, require less reapplication, safe for pets and friendlier to vegetation.

- If winter precipitation is forecasted, cover highly trafficked small areas, such as steps, with a tarp to prevent snow accumulation or invest in reusable heated mats.
- Look for products that are certified environmentally safe. As with any ice melt product application, follow the manufacturer's instructions for safety and effectiveness.



# 2026 LINCOLN EARLY CHILDHOOD CONFERENCE

## SATURDAY, MARCH

### 21

8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.  
(6 hours of in-service will be given  
for this conference)

**NEBRASKA EXTENSION IN LANCASTER  
COUNTY CONFERENCE ROOMS**  
444 Cherrycreek Road, Suite A, Lincoln

**Cost: \$25**

Specialty hot & cold coffee from Little Beans and lunch  
included

Register online at [www.esu6.org](http://www.esu6.org)  
by March 13, 2026



**Stress & Behavior  
Specialist**

### **Dr. Alexa Yunes-Koch** **Understand the Brain.** **Manage Stress.** **Change Behavior.**

Dr. Alexa Yunes-Koch, has a PhD  
in Education focused in behavioral  
neurobiology and 10+ years of  
PreK–12 teaching experience.

She has a passion for  
transforming environments through  
practical strategies, and her  
strategies have been featured by  
Disney Learning.

#### **Key Topics**

- Child behavior challenges
- Disciplinary alternatives
- Effective conflict resolution
- Child wellbeing
- Adult wellbeing
- Adult stress

This conference is approved through the Nebraska Department of  
Education and sponsored by the Southeast Early Learning Connection.

# Nature's Clean-Up Crew: Appreciating Decomposers

*By Kait Chapman, Extension  
Educator in Lancaster County*

When it comes to “good”  
bugs, we often think about the  
value of pollinators, like  
bees, or maybe even  
predators, like  
lady beetles,  
that provide a  
much-needed  
service in  
the garden.  
Another  
group of  
beneficial  
insects, which  
are sometimes  
overlooked, but  
just as important,  
are decomposers:  
nature’s hidden  
helpers.

Decomposers  
are organisms that  
break down dead  
plant material and other  
organic debris. Often called  
“nature’s clean-up crew,” they  
play a vital role in recycling  
nutrients and maintaining  
healthy soil. Many familiar  
“buggy” decomposers include  
springtails, millipedes and  
pillbugs (more commonly

referred to as roly-polies here in  
Nebraska.)

These helpful critters aren’t  
limited to outdoor spaces.  
Occasionally, we may encounter  
them indoors, especially as  
hitchhikers in the soil of  
potted plants that have  
spent time



**Millipede**



**Pillbug**



**Springtails**

Photos by UNL Dept. of Entomology

outside or as  
accidental  
visitors in  
damp areas  
like bathrooms  
or basements.

Springtails, for  
example, feed on fungi and  
decaying matter and are  
excellent indicators of healthy  
soil outdoors. They may wander  
inside when weather conditions  
become unfavorable, often in  
search of moisture or shelter.

While finding insects indoors is  
never a popular discovery, these  
decomposers are temporary  
guests that do not cause damage  
or reproduce indoors.

If you notice decomposers  
like springtails or millipedes  
inside your home, the solution  
is usually simple by reducing  
excess moisture. Increasing  
ventilation or using a dehu-  
midifier can make indoor  
conditions less appealing  
to them. Sealing small  
entry points around doors,  
windows or foundation  
cracks can also help prevent  
their entry. Because these  
insects do not truly infest  
homes, gentle removal with a  
broom or vacuum is sufficient,  
and pesticides are unnecessary  
and not recommended.

Although it’s still cold  
outside, spring garden days  
are ahead, and with them,  
the chance to appreciate our  
small, often misunderstood,  
decomposers. These tiny  
clean-up crews quietly work  
behind the scenes to support  
healthy ecosystems, making  
our gardens, landscapes and  
ecosystems thrive.

## Ag Land Management and Leasing Workshop

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln’s Center for Agricultural Profitability and Nebraska  
Extension will present a Landlord/Tenant Cash Rent Workshop in Lincoln for farm landowners  
and operators on Tuesday, Feb. 10, 10:30 a.m.–2 p.m., at the Nebraska Extension in Lancaster  
County conference rooms, 444 Cherrycreek Road, Suite A, Lincoln.

The meeting, titled “Financial Strategies for Effective Agricultural Land Leasing and  
Management,” will cover current Nebraska cash rental rates and land values, best practices for  
agricultural leases and other contract considerations. The meeting will also include financial  
considerations for farm succession and transition.

The meeting is free to attend, but registration is required by Feb. 9. Register by calling  
Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County at 402-441-7180. Lunch will be provided, sponsored by  
Farmers National Company.



## HEART OF 4-H VOLUNTEER AWARD

Recognizing Outstanding Volunteer Service

### Russ Parrott

is receiving Lancaster County 4-H's January "Heart of 4-H Award." He has volunteered in a variety of roles for 10 years, including as a parent helper with Little Green Giants 4-H club and serving as a chaperone for 4-H Teen Council's annual overnight Lock-In for 4th & 5th graders. Russ is the current president of Lancaster County 4-H Council, and helps with Council's food stand and chicken dinner fundraisers at the Lancaster County Super Fair. At the fair, he also helps set up displays for static exhibits. This is not Russ's first time serving on 4-H Council — when he was a Lancaster County 4-H'er, he served as a youth member!

"I enjoy working with young people and helping them become better people and grow to be successful adults," Russ said. "I'm a third generation 4-H Council member. My father and grandmother were both on Lancaster County 4-H Council."



### Jason Babcock

is receiving Lancaster County 4-H's February "Heart of 4-H Award." For 10 years, Jason has helped set up and take down cages for the 4-H poultry show at the Lancaster County Super Fair. He currently is a robotics project leader with the N-Bots 4-H club and helps coach club members with the FIRST Tech Challenge curriculum and competitions. Previously, he was an archery coach for the Lincoln Shooting Stars 4-H club.

Jason said, "I enjoy helping the students look at problems as opportunities to develop options they can choose from. Sometimes there is not one correct answer, and I help them see that with every decision they make, there are positive and negative consequences. Seeing the satisfaction the students receive after working hard at something for a long time, with its ups and downs, can be very satisfying."



## At Ag Literacy Festival, Students Learn How Agriculture Impacts Their Daily Lives

Approximately 380 4th graders from 11 schools attended the Agricultural Literacy Festival held Oct. 21–23. Students gained a greater understanding of agriculture and how it impacts their daily lives. They rotated between 10 interactive stations.

Waverly teacher Daisy Shada said, "My students gained a lot from this field trip! They were able to see firsthand how crops are planted, grown and harvested, and how animals are cared

for, helping them connect food to farms."

The Ag Literacy Coalition of Nebraska, led by Nebraska Extension, organizes the annual festival with the help of Lancaster County Farm Bureau, agriculture businesses, commodity associations and food industry companies. The Sandhills Global Event Center is the host facility for the event.

More photos are on Flickr at <http://go.unl.edu/agliteracyfestival>.



Extension Associate Elizabeth Thiltges presented the sheep session, explaining that sheep are raised for wool, meat and byproducts such as milk and lanolin.



In the horse session taught by Extension Associate Kate Pulec, students learned how horses are important for the local economy and about horse jobs.

## Two Lancaster 4-H'ers Attend National 4-H Congress

Lancaster County 4-H members **Emily Bauman** and **Khloe Cuttlers**

were part of a 16-member Nebraska delegation who attended National 4-H Congress in Atlanta, Ga. from Nov. 28–Dec. 2. Attendees participated in numerous educational workshops, cultural events and completed service-learning projects. National 4-H Congress is the premier leadership event for 4-H'ers ages 15–19. Nebraska delegates are selected based on Achievement Applications submitted for state competition.

Khloe was selected by the Nebraska attendees to be their Youth Delegate Advisor. She led state meetings and had various other responsibilities while at National 4-H Congress. She said, "National 4-H Congress was such a tremendous opportunity, I got to



(L-R) Khloe Cuttlers and Emily Bauman

meet so many people and make new connections. My favorite part was learning more about people and learning the differences and similarities of 4-H between different states. I highly recommend applying and getting to experience this wonderful opportunity. For my service project, I was able to help clear out English Ivy from some sections at the

Atlanta History Center."

Emily said, "By attending National 4-H Congress, I grew in so many ways. I grew in leadership, confidence, inclusivity, responsibility and passion for 4-H. I was able to attend various workshops and events during Congress that shaped me into a better leader and human. For my service project, my group went to Benteen Elementary school and helped decorate the school for the holidays."

# 2025 4-H Horse Awards Night Results

The 2025 4-H Horse Awards Night, held Oct. 23, recognized top achievements at the Lancaster County Super Fair and other accomplishments throughout the past year. Congratulations to all Lancaster 4-H equestrians for your outstanding accomplishments! Additional results and photos are online at <https://lancaster.unl.edu/4h/horse-awards>.

## HORSEMANSHIP ADVANCEMENT LEVELS

The Nebraska 4-H Horsemanship Advancement Levels program is designed to serve as a guide for instruction and evaluation of each member's progress. The correct handling of horses is emphasized from the beginning level to the most advanced level.

**Ground** — Aurora Norris

**Level I Walk/Trot** — Teresa LaPlante, Layne McCoy, Emma Smith

**Level I** — Harper Anderson, Cayle Callahan, Samantha Combs, Saylor Desautels, Renly Ellenberger, Raelynn Keller, MacKenzie McCoy, Uriah Nichols, Ava Rathje, Lilyana Schuette, Kathryn Weaver, Maggie Zimmerman

**Level II** — Arianna Behrend, Saylor Bontrager, Cayle Callahan, Addyson Carl, Thomas Chevalier, Brogen Frink, Annie Illian, Aleese Jurgens, Camilla Macdissi, MacKenzie McCoy, Stanley Newby, Olivia Thompson, Kathryn Weaver

**Level III** — Lena Barnes, Liz Boshart, Corrine Byrne, Gracen Byrne, Cayle Callahan, John Chevalier, Clairia Heinzle, Meg LaPlante

## INCENTIVE AWARDS

4-Hers logged the hours they spent working with or learning about horses. The more hours invested, the more valuable the reward! The Horse Incentive Awards are sponsored by the Lancaster County 4-H Horse Volunteers in Program Service (VIPS) Committee.

**Bronze (100+ hours or points)** — Layne McCoy, Emma Smith

**Silver (minimum of 225 hours or points)** — Saylor Desautels, Brogen Frink, Aleese Jurgens, Camilla Macdissi, MacKenzie McCoy, Amelia Proffitt, Christina Zade

**Gold (minimum of 390 hours or points, and completed horse record book)** — Lena Barnes, Liz Boshart, Corrine Byrne, Easton Byrne, Gracen Byrne, Hannah Chevalier, Kiara Eppenbach, Shea Frink, Lyra Krutak, Meg LaPlante, Gracie Mittan-DeBuhr, Natalie Plautz, Avery Stohs

## TOP AWARDS FOR SUPER FAIR

**Top Trail Award** for the all-around champion with the highest score of the 4-H Trail obstacle competition, sponsored by the late Dick and Cookie Confer — Scarlett Battles

**All-Around Cowboy/Cowgirl Awards** all-around champions in three age divisions for most total points scored from specified classes, sponsored by the Lancaster County Horse VIPS Committee — **Senior:** Scarlett Battles (horse "Baby Step Up Your Whiz"); **Intermediate:** Violet Green (horse "Ghost Pepper"); **Junior:** Ava Schepers

**All-Around Ranch Horse Awards** age division awards for the horse/rider combination with the most points scored demonstrating the versatility of the working ranch horse, sponsored by Olive Creek Acres Performance Horses (Brian & Shannon Vogler) — **Senior:** Scarlett Battles (horse "Baby Step Up Your Whiz"); **Intermediate:** Violet Green (horse "Ghost Pepper"); **Junior:** Ava Schepers (horse "Color Me On Ice")

**Franklyn Manning All-Around Barrels Award** for the fastest time across all age groups in the 4-H Barrel Racing competition, sponsored by Brad & Susan Frink, given in honor of the late Franklin Manning — Shea Frink

**Bluestem All-Around Miniature Horse Awards** for high point 4-H miniature horse and 4-H member combination in two age divisions, sponsored by Bluestem Miniature Horse Club — **Senior:** Clairia Heinzle (horse "Countryview Majestic Cavalier"); **Junior:** Gracie Mittan-DeBuhr (horse "D.M. King Chipette")



Horse Incentive Awards — Gold level recipients

## Nebraska Dressage Association High Score

**Dressage Rider and High Score Western Dressage Rider Awards** for the champion and reserve champion high score riders in the Dressage Show's dressage and western dressage classes, sponsored by the Nebraska Dressage Association — **High Score Dressage Riders:** Maggie Zimmerman (champion) and Gracie Mittan-DeBuhr (reserve champion); **High Score Western Riders:** Ava Schepers (champion) and Samson Zade (reserve champion)

**Lowell Boomer High Point Jumping Award** for the all-around champion in the 4-H jumping classes, sponsored by Hunter's Pride 4-H Club — Gracie Mittan-DeBuhr

**Dr. Kelly Stich Top NRHA Reining Awards** for highest NRHA pattern score in each age division of the 4-H Reining competition, sponsored by Dr. Kelly Stich — **Senior:** Scarlett Battles (horse "Baby Step Up Your Whiz"); **Intermediate:** Evelyn Smith (horse "Whizkeys Hot Jewell"); **Junior:** John Chevalier (horse "Need A Star")

**All-Around Versatility Horse Award** for the most versatile horse/rider combination in the intermediate or senior age divisions, sponsored by Brad & Susan Frink and Pam Schaaf — Natalie Plautz (horse "Pocos Lucky Kandi")

**Wilhelmina Wittstruck Memorial All-Around Champion Award** for the all-around 4-H champion individual, sponsored by Joan & the late Dwayne Wittstruck. Points are calculated from several categories, and exhibitors must indicate during the fair entry process which classes they designate for this award — Ava Schepers

## JUDGING CONTEST

The Horse Judging Contest (a Lancaster County Super Fair contest) emphasizes how much 4-H members know about horse conformation as they judge four or more classes of horses along with the opportunity to give oral reasons. The champion of each division receives a buckle.

**Senior Division:** Elizabeth Funk (champion), Shea Frink (reserve champion), Amelia Proffitt (3rd), Avery Stohs (4th), Savannah Nordmeyer (5th)

**Intermediate Division:** Paige Schepers (champion), Kathryn Weaver (reserve champion), MacKenzie McCoy (3rd), Christina Zade (4th)

**Junior Division:** Ava Schepers (champion), Gracen Byrne (reserve champion), Corrine Byrne (3rd), Samson Zade (4th)



Bluestem All-Around Miniature Horse Award winners Clairia Heinzle (left) and Gracie Mittan-DeBuhr (right). Pictured with Bluestem Club Vice President Jo Stork.



Top NRHA Reining Award winners (L-R) John Chevalier, Evelyn Smith and Scarlett Battles.



Wilhelmina Wittstruck Memorial All-Around Champion Ava Schepers (left) with Extension Associate Kate Pulec.

## 4-H Events Open to All Youth

**4-H CAT SHOW, JAN. 17** — This Cat Show will be the purrrfect opportunity to learn and practice showing your cat in 4-H. It will be held Saturday, Jan. 17, 9 a.m. at the Sandhills Global Event Center, 84th & Havelock, Lincoln at the Lancaster County Farm Bureau Room in South Hall (by the Extension 4-H office). Registration and check-in from 8:15–8:45 a.m. Open to all youth ages 8–18, with a Clover Kids opportunity for youth 5–7. Register at show. Cost is \$2 per class or \$5 for unlimited classes. One cat per exhibitor. Show information with classes and health requirements is at <https://lancaster.unl.edu/4h/cat-show>. If you have questions, contact Elizabeth Thiltges at [elizabeth.thiltges@unl.edu](mailto:elizabeth.thiltges@unl.edu) or 402-441-7180.

**RABBITS R US FUN SHOW & SHOWMANSHIP CLINIC** — The Rabbits R Us 4-H club will present a 4-H Rabbit Fun Show & Showmanship Clinic on Sunday, Feb. 8, 1 p.m. at the Sandhills Global Event Center, 84th & Havelock, Lincoln in the South Hall. This is a great opportunity for youth to learn about the 4-H rabbit project and learn showmanship! Event starts with the clinic followed by carrier decorating & costume contests, quiz bowl, fun breed show and awards. Prizes will be given! Open to all youth ages 8–18, with Clover Kids opportunities for youth 5–7. Preregister at <https://lancaster.unl.edu/4h/rabbit-fun-show> by Feb. 2 for reduced entry fee of \$10 per child (includes the clinic, entry into the contests and registration fee for 1 rabbit in the show) and \$2 for each additional rabbit. Walk-in registration at the show will have a \$12 entry fee per child and \$4 per additional rabbit. All fees are paid at the show by cash or check payable to Rabbits R Us 4-H club. Rabbit attire is optional, but not required. If you have questions, contact [rabbitsrus.4h@gmail.com](mailto:rabbitsrus.4h@gmail.com). Note: Save the date for the 4-H Spring Rabbit Show on Saturday, March 14 presented by the 4-H Rabbits VIPs Committee.

Lancaster County 4-H Teen Council presents the annual

## OVERNIGHT LOCK-IN

### Themed Disco Party for 4th & 5th Graders

(Need not be enrolled in 4-H)

**Fri. Jan. 23, 8 p.m. –**

**Sat. Jan. 24, 8 a.m.**

Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County  
conference rooms,  
444 Cherrycreek Rd., Suite A, Lincoln  
**\$20/person due Mon., Jan. 19**

Bring your sleeping bag, pillow,  
toothbrush, toothpaste, active  
wear, sleepwear (sweats) and  
invite a friend to attend!



**Games!**  
**Snacks!**  
**Movies!**  
**Sleep Over!**  
**Fun Projects!**

### TWO WAYS TO REGISTER AND PAY

• Online at  
<https://go.unl.edu/lock-in>  
(pay with debit/credit card)



• Contact Nebraska Extension  
in Lancaster County for a  
registration form by calling  
402-441-7180, emailing  
[lancaster4H@unl.edu](mailto:lancaster4H@unl.edu) or  
stopping by the office (pay  
with cash or check payable to  
Lancaster County 4-H Teen  
Council)

No refunds

For more information, contact Extension Educator Tracy Anderson  
at [tracy.anderson@unl.edu](mailto:tracy.anderson@unl.edu) or 402-441-7180.



## 4-H Announcements FOR 4-H'ERS AND VOLUNTEERS

The 4-H e-newsletter at <https://go.unl.edu/lan4hnews> has  
up-to-date information about upcoming 4-H opportunities.



**2026 4-H CALENDARS** — Lancaster County 4-H has compiled three lists of 2026 events which are at <https://lancaster.unl.edu/4h/calendar>:

- Overall Calendar
- Horse Calendar
- Rabbit Calendar

### HORSE INCENTIVE PROGRAM BEGINS

**JAN. 1** — Any Lancaster County 4-H'er may participate in the horse incentive program and earn points by participating in horse-related activities. The more points you earn, the more valuable the reward! Log hours/points by participating in various horse-related activities Jan. 1–July 20. To be eligible for rewards, families must have paid annual \$20 family dues to Lancaster County Horse VIPs. Instructions and forms are available online at <http://lancaster.unl.edu/4h/horse>.

### AWARDS & SCHOLARSHIP FORMS DUE

**JAN. 3** — Many Lancaster County 4-H award forms and college scholarship applications are due Jan. 3. Forms are available at <https://lancaster.unl.edu/4h/clubs/awards> and the Extension office. Recipients will be announced at Lancaster County 4-H Achievement Celebration on Thursday, Feb. 12.

### PILLOW SEWING WORKSHOP, JAN. 17

— 4-H youth ages 8 and up are invited to learn beginning sewing skills while constructing a pillow at the Pillow Party sewing workshop on Saturday, Jan. 17, 9 a.m. until about noon at the Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County conference rooms, 444 Cherrycreek Road, Suite A, Lincoln. No registration fee. Must register by Monday, Jan. 5 by contacting Kristin at 402-441-7180 or [kristin.geisert@unl.edu](mailto:kristin.geisert@unl.edu). This early date is needed to order pillow forms. Bring your sewing machine, basic sewing equipment (scissors, pins, measuring tape, etc.). Also bring 3/4 yard each of 2 coordinating/contrasting woven fabrics, pre-washed, 100% cotton (NO PLAIDS, NO KNITS, NO FLANNEL) and matching thread. Pillow forms will be provided. A few office sewing machines are available for use upon request. Parents/adults are asked to attend to help their 4-H'er(s).

### BB GUN/AIR RIFLE & AIR PISTOL

#### CONTEST, FEB. 7; REGISTER BY JAN. 30

— Lancaster County 4-H is offering a BB Gun/Air Rifle & Air Pistol Contest on Saturday, Feb. 7, 8 a.m. at the Nebraska Outdoor Education Center, 4703 N. 44th St., Lincoln. Register by Friday, Jan. 30 at <https://go.unl.edu/bbgun-airpistol-contest-2026>. To participate, youth must be ages 8–18 (by January 1 of the current year) and actively enrolled in the 4-H shooting sports project under the direct supervision of a certified 4-H shooting sports instructor. Participants exhibiting unsafe practices may be disqualified from the contest at the discretion of the superintendent.

### ACHIEVEMENT CELEBRATION, FEB. 12

— Lancaster County 4-H and 4-H Council invite ALL 4-H'ers, 4-H families and volunteers to the 4-H Achievement Celebration on Thursday, Feb. 12, 6:30 p.m. at the Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County conference rooms, 444 Cherrycreek Road, Suite A, Lincoln. The following milestone honorees will receive special recognition: 2026 high school seniors, 3-year members, 2-year leaders, 5-year leaders, 10-year leaders, 15-year leaders, 20-year leaders, etc. Graduating seniors will receive a 4-H Alumni T-shirt! In order for 4-H members and leaders (including organizational and project leaders) to receive a pin, award or T-shirt, please answer the survey questions at <https://go.unl.edu/4hmembersurvey2026> or <https://go.unl.edu/4hleaderssurvey2026> by Wednesday, Jan. 7. 4-H members, clubs and volunteers receiving awards, scholarships or milestone pins will be mailed invitations. Award winners are asked to submit award-related photos to <https://go.unl.edu/Lan4HPic> by Wednesday, Jan. 28.

### JAMMIE SEWING WORKSHOP, FEB. 21

— 4-H youth ages 8 and older are invited to practice their basic sewing skills and make pajama or lounge wear pants or shorts using a pattern at the Jammie Jamboree sewing workshop on Saturday, Feb. 21, 9 a.m.–12 p.m. at the Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County conference rooms, 444 Cherrycreek Road, Suite A, Lincoln. Parents/adults are asked to attend to help their 4-H'er(s). Bring your sewing machine (make sure it is in good working order), basic sewing equipment (scissors, pins, measuring tape, etc.), simple pull-on pajama bottom pattern in appropriate size, pre-washed flannel or 100% cotton fabric — see yardage requirement on pattern envelope (no one-way design fabrics or plaids). If you choose flannel, purchase an additional 1/2 yard as it is not as wide), elastic as recommended by pattern and matching thread. Choosing a very fuzzy or furry fabric with nap is highly discouraged as these fabrics are very difficult to sew. A few office machines are available upon request. No cost to attend. Register by Thursday, Feb. 12 by contacting Kristin at 402-441-7180 or [kristin.geisert@unl.edu](mailto:kristin.geisert@unl.edu).

### CROCHETING WORKSHOP, FEB. 28

— 4-H youth ages 10 and up are invited to learn how to crochet a washcloth utilizing the single crochet stitch at this Play With Crochet: Basic Stitches workshop on Saturday, Feb. 28, 9–11 a.m. at the Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County conference rooms, 444 Cherrycreek Road, Suite A, Lincoln. No cost to attend — all supplies will be provided. Parents/adults are asked to attend with their 4-H'er(s) to help guide them through the steps. Register by Tuesday, Feb. 17 by contacting Kristin at 402-441-7180 or [kristin.geisert@unl.edu](mailto:kristin.geisert@unl.edu) so supplies can be ordered.

## Meet the 2025–26 4-H Teen Council



The Lancaster County 4-H Teen Council is a leadership organization for youth in grades 7–12. Members are involved in several leadership activities and community service projects such as donating comfort kits to BraveBe Child Advocacy Center (shown in the photo above). Karol Swotek is the Teen Council volunteer leader, and Extension Educator Tracy Anderson is the Teen Council staff leader. To join Teen Council, contact Tracy at 402-441-7180 or [tracy.anderson@unl.edu](mailto:tracy.anderson@unl.edu). (Not all youth are pictured.)

## State 4-H Rodeo Results

The 2025 State 4-H Horse Rodeo was held Oct. 31–Nov. 1 in Lincoln at the Sandhills Global Event Center. There were 10 exhibitors representing four Nebraska counties. The State 4-H Horse Rodeo was made possible with the help of the UNL Rodeo Team. Complete results are posted at <https://4h.unl.edu/horse-rodeo>.

Here are Lancaster County youth top winners:

- **Shea Frink:** Champion Senior Barrel Racing, Champion Senior Pole Bending, Reserve Champion (Blue) Senior Breakaway
- **MacKenzie McCoy:** Champion Junior Goat Tying, Champion (Blue) Junior Breakaway
- **Addisyn Lorenson:** Junior Goat Tying 3rd Place, Junior Breakaway 3rd Place (Blue)



MacKenzie McCoy in Breakaway

## 4-H Thanks 2025 Sponsors

The Lancaster County 4-H program — a partnership between Nebraska Extension and the Lancaster County government — would like to thank all of the businesses, organizations and individuals who sponsored 4-H events, activities, programs and trophies during the 2025 4-H year. This support enhances the educational experience of the 4-H youth. 4-H also thanks all of our valuable volunteers!

Ames Simmentals  
Anderson Ford of Lincoln  
Tracy & Jason Anderson  
Anonymous  
Deborah Arends  
Arends Interiors, Inc.  
Arrow Capital  
Arrow Pest Control  
Artisan Custom Builders  
The Barnes Family  
Lorene Bartos  
Jim & Cindy Bauman  
Beach Seeds  
Beatrice 77 Livestock  
Murleen Bellinger  
Thomas & Laurie  
Bellinghausen  
Gary Bergman  
Amy Bilka  
Bison, Inc.  
Bloom's Mini Rex  
Blue River PetCare  
Bluestem Miniature Horse  
Club  
Bob & Willie's Wonderbowl  
Bomgaars  
The Boshart Family  
Bruck and Co. Mercantile  
The Byrne Family  
Campbell's Nursery  
Capital City Horse & Pony  
Club  
Ken & Susan Cassman  
Charitable Fund  
Warren Cheney Family  
Chopsticks Chinese Cuisine  
Kay Clinch Memorial  
Colby Ridge Popcorn  
Shirley Condon  
The Late Dick & Cookie  
Confer  
Mike & Kath Conroy

Cooper Specialty Feeds  
Cornhusker Pony Club  
Crawford Family Shorthorns  
John & Krista Croghan  
Culver's (Old Cheney Rd)  
Culver's (Pioneer Woods Dr)  
Culver's (N 27th St)  
The Cuttlers Family  
Dean Machine Plumbing and  
Excavating  
Andy & Suzi Dearmont Family  
Shayla Desautels  
Calvin, Jordyn & Bennett  
DeVries  
Stephanie & Eric Dinger  
Ron Dowding Family  
Dowding Shorthorns – Ron &  
Nate Dowding  
The Downing Family  
The Drbal Family  
East Campus Starrs  
Jan Edwards  
Electrical Enterprises  
Farm Credit Services of  
America  
Farmers Cooperative of  
Dorchester  
Fitch Trucking, Inc.  
Five Star 4-H'ers 4-H Club  
The Fort  
Four Winds Farms  
Brad & Susan Frink  
Frink Quarter Horses  
JJ & Amy Frink Family  
JJ Frink Hard Knock Horse  
Shoe'n  
Frontier Cooperative  
Roger & Kim Funk  
Kim Funk – Berkshire  
Hathaway Home Services  
Garden Lane Crafts  
Garland Girls

Blayne Glissman Family  
Good Life Hydraulics Services,  
LLC  
Great Plains Security, Inc.  
Greater Lincoln Obedience  
Club  
Ken Grothouse  
The Groom Room  
Addison Gropp  
The Heather Family  
John Heineman  
Heritage Nursery  
Lyle & Teresa Hespen  
The Higgins Family  
The Hilkemann Family  
Hillcrest Animal Clinic  
H L Muhlbach Construction  
Hog Wild Pit Bar-B-Q  
Greg Hollman  
The Home Agency  
Karen Hothan  
Hudkins Farms  
Rachel Huenink  
Hunter's Pride 4-H Club  
Hy-Vee (27th & Superior)  
Hy-Vee (40th & Old Cheney)  
Heather Ingracia  
The Isaacs Family  
James Arthur Vineyard  
Linda John  
Doug & Cheryl Johnson  
Jeff & Anne Johnson Family  
Brett Jurgens  
The Jurgens Family  
Deborah Kinney  
Kiwanis – Lincoln Center  
Kiwanis – Northeast  
Rachel Koch  
Gary & Diane Kubicek  
Lancaster County 4-H Council  
Lancaster County Agricultural  
Society

Lancaster County Farm  
Bureau  
Lancaster County Horse VIPS  
Committee  
Lancaster County Livestock  
Boosters  
Lancaster County Rabbit VIPS  
Committee  
Lancaster National Club Calf  
Sale  
The Lanik-Frain Family  
Lan-Otoe Farms  
David & Edie LaPlante Family  
Lincoln Children's Zoo  
J. Loomis & M. Vogel  
Lost In Float  
Ina Luhning  
The Macdissi Family  
Ken Majors  
Kelly Maronde  
Cole & Kylea Meador  
Bruce Mehlberg  
The Metcalf Family  
Morrow Collision Center  
Wayne Motycka  
Mueller Farms  
Mussmann Ag Services, Inc.  
Nebraska 4-H Foundation  
Nebraska Dressage  
Association  
Neemann Refuse, Inc.  
Neogen  
The Newby Family  
Tom Newby  
NextEra Energy Resources  
NextGen Ag Partners  
Brent & Jackie Nisely  
Dena Noe  
Norris FFA Chapter  
Olive Creek Acres  
Performance Horses –  
The Vogler Family

Dick Parrott Memorial  
Paula Peterson  
Janine Petracek  
Janine Petracek Photography  
Mike Pinho  
Rochan Pinho  
Justin & Julia Plugge Family  
Ponca Valley Show Goats  
Tim Powers Memorial  
Prior Pines  
The Pulec Family  
Rabbits R Us 4-H Club  
Rainbow Ends  
Raising Cane's Chicken  
Fingers  
Sheri Ramirez  
The Rawlinson Herd  
Reddick Plumbing  
Rembolt Ludtke Law Firm  
Reproductive Services  
Rock Creek Ranchers 4-H  
Club  
Runza (33rd & Pioneers Blvd)  
Runza (Waverly)  
Ryan's Market  
Cary & Becki Sandell  
Sandhills Global Event Center  
Pam Schaff  
Becky & Tom Schuerman  
Tammy Sheldon  
Sid Dillon  
Shar Sieck  
Alice Sittler  
Slim Chickens (Old Cheney)  
Smart Chicken  
Andy & Jen Smith  
Kyle Smith Family  
Dale & Marilyn Stertz  
Stevens Creek Mowing  
Dr. Kelly Stich  
Studio 8 Lincoln  
Ron & Barb Suing

The Sump Family  
Bill Sun  
Sun Valley Lanes & Games  
Superior Bingo  
The Swotek Family  
Phil Tegeler  
Ryan & Judy Terwilliger  
Tractor Supply Co. (Lincoln  
North)  
Tractor Supply Co. (Lincoln  
South)  
Tractor Supply Co. (Waverly)  
Tractor Supply Co. (Waverly  
Distribution Center)  
Triple H Rabbitry – Mark Hurt  
Triple RRR Farms  
Carol Van Rossum  
The Vanderford Family  
Jody Vlasin  
Wachal Pet Health Center  
Craig Wacker & Lindsay  
Rogers  
The Wagoner Traynor Family  
The Walbrecht Family  
Lisa Warren  
Waverly Grange #369  
The Wharton Family  
Charles & Dorothy Wiechert  
Family  
Wilhelm Auto Repair  
Jay & Brenda Wilkinson  
Wilkinson Sheep Farm  
Dayle Williamson  
Dwayne Wittstruck Memorial  
– Joane Wittstruck  
Karen Wobig  
Yankee Hill Veterinary  
Hospital  
The Yarn Guild – Lincoln  
The Zade Family

**Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County**  
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## EXTENSION NEWS

### Jaci Foged Earns National Award for CHIME

Extension Educator Jaci Foged and Nebraska Extension's Early Childhood team was recently recognized as the 3rd place national winner and 1st place central region winner of the "Florence Hall Award" by the National Extension Association of Family & Consumer Sciences (NEAFCS). This award recognizes NEAFCS members who have planned and implemented programs which address emerging issues while partnering with others in their communities. Extension's Cultivating Healthy Intentional Mindful Educators (CHIME) Program teaches childcare providers how to incorporate mindfulness into their daily routine and caregiving. To meet growing demand for this program, Extension staff created a CHIME Guiding Teacher Facilitator Program to expand programming outside of Nebraska.

### Statewide Extension Awards

Nebraska Extension recently announced their 2025 Extension Award Winners. Two Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County staff were members of teams receiving "Excellence in Extension" awards.

- The **National Health Outreach & Engagement Conference** 11-person team, including Extension Educator **Emily Gratopp**, was recognized for "Collaboration." The planning committee hosted a three-day national conference in Omaha attended by 263 professionals from 38 states. The conference emphasized the role of multisector partnerships and collaboration in advancing programs, as well as policy, systems and environmental change approaches to improve health for all.
- The **Tick Tag Go** three-person team, including Extension Educator **Kait Chapman**, was recognized



## EXTENSION CALENDAR

All events held at the Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County conference rooms, 444 Cherrycreek Road, Suite A, Lincoln, unless otherwise noted.

### January

- 1 4-H Horse Incentive Program Begins
- 3 4-H Award & Scholarship Applications Due to Extension Office
- 3 4-H Club Treasurer's Reports Due
- 6 4-H Council Meeting ..... 6 p.m.
- 9 Extension Board Meeting ..... 8 a.m.
- 11 4-H Teen Council Meeting ..... 3 p.m.
- 16 Deadline for Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Applications
- 17 4-H Cat Show, Sandhills Global Event Center – Lancaster County Farm Bureau Room 9–11 a.m.
- 17 4-H Pillow Party Sewing Workshop ..... 9 a.m.–12 p.m.
- 22 Pesticide Applicator NDA "Walk-In" Testing Session ..... 9 a.m.–2 p.m.
- 23–24 4-H Teen Council's Lock-In For 4th & 5th Graders ..... 8 p.m.–8 a.m.
- 27 Private Pesticide Applicator Training ..... 1–4 p.m. & 6–9 p.m.
- 29 Commercial Pesticide Applicator Recertification Training ..... 8:30 a.m.
- 29 Horse VIPS Committee Meeting, Virtual ..... 6 p.m.

### February

- 2–3 4-H EGG Cam Chicks Hatching, <https://lancaster.unl.edu/eggcam>
- 3 4-H Council Meeting ..... 6 p.m.
- 5 Pesticide Applicator NDA "Walk-In" Testing Session ..... 9 a.m.–2 p.m.
- 7 4-H BB Gun/Air Rifle & Air Pistol Contest Nebraska Outdoor Education Center, 4703 N. 44th St. .... 8 a.m.–12 p.m.
- 8 4-H Rabbits R Us Fun Show & Showmanship Clinic, Sandhills Global Event Center – South Hall. .... 1 p.m.
- 8 4-H Teen Council Meeting ..... 3 p.m.
- 10 Landlord/Tenant Cash Rent Lease Workshop ..... 10:30 a.m.–2 p.m.
- 12 4-H Achievement Celebration ..... 6:30 p.m.
- 17 Commercial Pesticide Applicator Initial Training ..... 8:30 a.m.
- 19 Commercial Pesticide Applicator Recertification Training ..... 8:30 a.m.
- 21 4-H Jammie Jamboree Sewing Workshop ..... 9 a.m.–12 p.m.
- 23 Registration Deadline for March 2 ProHort Lawn & Landscape Workshop
- 26 Private Pesticide Applicator Training ..... 9 a.m.–12 p.m. & 1–4 p.m.
- 28 4-H Play With Crochet: Basic Stitches Workshop ..... 9–11 a.m.

for "Collaboration." At the heart of the program is a community-powered surveillance effort using the iNaturist app. Nebraskans have contributed over 1,000 tick observations from across the state. Through the larger Nebraska Tick Network, Extension staff work closely with University of Nebraska–Lincoln, University of Nebraska Medical Center, Creighton, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, and local health departments to connect education with research and public health preparedness.

### Asian Center Honors Zahraa Rida

The Asian Community and Cultural Center (ACCC) awarded Extension Assistant **Zahraa Rida** and two other individuals during its Harvest Moon Festival with Certificates of Appreciation in recognition for outstanding performance and distinguished service. ACCC Director of Communications Lisa Guill said, "Zahraa is a dedicated guest speaker who shares her knowledge and experiences with women's groups at the Asian Community and Cultural Center. Zahraa brings warmth, confidence and motivation to each session, creating a supportive and engaging environment."

### Outgoing Extension Board Members



(L–R) Jim Ballard and Meghan Sittler

The December Lancaster County Extension Board meeting marked the final meeting for two outgoing board members: Jim Ballard and Meghan Sittler (who also served as President for 2 years and Vice President for 1 year). Lancaster County Extension thanks them for their service.