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2020

## 2020 Extension Highlights

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## 2020 Extension Highlights Responding as Local Needs Changed

### Gardening Increases in Popularity

Many people spent more time outside during the COVID-19 pandemic, noticing their landscape or starting gardens. Nebraska Extension horticulture staff, including Extension Educator Sarah Browning, created the GROBigRed Virtual Learning Series. The series of 12 programs was attended by **1,100 participants**.

Extension Associate Mary Jane Frogge partnered with Extension in Douglas-Sarpy Counties to present a new virtual Lunch and Learn series to engage Extension's Master Gardener volunteers. Master Gardener Nance Harris said, "Knowledgeable presenters, relevant topics and good questions from participants with equally good answers from the pros. Appreciated the chance to learn more."

### Stretching Food Dollars

Food security issues dramatically increased during the pandemic. Extension's Nutrition Education Program (NEP) staff used virtual teaching methods, including Facebook, recorded videos and interactive virtual classrooms to educate limited-resource families on topics such as:

- Feeding the whole family while children were home during school closures.
- Managing food budgets during financially trying times.
- Utilizing community resources available to families.

NEP **doubled youth reach** this summer, engaging over **2,300 people** and teaching over 40 virtual lessons.



GROBigRed program on Tree Care



Extension Educator Emily Gratopp presenting a virtual nutrition lesson



Soccer for Success program

sport, enjoyed outdoor play and participated in 60 minutes of physical activity. Due to the program's success, Extension received a **\$7,500 grant** from 4-H Healthy Habits to purchase equipment to teach Soccer for Success in Lincoln and Grand Island.

- Extension Educators Kayla Colgrove and Alyssa Havlovic helped present a virtual Husker Performance lecture series teaching sports nutrition to high school athletes. This research-based curriculum included six statewide sessions and had 138 participants. According to survey respondents: **98% learned something new** as a result of this program, **81% planned to make at least one change** based on what they learned.

### Benefiting Childcare Providers

One of Extension's on-going priority programs

is professional development trainings for childcare providers, because quality childcare affects entire communities. Since many childcare programs temporarily closed due to COVID-19, Extension began offering virtual trainings at no cost. Participation dramatically increased and feedback indicates the trainings made a positive impact, such as, "The online

"This is what we were talking about that we needed! Cooperative Extension for the win!!!!"  
—Facebook user who shared a nutrition video lesson

### Promoting Well-Being

Nutrition, fitness and well-being became critical issues during the pandemic. Extension responded with new programs:

- NEP staff, along with City Impact, piloted the U.S. Soccer Foundation's Soccer for Success program for limited-resource youth. Youth learned a new

## Helping People Solve Real-World Problems

Creating.  
Adapting.  
Responding.  
Extension answered the call to help communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Extension not only pivoted how we taught, but changed programs to meet people's needs. This 2020 highlights report shows examples of how we responded using research-based information. The community exhibited resilience and grit during this unprecedented time. We will continue working together to solve emerging issues. To find out how Extension can help you, connect with us by calling, visiting <https://lancaster.unl.edu> or via Facebook and Twitter.

**Karen Wobig,**  
Extension Educator & Unit Leader

trainings have been such a blessing and great resource!" and "Thank you for offering free classes as our preschool budget took a big hit!" From April 7 to Oct. 24, Extension Educator Jaci Foged delivered or co-delivered **63 virtual programs** to **2,657 participants** with **in-kind savings of \$18,147**.

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# 20,311 Youth Engaged in 4-H Programs

Lancaster County 4-H brings life-changing opportunities to youth wherever they are: clubs, schools, after-schools/summer sites, camps and homes.

## Resources For Youth at Home

When schools closed in March, 4-H staff compiled and created research-based, experiential online resources which youth and families could use at home. Resources at <http://lancaster.unl.edu/4Hathome> included activity handouts, contest study materials and horse judging lessons — this webpage has received over **1,000 pageviews**. Staff developed 17 Clover Kid Fun Pack hands-on activity lessons for the Nebraska 4-H website, <http://4h.unl.edu/fun-pack>, which has received nearly **900 pageviews**. Lancaster County 4-H staff also presented four statewide Zoom experiences (Living Room Learning and Boredom Busters), engaging **219 participants/archived video views**.

## Schools Adapt to Remote Learning

Extension coordinates several school enrichment programs, including Embryology for 3rd graders and Nutrition Kits for K-5th graders. These two programs quickly adapted to remote learning with videos, web-based resources (including EGG Cam), Zoom presentations and YouTube live sessions. The Embryology online resources were used by **93 schools, including 44 out-of-state**. Malcolm 3rd grade teacher Morgan Lemkau said, "The virtual presentations were great and still interactive as if they were in person!" Lincoln Public Schools requested handwashing videos as a key part of the nutrition kit remote learning. Since their release in August, the videos have been viewed 707 times.



Embryology going live during a "Living Room Learning" virtual experience

## Super Fair Focuses on Youth

This year's Lancaster County Super Fair focused solely on 4-H & FFA youth participation, and was a blend of virtual and in-person exhibits and events at the Lancaster Event Center Fairgrounds. Over **400 4-H/FFA exhibitors** showcased over **2,700 exhibits** (including static exhibits, Clover Kids, animals and contest entries). Static exhibits and many contest entries were submitted, judged and showcased online. Livestock and horse shows were held in-person with many modifications to accommodate health guidelines. Lancaster County 4-H livestreamed nearly all in-person events.



Lancaster County has the largest county fair 4-H horse show in the state

## Sewing for Hospitals

4-H coordinated three community-service sewing projects to meet the need for protective gear for hospital staff in Lincoln. During the initial phase called "Hats for Hospitals," 4-H youth and community adult volunteers spent over 543 volunteer sewing hours producing **778 cotton surgeon hats**. During the "Sewing for Hospitals" phase, volunteers gave over 352 hours constructing **1,011 cotton face coverings**. Due to a continued need for face coverings, a third phase resulted in an additional **700 cotton face coverings** being sewn by volunteers who spent over 90 hours making the items.



4-H youth sewing surgical hats

# Other Extension Highlights

## Wellness in Tough Times Chat Café

Nebraska Extension's statewide Wellness in Tough Times team — which includes Extension Associate Soni Cochran — partnered with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Department of Child, Youth, and Family Studies (UNL-CYF) to pilot a Chat Café help line. Staffed by UNL-CYF therapists, the Chat Café gave rural residents the opportunity to work through challenges connected to natural disaster recovery and gain skills to improve lives. The eight-week pilot focused on topics such as coping after a disaster and the pandemic, finances, resolving conflict, self-care and personal relationships.



Extension Associate Becky Schuerman teaching the hydrologic cycle

## Teaching Water Stewardship

Associate Becky Schuerman is Extension's statewide expert on domestic water and wastewater issues — assisting the public and industry professionals. This fall, Becky taught a STEM activity to homeschooled youth on being good stewards of our natural resources. Students:

- Created a water-cycle storyboard.
- Discovered how water is pumped from the aquifer.
- Learned the importance of keeping our groundwater clean.
- Built terrariums to take home to watch the water cycle in action.



Extension Educator Kait Chapman demonstrating an insect's strength during Sunday With a Scientist

## Solving Insect Problems

Bed bugs, termites, ticks, spiders and many other arthropods can cause nuisance problems, economic impact and public health concerns. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County continued to offer insect and spider identification and consultation services. Urban entomology Extension Educator Kait Chapman answered nearly 300 emails and phone calls over the summer months. This fall, Kait partnered with the University of Nebraska State Museum to present Sunday With A Scientist program: Arthropods Got Talent. The virtual program was broadcast from Morrill Hall to over 40 families on Facebook live and Zoom.

## Extension's Volunteers Worth Over \$460,000

Extension's estimated **1,023 volunteers gave 18,484 total hours of service worth \$461,545.48\*** to our community! Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County benefits from these volunteers who help extend the reach of programs such as 4-H and Master Gardeners. Volunteers also serve on the Extension Board and 4-H Council. In addition, many 4-H youth give back to their community through service projects, reporting over 1,800 hours of community service.

\*Based on Independent Sector's estimate of Nebraska's value of a volunteer hour in 2019 as \$24.97



"4-H gives meaning and purpose to our young people in their daily lives. The pride of accomplishment and success continues to grow our 4-H'ers into future leaders. The pandemic certainly changed our world, but not the value of 4-H for our members!"

— Marsha Prior, leader of the Fusion 4-H'ers club