

Sedgwick County EXTENSION NEWSLETTER

Knowledge for Life

January 2026



Reflection, Gratitude and Focus

As we begin a new year, I'm proud to reflect on the impact K-State Extension in Sedgwick County continues to make. Every day, our agents and staff put research into action by helping youth build life skills and work-readiness skills, teaching families how to stretch their grocery dollars farther, working with gardeners to beautify our community and to grow local fruits and vegetables, providing timely information to farmers and ranchers helping them to make decisions that affect their productivity and profitability, and ensuring that aging individuals understand their healthcare options. Extension's reach is broad, and its impact is deeply felt.

That impact would not be possible without the dedication of our volunteers and the strength of our community partnerships. Our Master Gardeners, 4-H volunteers, Medicare counselors, board members, and numerous partners extend our work far beyond the walls of the Sedgwick County Extension Center.

As we look ahead to 2026, our focus will remain on delivering high-quality, relevant programming while working collaboratively with local leaders and partners to ensure Extension has the resources needed to sustain and strengthen its impact.

Our focus will also center on meeting the needs of the people who call Sedgwick County home. That's you! I invite you to explore our [website](#) and [Facebook page](#), and [reach out to us](#) if you are looking for information and resources on any of our topic areas.

Kelli Anderson, Extension Director

Extension in Action: 4-H and Youth Development

A New Year of Hope: Start Your Youth With a New Year's Resolution for Emotional Health

As we begin a new year, families across Sedgwick County are asking an important question, "How can we help our young people grow into confident, resilient, and emotionally healthy adults?" Research and real-world experience point to one powerful answer: 4-H.

4-H'ers are...

2x

more likely to have the goal of being a leader

3x

more likely to participate in community service

2x

more likely to report living life with intentionality and purpose



4-H is more than projects and fairs. It is a nationally recognized positive youth development program that intentionally builds the skills young people need to thrive emotionally, socially, and academically. National studies consistently show that youth involved in 4-H experience stronger emotional well-being and develop protective factors that help them navigate life's challenges with confidence and purpose.

Here in Sedgwick County, 4-H youth experience these benefits every day through:

- Club meetings that build friendships and

communication skills

- Project work that encourages goal setting and perseverance
- Leadership opportunities at the club, county, and state level
- Community service projects that connect youth to something bigger than themselves
- Caring adult volunteers who serve as mentors and role models

We invite you to [read more about the social and emotional benefits of joining 4-H](#). New members are welcome to join at any time of the year, and joining is easy and open to all youth ages 5-18. Visit www.4honline.com to enroll, or contact the [Sedgwick County Extension Center](#) to learn more.

Numbers that Matter: The Impact of SHICK



Senior Health Insurance Counselors of Kansas (SHICK) Program Brings Peace of Mind to Participants

K-State Extension - Sedgwick County SHICK counselors assisted more than 2,100 Medicare beneficiaries in 2025, helping residents navigate complex health insurance decisions across the county. SHICK offers one-on-one, non-biased counseling and assistance to individuals and families either getting ready to sign up for Medicare, or those who already have Medicare. Volunteer counselors receive training on Medicare, Medicare Supplemental Insurance, Long-Term Care Insurance, and other health insurance issues that concern Kansans.

While final post-open enrollment numbers are still being finalized, more than 1,600 individuals were served during the open enrollment period alone. Through thousands of phone calls, appointments, and follow-ups, counselors provided unbiased guidance with care, patience, and professionalism.

The volume and quality of assistance reflect the strength of SHICK's volunteer counselors and the collaborative partnerships that support the program locally.

"I extend my appreciation to all who contributed their time, expertise, and dedication throughout the year and look forward to continuing this important service in 2026," shares Tat Hidano, K-State Extension - Sedgwick County adult aging and development agent.

Sedgwick County Extension's Medicare Options classes and events are filling up fast! [Sign up](#) for a class today.

People Who Power Extension: Irma Rosas



Rosas Honored with the 2025 Habitat for Humanity Mission Principle Award

Sedgwick County EFNEP Nutrition Educator, Irma Rosas, was recently recognized with the 2025 Habitat for Humanity Mission Principle Award for her outstanding partnership and impact in the community.

Rosas works closely with Habitat for Humanity and program participants to support individuals and families working toward home ownership while also building skills for healthier living. Through this partnership, participants receive nutrition education focused on reading food labels, managing food resources, menu planning, and making informed choices that support long-term health and well-being.

A key strength of the program is the trusted relationships Rosas builds with participants. By meeting people where they are and tailoring education to their needs, she helps create lasting change that extends beyond the classroom and into daily life.

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and delivered locally through K-State Extension in Sedgwick County, provides free, research-based nutrition education to eligible families, pregnant women, caregivers, and youth. EFNEP educators partner with community organizations across Sedgwick County to increase access to education that strengthens families and supports healthier communities.

To learn more about EFNEP in Sedgwick County, visit sedgwick.k-state.edu/efnep.

Seasonal Solutions

Give Your Christmas Tree a Green Goodbye...Recycle!

As the holiday season winds down and the decorations come down, one important task remains: recycling your live Christmas tree. Even though the holidays may be over, the lifespan of your Christmas tree doesn't have to end. Consider how your live tree can still bring function & cheer:

1. **Recycle your live tree** and have it turned into mulch. In Sedgwick County, there are 21 drop off locations where you can have your tree recycled and pick up free mulch to use in your garden.
2. Find a location outdoors to tie up your tree in order to **support birds and other wildlife**. For songbirds, Christmas trees and other evergreens can be an important source of cover from predators, and shelter to protect them from the cold wind chills of winter. Consider locating your Christmas tree outside along a fence, near a birdfeeder, or in the corner of the deck.



3. Cut the branches off your live Christmas Tree, and use them to loosely cover perennial plants in the landscape. **Position branches over the tops of perennial plants** during the winter months to help insulate the plant, protect plants from wind, reduce heaving during the freezing and thawing cycles of winter, and conserve moisture for the plant. Gradually remove branches in the spring as growth begins.
4. Sink Christmas Trees underwater in ponds to **support fish and other aquatic life**. Submerged Christmas trees can act as a coral reef, providing habitat for a healthy pond.
5. **Create table top arrangements and floral arrangements** with Christmas tree greenery. Add interest with other materials from the landscapes such as pinecones, seedheads of perennials and ornamental grasses, twigs/branches, and berries.

Whatever you choose, repurposing live trees is an important way to reduce landfill waste and prolongs the useful life of your tree, even past the holidays.

If you choose to recycle your Christmas Tree, trees can be dropped off now through Jan. 23, 2026. For more information on how to recycle your tree and a list of drop-off locations visit <https://www.sedgwickcounty.org/environment/christmas-trees/>.



Protect Your Home: January is Radon Action Month

Did you know that 1 in 4 Kansas homes have elevated radon levels? Radon is the leading cause of lung cancer among nonsmokers, and the only way to know if your home is safe is to test—it's invisible, odorless, and tasteless.

Radon naturally seeps from the soil and can accumulate indoors without warning. Take action this winter to protect your family. Affordable radon test kits are available for just \$15 at the K-State Extension - Sedgwick County office.

Want to learn more? Join a free 30-minute Radon 101 Webinar:

- Jan. 6 – Noon
- Jan. 13 – 2 p.m.
- Feb. 3 – 6 .m.

Register for the webinar at <https://shorturl.at/B1jCa>. For more information, contact Sara Sawer, K-State Extension - Sedgwick County nutrition, health and wellness agent at 316-660-0118.

Where You'll Find Us: Extension Events and Opportunities



Soil Smarts: Best Practices to Improve Soil Health

Wednesday, January 7th 12:00PM-1:00PM CST

Discover simple, science-based practices that transform the way your lawn and garden grow. Join Shannon Blocker, Pottawatomie County Extension Agent, as she explores soil health through the powerful combination of physical, chemical, and biological functions collaborating in the soil beneath your feet. Learn to boost resilience, create a thriving landscape, and provide for long-term soil vitality.



[Register Here!](#)

Please register for this free Zoom Webinar at: kare-learn.com/KStateGardenHour

KANSAS STATE
UNIVERSITY
Extension

Join the K-State Garden Hour webinar series in 2026

Kick off the new year by discovering how to build a healthier lawn and garden from the ground up. Join the

Three King's Day Event to showcase Hispanic culture

You are invited! Join us to experience this grand event showcasing and bringing awareness to the Hispanic culture, and embracing the differences. The event is scheduled for Saturday, January 10, from 3 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at the K-State Extension-Sedgwick County Extension Center.

For more information, contact Elizabeth Brunscheen-Cartagena, K-State Extension - Sedgwick County home and family agent at 316-660-0114 or lizb@ksu.edu.



Registration open for the 2026 Hutchinson Local Food Producers Workshop

The Hutchinson Local Food Producer Workshop will provide producers and small food businesses with practical training on expanding sales through farmers' markets, direct-to-consumer channels, and other local market opportunities.

Hosted in collaboration with the Kansas Department of Agriculture and the Kansas Center for Sustainable Agriculture & Alternative Crops, the workshop also offers valuable networking opportunities, allowing participants to connect with peers and gain insights to strengthen their businesses.

[Click here to register, learn more or find a workshop near you.](#)

next K-State Garden Hour webinar on Jan. 7, 2026, to learn more about Soil Smarts: Best Practices to Improve Soil Health.

This free webinar will be presented live from noon to 1 p.m., and recorded and available online. Register for this and all of the upcoming webinars of 2026 at www.ksre-learn.com/KStateGardenHour.



Growing Growers apprenticeship and host farm applications now open for the 2026 season

Growing Growers is a farm apprenticeship program that combines hands-on experience with structured education. Apprentices receive 12 months of access to an online, non-credit course, along with textbooks, and participate in in-person workshops, farm tours, and networking opportunities throughout the growing season. Positions may be paid or unpaid and typically run from March through October, depending on host farm needs.

Apprenticeship and Host Farm applications are now open for the 2026 season! To learn more or apply for an apprenticeship or to be a host farm, visit growinggrowers.org or contact growers@ksu.edu.



Volunteer Opportunities



Room Rental



Support Extension



This monthly e-newsletter is intended to inform citizens of events, activities and research-based information from K-State Extension - Sedgwick County.

K-State Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

K State Extension is a short name for the Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, a program designed to generate and distribute useful knowledge for the well-being of Kansans. Supported by county, state, federal and private funds, the program has county extension offices, experiment fields, area extension offices and regional research centers statewide. Its headquarters is on the Kansas State University campus in Manhattan. For more information, visit www.ksre.ksu.edu



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