

February 28, 2024

Ivan Klein, Chair
Buffalo County Board of Commissioners
1512 Central Ave
Kearney, NE 68847

Dear Commissioner Ivan Klein:

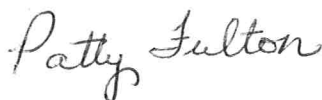
Nebraska Extension is pleased to continue a strong tradition of making a difference in the lives of individuals, families, businesses, and communities in Buffalo County! Our programs address issues that Nebraskan's have identified as being important to them.

Enclosed you will find local extension programming and financial summaries for 2023. Specific items include:

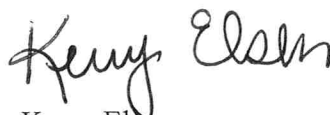
1. Summary of 2022-23 budget expenditures
2. Current fiscal year 2023-24 budget
3. County Impact Report
4. Brief program summary for each educator and assistant/associate
5. Samples of 4-H newsletters and news articles

Thank you for continuing to invest in Nebraska Extension as a local collaborative partner. We strive to be great stewards of resources and work hard every day to demonstrate a strong return on your investment. As you know, extension educators and assistants live, work, and engage with people in your local and area communities. We look forward to making a difference in the lives of Nebraskans together with you!

Sincerely,



Patty Fulton
President
Buffalo County Extension Board



Kerry Elsen
Lead Educator
Nebraska Extension in Buffalo County

Enclosure

2022-2023																	
Acct #	Acct Name	Budget	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	Balance	% Used	Expenditures
1-0301	Extension Assistant (1.0 FTE)	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 520.00		\$ 221.00	\$ -									\$ 19,259.00	4%	\$ 741.00
1-0305	Clerical Salary (2.0 FTE)	\$ 72,413.44	\$ 8,057.92	\$ 5,542.32	\$ 5,278.41	\$ 5,491.21	\$ 5,491.22	\$ 8,236.80	\$ 5,272.94	\$ 2,571.21	\$ 2,571.21	\$ 5,107.43	\$ 5,269.96	\$ 4,457.58	\$ 9,065.23	87%	\$ 63,348.21
1-0405	Clerical PT Salary (PRN)														\$ -		\$ -
1-0408	PT Salary Spraying														\$ -		\$ -
1-0423	AG AGT - AIDES PT SAL	\$ 16,200.00													\$ 16,200.00	0%	\$ -
1-0500	Overtime	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 1,994.13	\$ 402.18	\$ 78.93										\$ 1,024.76	71%	\$ 2,475.24
1-0801	Workman's Comp														\$ -		\$ -
1-0802	Health Ins														\$ -		\$ -
1-0803	Life (Madison National)														\$ -		\$ -
1-0804	Life (Great West)														\$ -		\$ -
1-0900	Retirement	\$ 5,981.41	\$ 673.26	\$ 401.26	\$ 361.62	\$ 370.66	\$ 370.66	\$ 555.99	\$ 355.93	\$ 173.56	\$ 173.56	\$ 344.76	\$ 355.73	\$ 301.18	\$ 1,543.24	74%	\$ 4,438.17
1-1000	Oasi	\$ 6,778.93	\$ 752.61	\$ 398.59	\$ 370.58	\$ 363.92	\$ 363.92	\$ 573.96	\$ 377.07	\$ 170.38	\$ 170.38	\$ 363.75	\$ 376.19	\$ 314.69	\$ 2,182.89	68%	\$ 4,596.04
															\$ -		\$ -
2-0100	Postal Services	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 99.76	\$ 246.30	\$ 146.43	\$ 136.42	\$ 37.60	\$ 140.08	\$ 21.98		\$ 223.52	\$ 40.32	\$ 64.27	\$ 155.72	\$ 687.60	66%	\$ 1,312.40
2-0200	Telephone Services	\$ 1,200.00									\$ 1,200.00				\$ -	100%	\$ 1,200.00
2-0900	Gen Finance/Admin Expen	\$ -													\$ -		\$ -
2-1200	Office Equipment Repair	\$ -													\$ -		\$ -
2-1601	Car Repairs														\$ -	#DIV/0!	\$ -
2-1704	Mileage	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 296.50	\$ 40.96		\$ 128.76				\$ 195.50	\$ (89.25)			\$ 30.01	\$ 3,397.52	15%	\$ 602.48
2-1708	Board Members Expense	\$ 250.00													\$ 250.00	0%	\$ -
2-1801	Dues, Subscriptions, Reg.	\$ 350.00	\$ 8.88		\$ 8.88			\$ 9.40			\$ 63.80	\$ 10.81	\$ 10.34	\$ 10.34	\$ 227.55	35%	\$ 122.45
2-2515	Contractual Services														\$ -		\$ -
2-9900	Miscellaneous	\$ 500.00													\$ 500.00	0%	\$ -
															\$ -		\$ -
3-0100	Rental Expenses														\$ -		\$ -
3-0101	Office Supplies	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 58.79	\$ 249.42	\$ 42.32	\$ 222.48	\$ 145.16	\$ 167.13	\$ (627.09)	\$ 12.18		\$ 169.56	\$ 465.96	\$ 1,654.61	\$ 939.48	73%	\$ 2,560.52
3-0124	Program Supplies	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 56.30	\$ 495.22	\$ 177.75	\$ 79.23		\$ 23.86	\$ 767.87		\$ 323.00	\$ 125.00	\$ 267.84	\$ 202.88	\$ 1,481.05	63%	\$ 2,518.95
															\$ -		\$ -
4-0200	Equipment - Office	\$ 5,000.00									\$ 5,754.61	\$ 57.61		\$ 1,216.31	\$ (2,028.53)	141%	\$ 7,028.53
															\$ -		\$ -
5-0500	Office Equipmnet														\$ -		\$ -
															\$ -		\$ -
	Total	\$ 145,673.78	\$ 12,518.15	\$ 7,776.25	\$ 6,685.92	\$ 6,792.68	\$ 6,408.56	\$ 9,707.22	\$ 6,168.70	\$ 3,122.83	\$ 10,390.83	\$ 6,219.24	\$ 6,810.29	\$ 8,343.32	\$ 54,729.79	62%	\$ 90,943.99

2023-2024																	
Acct #	Acct Name	Budget	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	Balance	% Used	Expenditures
1-0301	Extension Assistant (1.0 FTE)	\$ 40,000.00			\$ 1,950.00										\$ 38,050.00	5%	\$ 1,950.00
1-0305	Clerical Salary (2.0 FTE)	\$ 80,211.50	\$ 5,296.20	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 6,160.01										\$ 62,755.29	22%	\$ 17,456.21
1-0405	Clerical PT Salary (PRN)	\$ 500.00		\$ 870.00	\$ -										\$ (370.00)		\$ 870.00
1-0408	PT Salary Spraying														\$ -		\$ -
1-0423	AG AGT - AIDES PT SAL	\$ -													\$ -	#DIV/0!	\$ -
1-0500	Overtime	\$ 3,500.00		\$ 2,888.06	\$ -										\$ 611.94	83%	\$ 2,888.06
1-0801	Workman's Comp														\$ -		\$ -
1-0802	Health Ins														\$ -		\$ -
1-0803	Life (Madison National)														\$ -		\$ -
1-0804	Life (Great West)														\$ -		\$ -
1-0900	Retirement	\$ 8,384.28	\$ 357.50	\$ 590.84	\$ 547.43										\$ 6,888.51	18%	\$ 1,495.77
1-1000	Oasi	\$ 9,502.18	\$ 375.86	\$ 716.44	\$ 536.71										\$ 7,873.17	17%	\$ 1,629.01
															\$ -		\$ -
2-0100	Postal Services	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 110.23	\$ 309.69	\$ 169.72										\$ 910.36	39%	\$ 589.64
2-0200	Telephone Services	\$ 1,200.00			\$ 57.24										\$ 1,142.76	5%	\$ 57.24
2-0900	Gen Finance/Admin Expen	\$ -													\$ -		\$ -
2-1200	Office Equipment Repair	\$ -													\$ -		\$ -
2-1601	Car Repairs			\$ 18.00											\$ -		\$ -
2-1704	Mileage	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 302.48		\$ 95.00										\$ (18.00)	#DIV/0!	\$ 18.00
2-1708	Board Members Expense	\$ 100.00													\$ 2,602.52	13%	\$ 397.48
2-1801	Dues, Subscriptions, Reg.	\$ 150.00	\$ 110.81												\$ 100.00	0%	\$ -
2-2515	Contractual Services														\$ 39.19	74%	\$ 110.81
2-9900	Miscellaneous	\$ 500.00													\$ -		\$ -
															\$ 500.00	0%	\$ -
															\$ -		\$ -
3-0100	Rental Expenses			\$ 69.92	\$ 50.00										\$ (119.92)		\$ 119.92
3-0101	Office Supplies	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 444.23		\$ 1,176.24										\$ 1,379.53	54%	\$ 1,620.47
3-0124	Program Supplies	\$ 3,000.00													\$ 3,000.00	0%	\$ -
															\$ -		\$ -
4-0200	Equipment - Office	\$ 5,500.00													\$ 5,500.00	0%	\$ -
															\$ -		\$ -
5-0500	Office Equipment	\$ -													\$ -		\$ -
															\$ -		\$ -
	Total	\$ 160,047.96	\$ 6,997.31	\$ 11,462.95	\$ 10,742.35	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 130,845.35	18%	\$ 29,202.61

Buffalo County

Impact At-A-Glance



Engaging in mindfulness and reflection has many benefits for health and well-being of providers and young children, including better sleep, increased focus and attention, and enhanced relationships.

Pennsylvania State Extension Better Kid Care visited Sonshine World in Kearney. The program is evidence-informed education provided to early childhood educators. During the visit they interviewed several professionals and filmed classroom practices for an upcoming course highlighting mindfulness and social-emotional learning. The course is based on the work of the CHIME Program (Cultivating Healthy, Intentional, Mindful Educators), which offers education and guidance on incorporating mindfulness and reflective practice into daily routines, teaching, and caregiving.

Programs At-A-Glance

- Farmer's Market Offers Double Up Food Bucks to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) customers. Customers get twice the number of fresh fruits and vegetables. For every \$2 spent, they receive \$2 in a voucher up to \$20 a day.
- During the 2023 season, 61 EBT card transactions were matched with vouchers with 35 first-time customers.

630

Buffalo County Kindergarteners, 3-4th grade students reached over 110 hours through Embryology program

475

Buffalo County students reached through Career Simulation Connect-the-Dots Program.

143

5th grade Kearney Public School students participated in the Leadership Summit

**STRENGTHEN NEBRASKA
AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS**

**INSPIRE NEBRASKANS &
THEIR COMMUNITIES**

**ENHANCE THE HEALTH
& WELLBEING OF ALL
NEBRASKANS**



Elsen Kerry Impacts 2023

Most Significant Contributions

AgCiting Science remains one of my focus areas. Kearney Public Schools has continued to have all third-grade classrooms participate in the complete 10-hour lesson set. These students will also be involved in our AgCiting Science Ag Festival as a capstone event in the spring. Our AgCiting Science Ag Festival was attended by 569 youth from both Kearney Public and the area rural schools. **My Contribution:** I teach the 10-hour lesson sets to each third-grade classroom. Additionally, I organize, host and coordinate speakers for each of the AgCiting Science Festivals.

BRAG, (Big Red Ag Growers) maintains each year with approximately 12 youth selected to participate each year. Youth gain knowledge to develop the skills necessary to advocate for production agriculture confidently and correctly. They recognize the diversity in agriculture across Nebraska. This program is constantly evolving. Members have the opportunity to gain and practice communication skills, experience the vastness of Nebraska Agriculture by experiencing what is happening in agriculture related businesses across the state. A few highlights for the 2023 tours, Rouse Rakes, Pitzer Quarter Horses, Calamus Fish Hatchery, Popcorn, Omaha Steaks, Oxbow Animal Health, Bayer Crop Science, Johnson Landscape, Sprout House, Nebraska Farm Bureau, KRVN and Innovation Campus Greenhouses. In June 2023, thirteen previous BRAG members were selected to travel to Kodiak, Alaska and learn how agriculture especially is guided by available resources and what agriculture industries look like outside of Nebraska. This 10-day experience provided many opportunities for youth to experience agriculture. All participants stated, "yes" to, As a result of this experience, do you better understand how the available resources determine what agricultural practices are used. All participants stated, "yes" to, as a result of this trip, I have greater respect for agricultural practices that are different from my own. When asked what they would do with the knowledge gained during their Alaska experience, one participant responded, "I would like to first tell my family and then use it as a tool to help tell and show others how every part of this agriculture industry is important towards our survival!" Another response was, "Agriculture in our state seems to be focused on growth and development. Although Alaska is working to make better and safer products for a lot of people agriculture is about sustainability."

My contribution: Organize and schedule educational seminars and tours for both local events and those for participants in Alaska. A few tour highlights include Port of Alaska, Musk Ox Farm, Reindeer Farm, Kodiak Seafood and Marine Science Center, Alaska Wildlife Conservation, Portage Valley Glacier, and Dogsled tours. Worked directly with committee members on developing and continuing to grow the program.

The **Youth Science Field Day (YSFD)** team held programs in Hastings, Holdrege, Grand Island and Kearney reaching over 360 youth from 17 school districts. **My contribution:** In Hastings, Grand Island, Holdrege and Kearney I co-taught "One Health" sessions. I organized and found speakers for the event in Kearney. **Impact:** Evaluation from the program showed youth stated 'yes' to the following statements:

- 94% I know science, engineering or technology can be useful in solving everyday problems.
- 80% I was introduced to science in a new way today.
- 87% I think learning new things about science, engineering or technology is fun.

- 89 % I learned about opportunities at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln to student science, engineering, and technology related fields.
- 95% of participants would recommend YSFD to other students.

This past year, 79% of those that participated were not enrolled in the traditional 4-H program. The **Animals Inside & Out** team reached 1596 youth at 12 sites in 2023. A total of 27,539 youth participants and adults have been reached since the program began in 2012. **My Contribution:** During the Minden event, I taught the By-Products session. *Impact:* Participant post-program evaluation reported:

- 91% thought Animal Science was cool
- 96% know that farmers make good choices to keep our food safe
- 85% reported that they better understood where their food comes from
- 96% learned something new

This past year, 70% of those that participated were not enrolled in the traditional 4-H program.

Ambiguous Loss

Nebraska Extension's Ambiguous Loss and Agriculture team formed in response to the changing farm and rural landscape. In 2022, UNMC research study using the Migrant Farmworker Stress Inventory (MFWSI) identified common stressors among farmer workers highlighting stress, depression, and stigma associated with mental health. Nebraska Extension's Rural Family Stress and Wellness Team promotes the health and wellness of all Nebraskans. This diverse team of community partners meets regularly to share resources and programs that also focus on the unique and underserved needs, especially of rural residents. The Ambiguous Loss program is a sub-team housed within the broader team. UNL has a long-standing reputation for delivering high-value resources and programs, especially in the field of agriculture and natural resources. These specific and tailored resources to underserved audiences address a gap in resources that current Extension personnel do not have access to. Furthermore, this team creates peer-reviewed materials that Extension personnel can embed in their own programming. **My Contribution:** I am an active team member and have provided an interview clip – "Ambiguous Loss and Agriculture – Family Farm", [UNL | MediaHub | Nebraska Extension's Ambiguous Loss and Agriculture Series](#).

Lead Educator

The role of Lead Educator provides for new challenges and new success each year. In 2023, Buffalo County has seen success in combining two part-time positions to create one full-time position. We hired 4-H Assistant, Heidi Darby in August. She has already been a wonderful addition to this team and has been successful in adding new youth audiences. Additionally, we hired Kathy Andrews as Office Manager, she has also been a wonderful addition to our team. Our team spends time doing team building activities each month to encourage cohesiveness. I am continuing to learn how to manage the role of Lead Educator while balancing the responsibilities of a 4-H Educator. Our relationship with Buffalo County Commissioners still continues to improve and I feel we are working together to meet the needs of the community. Communication is improving but we need to spend more time focusing on how to make sure commissioners know what Extension is providing. We need to be more intentional about inviting them to events we are holding and making a larger effort to provide updates to the

entire Board instead of relying on the Extension Committee to share with the remainder of the Board of Commissioners.

Other Contributions

- 4-H 101 Coach
- State Fair Management Team Member
- PASE Quiz Bowl Co-Superintendent
- Leadership Team for Fed Steer Challenge Program
- Monthly Clipper Articles
- Manage 4-H Program
- Buffalo County Fair
- Facilitate Extension Board Meetings
- Attended ESP Conference
- Submitted presentation proposals to ESP and NAE4-HYDP conferences

2023 Impacts and Accomplishments
Brent L. Plugge, Extension Educator
Zone 3

2023 Stocker/Yearling Program and Tour

Stocker-yearling cattle can complement a cow-calf operation by providing flexibility in a grazing system. This segment can be a profit center for producers as well as provide an avenue into the beef business for beginning ranchers. The annual Stocker/Yearling program and a tour was held in June in Sioux County, to provide participants information pertaining to the stocker-yearling enterprise. A total of 72 producers, veterinarians, consultants, and land managers attended the program. *My Role:* Program Planning, Publicity, Evaluation.

Impact: A post meeting survey (n=11) indicated that 89% of the respondents were likely or very likely to make management changes because of this educational effort. The most likely changes reported were from information shared at the ranch tour. Knowledge gained in all categories was significant. Participants reported an average of 1,762 head of stocker-yearlings, 692 head of cows and 144 head of replacement heifers they own, manage or influence by consultation. In addition, participants reported an average of 12,026 acres of pastureland and 240 acres of hayland they own, manage or influence. A \$40.99 per head value from anticipated management changes and knowledge gained was reported in the survey. The total reported value of the 2023 Stocker-Yearling program was \$369,338.

Presented: Presented "Serving the Research and Extension Needs of Growing Cattle Systems in Nebraska" at the 2023 NACAA AIM/PIC Meeting in Des Moines, Iowa.

2023 Feedlot Roundtables

The Bayer Crop Science, Gothenburg Water Utilization Learning Center was the site for one of three Feedlot Roundtables in 2023. The roundtables are designed to share current research and best management practices in a wide variety of topics relevant to feedlot owners, managers, and employees. *My Role:* Publicity, Program Moderator, Local Facility Arrangements.

Impact: The 72 participants in a post meeting survey reported significant knowledge gained, an increase in the likelihood of adopting new management practices and reported a significant economic gain because of attending the roundtable. One producer commented "This was the most informational meeting I have been to in years. Presenters and topics were excellent."

Nebraska Grazing Conference

In The 23rd Annual Nebraska Grazing Conference was held in Kearney on August 8 and 9, 2023. A total of 106 producers attended the conference with over 50 attending the pre-conference tour. In keeping with past conferences, the agenda included a pre-conference tour and speakers representing academia, industry and producers emphasizing that everyone is a teacher, and everyone is a learner. The pre-conference tour featured Curt Pate, a nationally recognized expert in animal handling and Ruth Woiwode, UNL Extension Specialist in Animal Welfare and Behavior, who conducted a low-stress animal handling demonstration on pasture. *My Role:* Co-Lead the Conference Planning, Local Facility Arrangements, Publicity, Chair Sponsorship Committee and Plan the Pre-Conference Tour.

Impacts: Producers reported owning or influencing 9,345 head of cows and 12,342 stockers. They also reported owning or influencing 105,880 acres of pasture and 9,280 acres of hayland. In a post-meeting survey, 69% of participants reported they that implemented ideas from past conferences and 81%

reported they are very likely or likely to make management changes as a result of this year's conference. Based on past conferences the value of the conference is estimated to be \$25-\$35 per acre, making this year's conference valued between \$2,879,000 and \$4,030,600.

Husker Beef Lab

The Husker Beef Lab was launched in August of 2011. The lab is designed to transport a ruminally fistulated beef animal to middle schools and high schools across Nebraska and other invited events. The purpose is to teach students about ruminant animal nutrition and to increase their interest in science and science related careers. In addition, this hands-on, learning experience teaches youth the value of beef production in Nebraska, animal well-being, nutritional aspects of beef, and production phases from pasture to plate. Students can observe rumen microorganisms under a microscope and apply science principles using this ruminally fistulated animal. In 2023, I participated in 17 events (76 sessions) reaching 1,839 people with 47.5 hours of instruction. Events included Youth Science Field Days (n=5), Animals Inside and Out (n=7) and other invited events (n=5). *My Role:* Instructor, Oversee Lab Schedule, and Monitor Lab Supplies.

Total Lab Impacts: Surveys indicated the following overall impacts:

- 95% of youth correctly identified that more than one-half of Nebraska's land mass consists of grasslands which grazing cattle turn into protein and other products for humans.
- 98% of youth recognized that Nebraska has the top three beef cow counties in the nation.
- 95% of students correctly identified that cows are ruminants with a four-compartment stomach.
- 75% of participants reported learning that the cow and rumen microorganisms have a symbiotic relationship.
- When asked to identify the most important thing they learned, one student responded, "The cow provides the perfect environment for bacteria to break down cellulose in plants." Another participant commented, "Thank you for letting us have this opportunity to learn more about animal science and explore the cow's digestive system."
- 66% of youth indicated an increased interest in animal science.

For Animals and Inside and Out, I taught 940 students, with 20 hours of instruction at 7 events:

Animals Inside and Out Impact: Participant post-program evaluation reported:

- 91% thought Animal Science was cool.
- 96% know that farmers make good choices to keep our food safe.
- 85% reported having a better understanding where their food comes from.
- 96% learned something new.

For Youth Science Field Day's, I taught 272 students with 10.5 hours of instruction at 5 events.

Youth Science Field Day's Impact: Participant post-program evaluation reported:

- 94% I know science, engineering or technology can be useful in solving everyday problems.
- 80% I was introduced to science in a new way today.
- 87% I think learning new things about science, engineering or technology is fun.
- 89 % I learned about opportunities at the UNL to study STEM related fields.

Other 2023 Contributions

- Co-lead of the Husker Harvest Days effort, including selecting the theme, approving graphics, selecting booth leaders, inviting dignitaries, monitoring daily activities, and receiving feedback from attendees.
- Serve as a livestock resource in York, Merrick, Hamilton, and Polk Counties in the absence of a livestock educator.
- Assigned mentor for Lindsay Waechter-Mead.
- Active member of the Beef Innovation Hub, Faculty Advisory Committee, representing Livestock Educators, the Information, Technology and Service Committee, a sub-committee of the Faculty Senate, a member of the NCEA, Ag Section, and an affiliate of the Department of Animal Science.
- Advisor for the Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition Board of Directors, member of the Lower Loup Nebraska Cattleman's Affiliate, advisor for Grazing Systems major, and member of the Center for Grassland Studies Policy Advisory Committee.
- Served as a secondary host for five Private Pesticide Certifications (n=204), a Chemigation Certification (n=35), a Farm Succession and Transition meeting (n=22) and a Nebraska Extension On-Farm Research Results meeting (n=38).
- Attended the 2023 NACAA AIM/PIC Annual Meeting in Des Moines, Iowa. Presented "Serving the Research and Extension Needs of Growing Cattle Systems in Nebraska" as an Animal Science Seminar.
- Contributed to the success of the 2023 Buffalo County Fair.
- Submitted \$50,000 SARE Grant: Plugge B. L., Laborie E., Meyer T.L., Smith H., Benjamin R., Walz T., and Rick Rasby. "Producers Helping Producers – Co- Creating Solutions with New Livestock Producers that Impact Quality of Life, Natural Landscape and Resources, and Economics to Build Success and Sustainability." (Pending)
- Reached 1,941 clients with 51.5 hours of direct teaching and an additional 123 clientele with individual consultation within the Livestock Systems Program Area.

Jada Ruff || FNH Educator
2023 Annual Report

Note:

In my first seven months employed by Nebraska Extension I have developed partnerships with local stakeholders; connected with community members, peers, and teams; and contributed to the health and wellbeing of people in Nebraska through direct education, indirect education, and/or PSE work. PSE stands for Policy, Systems and Environmental work. I am continuing to learn my role at the county level as well as in my accountability region.

Double Up Food Bucks (DUFB) and the Kearney Area Farmers Market (KAFM)

Goal: KAFM has been able to offer DUFB program to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligible customers for the last three years. The primary goal of this PSE program is to increase food access to individuals in the Buffalo County area and help customers bring home more healthy food.

Objective: When customers use their EBT Card at the market, Double Up matches their fruit and vegetable purchases dollar for dollar, up to \$20 a day. That means customers get twice the number of fresh fruits and veggies and increase their fruit and vegetable intake.

Contributions: Collected DUFB data biweekly throughout the market season (June-October) and entered data into the Nutrition Incentive Hub as part of the requirement by the USDA Grant.

Impact and Outcomes: During the 2023 KAFM season, there were 61 EBT card transactions where customers were then matched with DUFB vouchers and of that 61 transactions 35 were first time customers at the market. Those 31 new customers were able to participate in Double Up for the first time. DUFB customers (n=61) spent \$1,554 of their federal SNAP benefits at the market, earning \$1,087 in DUFB for the 2023 market season.

AgrAbility

Goal: Nebraska AgrAbility is a partnership of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension and Easter Seals Nebraska. Nebraska's state project goal is to provide information to farmers or farmworkers, their families on assistive technology (AT) and farm site modifications that enable people with disabilities to remain involved in production agriculture.

Objective: By bringing rural safety to the forefront, the Nebraska AgrAbility Project delivers services statewide to Nebraska farmers/ranchers with disabilities who are engaged in agriculture to bring them necessary resources, modifications, and AT to continue working in an agricultural related profession. Some disabilities may be present at birth, while others may be a result of accidents, injury, illness, or age-related conditions.

Contributions: Provided indirect education and resources to farmers and ranchers with disabilities through newly created assistive technology handouts (both low and high assistive technology). Provide direct education to people of Nebraska through local farm shows and community events and bring awareness about the state project that is happening in Nebraska.

Impact and Outcomes: I attended one farm show and was able to interact with individuals who have experiences with farmers and ranchers with disabilities and collect their information so that AgrAbility can reach out. Additionally, continue learning the leadership role Extension plays in this partnership.

Youth Science Field Days (YSFD)

Goal: YSFD Team held programs in Hastings, Holdrege, Grand Island and Kearney reaching over 360 youth from 17 school districts

Objective: Teach highschoolers all about science, engineering, and technology and how that can apply to everyday life through various stations with different topics.

Contributions: I taught Food Science using the Food, Fuel, Fiber lesson and taught the Science of Sleep using Sleepless in Nebraska curriculum.

Impacts and Outcomes: Evaluation from the program showed youth stated 'yes' to the following statements:

- 94% I know science, engineering or technology can be useful in solving everyday problems.
- 89 % I learned about opportunities at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln to student science, engineering, and technology related fields.
- 95% of participants would recommend YSFD to other students.

Student survey responses stated: "Sleep science was cool because it taught me to not sleep in a hot room", "I learned a lot about sleep that I did not know", "The sleep session inspired me because I learned a lot" and "The most important thing I learned was to get enough sleep and ways you can".

Nebraska Kids Fitness and Nutrition Day (NKFND)- Handwashing Station

Goal: Increase physical activity and nutrition knowledge in youth and the importance of handwashing

Objective: Teach youth how to wash their hands, why we wash our hands, and when to wash their hands

Contributions: Extension has partnered with University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK) for years to bring resources about handwashing to NKFND. There was a brief break in this partnership, and I was able to reconnect with UNK this year. I facilitated the handwashing station while volunteers from UNK led the station which consisted of 10 different sessions throughout the day.

Impacts and Outcomes: 674 4th graders from Kearney Public Schools and surrounding Buffalo County rural schools are now equipped with knowledge and resources to make healthier food choices around MyPlate, how to effectively wash their hands, how to choose healthier drink options, and learned many ways to stay physically active.

Other Contributions

- Participated in the GO NAPSACC training and received certification as a trained consultant
- Helped create recipes cards through a partnership with FNH and UNL-Loeffel Meat Shoppe
- Member of the AgrAbility Team
- Receive funding from USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program grant (DUFB)
- Attended CATCH Training and became certified
- Presenter at annual GNBC Retreat in Curtis, NE (20 participants)
- Member of the Rural and Wellness booth at Husker Harvest Days
- Member of the AgrAbility booth at the Lincoln Farm Expo
- Participated in the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People Workshop
- Contributed to the success of the 2023 Buffalo County Fair

Wilbur Jordan Impacts 2023

Most Significant Contributions

Leadership Summit is a contribution I continued to grow upon this year. Overall, 121 5th grade students in the Kearney Public School System were taught this curriculum. Four elementaries, Windy Hills, Buffalo Hills, Kenwood, and Northeast, participated. **My Contribution:** The Leadership Summit Curriculum consists of six 45-minute sessions that I taught. They each take a personality assessment, learn more about their strengths, and do activities with one another to test their strengths.

The **Building Better Babysitters** Curriculum was offered to 30 youth in Kearney. Kearney Park and Recreation continued our partnership with them to offer this course to youth in their summer activities. Topics that were covered in the workshop were nutrition, general care, business of babysitting, and child development. A nurse from CHI presented safety to the participants. 90% of participants reported they learned how to reduce the risk of choking after participating in this workshop, which is a cause of death many babysitters fear in children. **My Contribution:** I facilitated this workshop, planned with Kearney Park and Recreation for dates, facilities, and times, and connected with CHI to present at the workshop.

The **4-H Discovery Club** continues to grow and improve in Buffalo County. The Discovery Club is to give new 4-H members a home that do not know where to start. It is for ages 5-10 years old and meets biweekly. The 4-H Discovery Club had 15 members enrolled in the 2023 4-H year and had a consistent 15-17 members participate in meetings in the fall of 2023. **My Contribution:** I planned and led the 4-H Discovery Club meetings. Some of the meetings included making birthday cards for the Veterans Home, growing tomato and pepper plants from seeds, adopting a dairy cow, and learning about different art projects and agriculture.

The **Citizen Washington Focus Trip** was a highlight of the summer for 6 Buffalo County 4-H members. They joined 68 other 4-H members across the state to travel to Washington D.C for the Citizen Washington Focus Conference, as well as New York City, Chicago, Philadelphia, and other stops. **My Contribution:** I assisted in planning for the trip which included meeting with the travel agent, communicating with other Extension Staff, leading meetings, and teaching the We the People curriculum to 4-H members. I traveled with the group and was a lead for the group.

The **Tempt, Taste, Try Workshops** are a longstanding tradition in Buffalo County. This year, 62 youth participated, 5 business representatives, and 2 adult volunteers assisted over the course of the two days of workshops. Highlights this year were Paint Paradise, a local art shop, SmallCakes, a local bakery, teaching sessions, making door signs, and making terrariums with Rooted, a local plant company. **My Contributions:** I plan, organize, and teach at these workshops. I coordinated with local businesses, budgeted for supplies, and taught two project areas.

Christmas Baking Workshop was a success for the 2nd year. There were 38 youth bakers, 10 adult volunteers, and 5 elder 4-H volunteers teach at this year's workshop. There were recipes made that coordinated with Cooking 101, 201, and 301/401. Volunteers led groups of 5-7 to work through recipes, share expertise, and have fun! Each youth had the opportunity to make a Christmas craft, and each youth took home a sample of each recipe as well as a booklet with all the recipes. **My Contribution:** I

planned and organized the workshop by finding recipes, volunteers, supplies, and ingredients.

The **Youth Science Field Day** (YSFD) team held programs in Hastings, Holdrege, Grand Island and Kearney reaching over 360 youth from 17 school districts. **My contribution:** In Hastings, Grand Island, Holdrege, and I taught sessions on food science, meat science, and Ag Innovations. Evaluation from the program showed youth stated 'yes' to the following statements:

- 94% I know science, engineering or technology can be useful in solving everyday problems.
- 80% I was introduced to science in a new way today.
- 87% I think learning new things about science, engineering or technology is fun.
- 89 % I learned about opportunities at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln to student science, engineering, and technology related fields.
- 95% of participants would recommend YSFD to other students.

The **Animals Inside & Out** team reached 1596 youth at 12 sites in 2023. A total of 27,539 youth participants and adults have been reached since the program began in 2012. **My Contribution:** During the Grand Island and North Platte events I taught the Management session, and at the Minden and Holdrege events, I taught the Careers session. *Impact:* Participant post-program evaluation reported:

- 91% thought Animal Science was cool
- 96% know that farmers make good choices to keep our food safe
- 85% reported that they better understood where their food comes from
- 96% learned something new

This past year, 70% of those that participated were not enrolled in the traditional 4-H program.

Other Contributions:

- Building Better Babysitters Curriculum Co-lead
- Trainee to be the Co-Lead of the 4-H Leadership Team
- Clover Kid Adventure Day
- Buffalo County pre-fair contests including the Performing Arts Contest, the Premier Communication Event, and the Fashion Show
- Buffalo County Fair
- Enrolled in the Achieving the Extension Mission Through Volunteers course
- Participated in the Your Investment in Workplace Culture Training
- Safety Day presenter at Pleasanton and Franklin Schools

Impacts and Accomplishments

Heidi Darby

Most Significant Accomplishments 2023

Activities with Forestry Service

Assisted with Tree Jamboree at Hastings Museum

Lead class on owl pellet dissection for 2nd-4th graders.

Youth Science Field Day

Lead instructional group on Bees and pollinators.

Entrepreneurship Team Activities

Assisted with Inventure day in Nuckolls County.

Mentored a team of five 6th graders.

Completed certifications:

Upstarts and Youth Arise curriculum.

Monthly School Enrichment activity with three 6th grade classrooms.

Bees

Water Journey

Mammal Tracks and Scat

Wild Turkeys

Owl Pellets

Monthly School Enrichment activity for Homeschool students.

Mammal Tracks and Scat

Wild Turkeys

Bats

Environmental Team Activities

Environmental Education presentation to Nebraska Ag. Academy Homeschool Program.

Completed certification in CAPE curriculum.

Impacts and Accomplishments

Other Contributions 2023

Other sharing/teaching opportunities:

Shared Beekeeping program with Buffalo County Extension Board.

Monthly articles for The Clipper newspaper.

Conducted mock interview with Kearney High School seniors.

4-H Information table at Trick or Treating at the Armory for Halloween.

Assisted with organizing shooting sports certification in Kearney.

Elizabeth Exstrom 2023 Impacts and Accomplishments
Horticulture, Landscape, and Environmental Systems Extension Educator

Most Impactful Work and Significant Contributions

Water Dogs Program- “Set it and forget it” is a common practice with automatic irrigation systems that may result in excessive irrigation, unhealthy turf root systems, and water waste. The Water Dogs program is a multi-year program that focuses on educating Extension Master Gardener Volunteers (EMGVs) about turfgrass water needs, efficient irrigation methods, and soil health management practices. The program also encourages increased engagement of EMGVs with homeowner audiences to share and demonstrate knowledge gained and practices learned via “Neighbor to Neighbor” workshops. The overall goal is water conservation and improved soil and plant health.

The Nebraska Water Dogs program was adapted from two articles in the Journal of the NACAA (National Association of County Agricultural Agents) and was developed by a statewide team of Extension Educators and Specialists. I am a member of the team, assisted with education, and had EMGVs participate in the program.

In spring of 2021, 24 Extension Master Gardener Volunteers (EMGVs) from six sites across the state participated in a pilot program. During that growing season, volunteers agreed to turn off their automatic systems and use a soil moisture meter and/or screwdriver, along with visual turfgrass signs, to determine when to irrigate. They collected data such as moisture meter readings, rainfall, how often they irrigated, irrigation system maintenance, and any other practices they used/changed.

Volunteers first took part in a virtual training conducted by Extension staff, teaching turfgrass water needs, efficient irrigation methods, and soil health management practices. I am one of six Extension Educators and two Extension Specialists that provided content and taught volunteers from their local areas by demonstrating an irrigation audit at each site, soil sampling, measuring soil compaction with penetrometers, and teaching how to use a simple moisture meter and screwdriver to estimate soil moisture. Four peer reviewed fact sheets were written by Extension Educators and Specialists and provided to the 24 participating EMGVs and for continued outreach in ongoing Water Dogs programming.

In October 2021, a virtual review was held for volunteers to share what they learned, and what did and didn’t work for them. They provided suggestions for the future of the Water Dogs program. Together, we explored next steps on sharing their learning experience to expand outreach and creating behavior change in future participants related to landscape irrigation and soil health. Almost all 24 EMGVs participated in the review, along with Extension staff.

In 2022 and 2023, 18 Water Dog ‘Neighbor to Neighbor’ workshops were hosted at the homes of participating EMGVs and at Homeowner Associations (HOAs) and other community locations reaching 258 people. At these workshops, EMGVs and Extension staff co-taught best practices for turf/landscape irrigation, soil compaction management and demonstrated an irrigation audit. A series of three virtual Water Dog webinars were held to reinforce and expand participant’s knowledge of these practices. These included a basic introductory webinar and two additional webinars providing more in-depth information on irrigation and automatic irrigation systems. These were open to all EMGVs, even those not directly involved with leading Neighbor-to-Neighbor workshops; 96 (2021), 161 (2022) and 107 (2023) participated. Some participants attended more than one program, indicating program value for them.

A multi-year evaluation tool was created by the University’s Bureau of Sociological Research (BOSR) and approved by the University’s institutional review board. BOSR collected and compiled the results from the completed surveys – 21 in 2021 and 15 in 2022.

- 50% of EMGVs participated in both years of the study. (n=39) Over 95% of participants had automatic, in-ground irrigation systems.
- Participants often entered the program with incorrect beliefs about turf and soil management, such as “...[I] learned watering alone will not correct soil compaction.” While others learned they were already doing many things correctly.

Before participating in the Water Dogs program, 28.6% of 2022 participants reported their normal practice was to turn their system on in spring and let it run all season on a preset schedule; 35.7% ran the system automatically but turned it off during rain. The final 35.7% ran their systems manually, turning it on when they determined irrigation was needed. This third group based their irrigation decisions on the physical appearance of the lawn, weather, and past experience with their lawn.

In both 2021 and 2022, a majority of participants - 59.1% and 62.5% respectively - indicated they very closely followed the recommendation to turn off their irrigation system and only run it manually when monitoring indicated a moisture need. EMGVs significantly increased their skills with efficient watering practices, with 56.5% in 2021 to 81.3% in 2022. When asked the difference in irrigation frequency when watering based on lawn needs, as compared to a preset schedule, in both years they reported "A big difference" and fewer irrigations (69.6% and 75.0% respectively). One participant commented, "My lawn is probably the healthiest on my city block." They also noted changes seen in their lawns and landscapes due to their change in irrigation practices.

One participant commented, "It made me very aware that we do have extreme control at our fingertips over how our lawns are maintained and getting the results we want for efficiencies, water conservation, lawn health and [financial] savings... are all attainable." Another commented, "Weed control and fertilization can be at a minimum if you learn efficient lawn care practices..." Or "My husband was always preaching that I wanted to water the lawn much more than [was] probably necessary. Now we both have learned to use our moisture meter. Problem solved."

Moving forward, the Extension team plans to grow and improve Water Dogs programming. Conducting an irrigation system audit is a topic in which participants indicated less than 40% competency level for both years. We will find new, innovative ways to teach the irrigation audit method. It has been discussed to create a video to show online participants how to conduct audits. The video could also be used in areas where there is no horticulture Extension Educator to teach clientele how to properly complete an audit. I have compiled the materials needed for two irrigation audit kits, which are an additional tools for EMGVs and homeowners to use. These kits have been assembled to check out and include the necessary equipment as well as instructions for conducting system audits completing an audit.

Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program- Extension Master Gardener Volunteers (EMGV) enroll in the program and receive 40 hours of education from University of Nebraska—Lincoln faculty, then volunteer 40 hours of gardening and horticulture related work. Eighteen EMGV classes offered 60 hours of education to 70 EMGs from 17 counties who contacted 5,235 clients and volunteered 2,076 hours locally; public value \$61,258. EMGV assisted in donation gardens & provided over 12,924 servings of fresh fruits and vegetables to over 1,792 individuals.

Special Garden Project- The Special Garden Project lets 4-H members try their hand at growing unusual vegetables and flowers. The project allows experienced 4-H gardeners to grow something fun, new, and different while letting those new to gardening get their feet wet in this project area. 1,570 packets of Mrs. Burns Lemon Basil were distributed across Nebraska. I have coordinated this project for the past 13 years and during this time, every county in Nebraska has participated in the project.

Client Contacts- In 2023, I received 1,575 calls, emails, and texts from 43 Nebraska counties, 5 states, and 2 countries and had nearly 5,750 program participants from 90 hours of programming. I also reach clients through local television, Backyard Farmer on Nebraska Educational Media, my regular news columns, social media platforms, and radio programs. Between media outreach, direct contacts, and programs offered, I have reached approximately 147,320 individuals, which is equal to the populations of Grand Island, Hastings, Kearney, Wood River, Doniphan, Cairo, and St. Libory combined. This number doesn't include all the media outlets that I interact with (some of those numbers are not made public), nor does it include my social media reach through multiple platforms.

Other Contributions

Student Success Story- In 2022 I coached the Nebraska Horticulture team and took them to the National Junior Horticulture Association Convention (NJHA). Paige Wood, Eliza Bailey, Emily Brhel, and Rachel Brhel were members of the 2022 team. While at the 2022 convention, Paige Wood was the Grand National Winner of the Floral Design competition as well as voted to Vice President of the Youth Council. Paige, Eliza, Emily, and Rachel were members of the 4th place 4-H identification team, and all 4 placed in the top 20.

In 2023 several from the 2022 team participated NJHA on their own. In 2023, Paige Wood was the Grand National Winner of Floral Design contest and the Grand National Winner of the Open Division category (ages 19-22) of the Horticulture Identification Contest (not an easy contest to win). "Being a part of Nebraska 4-H and NJHA has allowed me to make lifelong friends and connections through horticulture," said Paige. "I have also learned many new things, and my eyes have been opened to the opportunities within horticulture."

Last year, Paige served as vice president of the NJHA Youth Council. "It was a wonderful chance to get involved in helping to plan this year's convention and contests," she said. "This year, I was elected president of the NJHA Youth Council, and I cannot wait to start planning next year's convention. I hope to see the organization grow, and more youth compete at the national level."

Emily Brhel, Rachel Brhel and Nathan Brhel participated in the photography contest. Emily was the Grand National Winner and Best in Show for her unedited photo "Indigo Glory." Nathan received an "Outstanding" mark for his unedited photograph "A Burst of Orange." Rachel received a "Good" for her unedited photo "An Array of Color."

https://extension.unl.edu/nebraska-youth-excel-at-the-2023-national-junior-horticulture-associations-convention/?utm_source=ActiveCampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_content=NExt+Wins&utm_campaign=NExt+Wins+III

Lead Educator- In the Hall County office, I am the lead educator in charge of communication with accountability region educators and the Extension board. This past year I planned and facilitated the Extension board meetings, sent reminders, and prepared the documents needed for the board. I also reached out to non-resident Educators to include them in board meetings and provided their program narratives to the Extension Board Members. I also worked with non-resident educators and asked their preference when it comes to receiving client questions and shared that with the front office staff.

Faculty Senate- I served on the Faculty Senate as a zone 6 representative from August until December. My term on the senate was shortened due to the dissolution of zone 6 in December 2023.

Mentor- Serve as a formal mentor for a new HLES educator. We meet monthly to discuss upcoming programs, answer any questions she may have, as well as act as a sounding board for ideas.

Area Committees- I serve on several area committees. In 2023 I was asked to be on the Kearney H2O Steering committee. I also sit on the Grand Island Tree Board, State Fair Landscape Committee, and Grand Island Groundwater Guardian committee. Serving on these committees allows me to be involved in the local communities and provide my expertise to these committees.

NCEA Agriculture Section Pres-Elect- 2023 I served as Ag. Section president elect.

Agriculture and Natural Resources Promotion committee- newly elected to the committee in 2023.

Professional Development- Tested and passed the 200-question written exam to become an International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist. I am the only Extension Educator in our system that is a certified arborist with both the Nebraska Arborist Association (NAA) and the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA). In central Nebraska, there are only a handful of certified arborists. These credentials add to my expertise in this area and add to my credibility in this area. Additionally, I attended both the Nebraska Arborist Association and Nebraska Nursery and Landscape Association annual conferences for Extension to have a presence in both organizations and I attended the ISA virtual conference. I completed the two-day Technology of Participation (ToPs) Facilitation training for group facilitation.

October 16, 2023
Kerry Elsen
Buffalo County Extension
For Immediate Release

Finding Community in 4-H

Nebraska 4-H is open for enrollment for the 2024 programming year. 4-H offers a multitude of opportunities for youth and families to develop their community.

Community can be defined as, "a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests and goals." 4-H offers programming through camps, traditional clubs, school enrichment, afterschool programs and special interest programs, focusing on the following educational focus areas, agriculture literacy, environmental education, science, technology, engineering and math, leadership development, entrepreneurship, college and career success and healthy living.

Youth are able to select project areas that interest them and work with other youth and caring adults to develop skills from completing hands-on projects. Often times clubs contribute to their local community by completing community service projects. These projects not only allow youth to develop their leadership skills as well as improve their local community by fulfilling a need. The interaction between youth members assists them in developing lifelong friendships with youth who may be from another community.

4-H also allows youth to find a community of young people who have similar interests and allows them a safe place to be comfortable to gain life skills. Often community is gained over the snack during a meeting or following an activity. The Buffalo County Extension Office can help you find the right projects for you, as well as

aid in finding other youth members who want to develop a community. To look at all of the project areas available visit our website, <https://buffalo.unl.edu> or contact the Buffalo County Extension Office at 236-1235 or kerry.elsen@unl.edu.

September 25, 2023
Jada Ruff
Buffalo County Extension
For Immediate Release

Healthy Eating During Busy Seasons of Life

It is easy to feel stressed around mealtime especially during busy seasons of life! Harvest season is a prime example of how busy times can impact healthy eating. During these busy times, individuals are impacted by long days and hours, so there is rarely time to sit down for a meal. Most of the time mealtimes are on the go, in the field, at a gas station, etc. A couple other reasons for why healthy eating is impacted during harvest or busy seasons of life is that there may be limited healthy options available especially in rural areas. Harvest time is also an added stress in our lives which can contribute to changes in eating patterns that tend to lead to an increased consumption of high sugar and high fat foods. A healthy eating pattern doesn't mean a complete diet overhaul but rather making small changes that lead to a healthier lifestyle!

It is especially important to plan ahead during these busy seasons so that you are prepared for when mealtime comes around. Here are a few tips and tricks or small shifts that you can include in your daily routine to make busy seasons of life and harvest time more enjoyable and healthier!

Small shifts towards a healthier eating pattern:

- Shift to whole grain bread, pasta, wraps, or rice.
- Shift to water or unsweetened tea rather than sugar sweetened beverages or pop.
- Shift to lean proteins including white meat chicken, lean beef, and pork.
- Choose healthy food preparation methods like roasting, steaming, or air frying.

- Include a serving of fruit with your meals like an apple, unsweetened dried fruit, or 100% fruit juice.
- Add a vegetable to sandwiches, wraps, or as a side!
- Choose low fat dairy with low fat milk, yogurt, and cheeses.
- Vary your protein including eggs, nuts, beans, and seeds.
- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables, this could include an apple and some baby carrots for lunch or a baked potato and bagged salad with dinner.

This information was adapted from Food in the Field. To find out more information or want to learn more about Food in the Field visit <https://food.unl.edu/foodinthefield> or call Buffalo County Extension at 308-236-1235.

Jada Ruff
Food, Nutrition, & Health Extension Education
Nebraska Extension in Buffalo County
1400 East 34th St Kearney, NE 68847
308-236-1235

December 4, 2023
Jordan Wilbur
Buffalo County Extension

Making Christmas Cookies as a Family

It seems almost everyone's Christmas trees are up, houses are lit, and everyone's Christmas shopping has begun! This is one of my favorite times of the year and I owe a lot of it to the memories my family has made over the years. One of my favorite memories is baking Christmas cookies! If your family doesn't bake cookies or treats as a family, I would recommend trying it out this year because the memories made, lessons learned, and calories eaten, make up for the hassle!

Everybody can decorate their cookies differently, some buy cookie dough, some buy frosting, some make royal icing, but my favorite way to make Christmas cookies is by making homemade sugar cookies with the "Wilton's" Buttercream recipe on top! While my family makes cookies we listen to Christmas music, a favorite of mine being Christmas Cookies by George Straight. My mom, sisters, and I spend a few hours baking the cookies and mixing the frosting, and sometimes my dad even gets involved in the decorating process. We do different colors of frosting and buy fun sprinkles to put on top. The conversations while decorating over the years have shifted from talking about baby dolls to talking about the next basketball game, to now talking about all of our jobs, but I wouldn't trade this conversation for the world.

The memories made over the years are priceless, but that isn't the only takeaway from decorating Christmas Cookies as a family! There is learning involved as well. If you have children that are young, they can learn how to measure and mix while making the cookie dough and frosting. Decorating the cookies can also teach them fine motor skills. As your children grow, they may get better at decorating and you as a family can try new things like a different kind of frosting or to use a frosting bag instead of a knife to spread the frosting. There are soft skills that can be learned from baking Christmas Cookies together such as patience and teamwork. Baking cookies can get lengthy, and it takes patience to wait for them to cook and cool, as well as patience to work with one another. Teamwork makes the dream work, and that cannot be truer when baking cookies, it is important to work together as a family because everyone will feel less stressed, and it will be overall more fun!

We can all look at Christmas traditions and see them as a hassle, and sometimes they feel that way. But it is important to take time to make memories as a family because looking back, we will never remember the exact Christmas we got the Xbox, Barbie Doll, or Ipad, but we will remember the time spent with one another. Please see my favorite sugar cookie and frosting recipe below to use with your family this Holiday Season. Merry Christmas!

Jordan Wilbur

4-H Asst Educator

Nebraska Ext in Buffalo County

1400 East 34th St Kearney, NE 68847 308-236-1235

Sugar Cookies

Ingredients

2 cups white sugar
1 ½ cups butter, softened
4 large eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 teaspoon almond extract-don't skip this one!
5 cups all purpose flour

2 teaspoons baking powder

1 teaspoon salt

Directions:

1. Beat sugar and softened butter together in a large bowl with an electric mixer until smooth.
2. Beat in eggs, vanilla, and almond. Stir in flour, baking powder, and salt. Cover, and chill dough for at least 1 hour (or overnight).
3. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F
4. Lightly dust a work surface with flour. Roll out dough to $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thickness.
5. Cut into shapes with any cookie cutter. Place cookies 1 inch apart on an ungreased baking sheet
6. Bake in the oven until cookies are lightly browned, 6 to 8 minutes. Carefully transfer cookies to a wire reach and cool completely before decorating.

This recipe is from Allrecipes.com

Wilton's Buttercream Frosting

Ingredients:

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup solid vegetable shortening

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup unsalted butter

4 cups sifted powdered sugar

2 tablespoons milk

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Pinch of salt

Directions:

1. Using an electric mixer fitted with beaters or a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, cream the butter and shortening on a medium speed until light and fluffy. Beat in the vanilla extract and scrape down the bowl occasionally.
2. Gradually add the powdered sugar, one cup at a time. Start by mixing each cup on a low speed then transition to beating well on medium speed. Scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl after each cup of sugar is added. When all the sugar has been mixed in, the frosting will appear dry and stiff.
3. Gradually add small amounts of cream or milk or water at a time until the desired consistency is reached. Continue to beat at a medium speed until light and fluffy. Scrape down the bowl once more and beat again to make sure all the ingredients are incorporated.

December 25, 2023
Heidi Darby
Buffalo County Extension
For Immediate Release

Keeping Kids Entertained over Christmas Break

Here we are at the end of 2023. All the Christmas presents have been opened and the guests have all gone home. Now what? The last five weeks from Thanksgiving to Christmas have been a blur of short work weeks, school programs, holiday shopping, and family dinners. Now that you have some downtime, how do you keep your kids entertained until they are back in school?

I remember when our kids were younger, the 8 days from Christmas until they were back in school sometimes seemed like the longest days ever. To keep them busy, my husband recruited them to help him. Most years, my husband's job would do a shutdown over these days. That gave the kids some extra ways to keep them busy. "Dad days" were busy days. Some days were spent moving cows with horses or four-wheelers for friends, or fixing fences that the deer or snow would mess up. A lot of days were spent cutting and splitting firewood. We heat our home with a fireplace so they would cut and split quite a bit of wood over these breaks. I would come home to a full load of split firewood and tired and hungry children.

The lull between Christmas and the new semester at school is also a good time to sort through closets and toys. Do they really wear all those clothes in the closet? Do they play with all those toys? Most often, they do not. You can easily free up closet and toy box space by pulling out what doesn't fit or is not something they like to play with or wear. Of course, this task isn't something that kids really like to do but you can make it fun. Our kids would pull out stuff that didn't fit and we would start a donation pile. We would talk about who the clothes might fit or who would like to have it. This helped to make room for their Christmas gifts and I'm pretty sure our family friends with younger children appreciated the hand-me-downs.

Another fun activity is to have your kids make a scrapbook for the year. These were always my favorite. Blank scrapbooks can be purchased at craft stores. You could also use school notebooks or even fun stationery too. You could ask your kids to write about their favorite memories of the year. Maybe they choose to add photos from your family trip that summer. One thought is to make memorial pages for family members or pets that passed away. It's a good opportunity to reminisce about their past loved one.

One rule of thought is to let them decide what is "worthy" of the book. You might be surprised what they thought were the best moments of the year. Just let them take the lead. To make it more personal, let them use their imagination to decorate it. In the future, you can pull them out each Christmas and reflect on all the fun and memorable events of previous years.

If your kids feel like sharing their project with others, this can be entered as an exhibit at the County Fair. Memory books, scrapbooks or even Photography from summer vacations, family trips or just fun memories make great exhibits. See your local Extension office for project information.

Heidi Darby

4-H Extension Assistant

Nebraska Extension in Buffalo County

1400 East 34th St. Kearney, NE 68847 308-236-1235



BUFFALO COUNTY 4-H

May 2023

Nebraska Extension-Buffalo County 1400 E. 34th St. Kearney, NE 68847 (308)-236-1235 buffalo.unl.edu

CALENDAR

May

- 5 Sign-up deadline for Speech/PSA/Presentation Contest
- 8 Sign-up deadline for Performing Arts - UNK
- 15 Speech/PSA/Presentation Contest
- 16 Lottery Goat pickup 6:30 p.m.
- 16 Lottery Lamb pickup 7:30 p.m.
- 18 Deadline to sign up for Sr. Tempt, Taste, Try
- 19 Deadline to sign up for Jr. Tempt, Taste, Try
- 22 Performing Arts - UNK
- 23 4-H Council meeting
- 23 Buffalo County 4-H Shooting Sports organizational meeting 6:30 p.m.
- 24 BRAG meeting
- 24 All Lottery Programs meeting
- 29 Extension office closed - Memorial Day

June

- 1 Sr. Tempt, Taste and Try
- 2 Jr. Tempt, Taste and Try
- 6 Deadline to sign up for Shopping in Style Workshops
- 9 Deadline to sign up for Party Planning Workshop
- 10 Buffalo County 4-H Horse Invitational
- 13 Deadline to sign up for Culinary Challenge
- 15 All Livestock & Horse ID's due (includes Rabbit & Poultry)
- 15 DNA State Fair envelopes due to Extension office

- 15 State Fair online nominations due
- 15 4-H ENROLLMENT DEADLINE
- 15 Quality Assurance deadline
- 15 Deadline to sign up Clover Kid Adventure Day
- 20 Shopping in Style Workshop Part 1
- 21 Deadline to sign up for Lamb & Goat Camp
- 21-22 PASE Premier Animal Science Event-UNL
- 23 Party Planning Workshop
- 27 Culinary Challenge
- 27 4-H Council meeting
- 27 BRAG meeting
- 28 Shopping in Style Workshop Part 2
- 29 Clover Kid Adventure Day

July

- 4 Extension office closed - Independence Day
- 5-6 Lamb & Goat Camp
- 6 Deadline to sign up for Fashion Show
- 7 Pre-Fair ONLINE Entries Due
- 7 Advancement Level for Horse Testing due
- 20 Fashion Show - UNK
- 25-31 Buffalo County Fair

★ ★ ★ **HAPPY** ★ ★ ★
MEMORIAL
Day

Extension is a Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln cooperating with the Counties and the United States Department of Agriculture.

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Lincoln

Enroll in 4-H today

The 4-H enrollment site is open for returning 4-H members, volunteers and to newcomers who have not yet joined. Please visit <https://v2.4honline.com/#/user/sign-in> to enroll. **To complete the enrollment process, you must select the 'pay by check' option regardless of your chosen payment method and you must select 'submit' at the end of the process.** If you choose to pay by cash or check, just drop your payment off at the Extension office or mail to 1400 E. 34th St. Kearney, NE 68847. If you wish to pay online by debit/credit card, you can visit the Buffalo County 4-H payment site at <https://buffalo-county-4-h-council.square.site/>.

ENROLLMENT FEES

Clover Kids: \$5

Clover kids are youth ages 5 to 7, as of January 1, 2023.

Traditional 4-H members: \$10

Traditional 4-H members are youth ages 8 to 18, as of January 1, 2023.

- Families have a maximum fee of \$30

FIND YOUR SPARK

IN BUFFALO COUNTY 4-H

DEADLINE TO ENROLL

JUNE 15



Check out these links to see what's coming up

- 4-H calendar - see what's coming up at <https://extension.unl.edu/statewide/buffalo/whats-happening-in-4-h/>
- For area shows and clinics visit <https://extension.unl.edu/statewide/buffalo/area-shows-and-clinics/>

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[Buffalo County 4-H](#)



SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

We are happy to announce the recipients of Buffalo County 4-H Scholarships:

Buffalo County 4-H: Katherine Stephens, Skyler Summers, Sydney Rowher, Gracie Wagoner, Creyton Line and Sadie Ringlein

Bankers Association: Skyler Summers, Gracie Wagoner, Katherine Stephens, Creyton Line, Sadie Ringlein

Karen Stafford Swartz: Katherine Stephens

Ronald & Jaquelyn Kegley: Rylee Bentz

Charles & Jeanette Mumma: Skyler Summers, Sadie Ringlein, Katherine Stephens, Creyton Line

Andy & Nevabelle Howe: Creyton Line

Buffalo Belles Horseman: Rylee Bentz

Build skills for a lifetime

Premier Communication Event is May 15

From novice to experienced speakers, these contests help youth develop communication, speaking and presentation skills, learn how to organize and prepare a speech, learn how to present themselves to others and develop self-confidence.

Sign up by May 5 at <https://go.unl.edu/speechcontest>

Speech Contest

Did you know that Clover Kids can talk about anything from reading a poem, a favorite story or tell their favorite thing about 4-H? All other levels must incorporate 4-H into their speech.

Presentation Contest

Presentations topics should be related to what the 4-H youth is learning through 4-H educational experiences. Participants can express themselves using visual aids in the Illustrated Presentation.

For more on these pre-fair contests, visit <https://extension.unl.edu/statewide/buffalo/fair-premium-book/>

PSA - Public Service Announcement

The Radio Public Service Announcement (PSA) contest challenges youth to write and record a 60-second promotional audio recording focused on the 2023 Nebraska State Fair theme:

'Discover Your Spark in Nebraska 4-H' that could be played on the radio to promote the work of Nebraska 4-H. Youth are judged on their overall organization and delivery of the PSA.

AND/OR

Have fun creating a county-only PSA using this year's county fair theme **'Good Times and Good Vibes'** while promoting 4-H.

NOTE: Youth can remain in the audience while their PSA is being played at the contest.

Video Communication

Youth who enjoy making their own YouTube videos and Tik Toks would love this competition!

The video communication contest allows youth to create a multi-media video around a theme related to 4-H. Judges will be evaluating on both the organization of information as well as the audio and video production.

NOTE: Youth can remain in the audience while their PSA is being played at the contest.

All talent welcome at Performing Arts Contest

Deadline to sign up is May 8



Youth ages 5-18 are welcome to share their talents of singing, playing an instrument, dancing or other special performance skills at the 4-H Performing Arts Contest on May 22.

Groups are encouraged to enter! Register at <https://go.unl.edu/performingcontest>.

GET READY FOR
Performing Arts



Save the Dates



May 1

Entry opens for State 4-H Horse Show
nhorse.fairwire.com

May 3, 10, 17 & 24

Intro to Basic Horse Management

May 24

4-H Horse Judging Contest

June 1

Deadline for Horse ID's & Advancement Level
testing for State 4-H Horse Show
Entries close at 5 p.m. for State 4-H Horse Show

June 2, 3 & 4

Come Learn With Carla Clinics

June 8-10

4-H Horse Camp

June 10

Buffalo County 4-H Invitational Horse Show

June 15

Horse ID sheets, Advancement Level testing
for county fair due to Buffalo County Extension

July 15-19

Fonner Park State 4-H Expo

<https://4h.unl.edu/state-horse-expo>

July 26

Buffalo County Fair 4-H Horse Show

For more on contests, clinics and
learning opportunities, visit:

[https://extension.unl.edu/statewide/
buffalo/area-shows-and-clinics/](https://extension.unl.edu/statewide/buffalo/area-shows-and-clinics/)

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EXTENSION

SENIOR TEMPT, TASTE, TRY

SIGN-UP DEADLINE IS MAY 18

Youth ages 13-18 (as of Jan. 1) can choose 4 projects for full day or 2 for half day to create and show at the Buffalo County Fair.

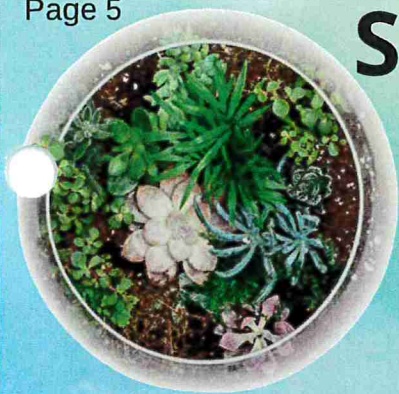
When: Thursday, June 1

Time: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Where: Buffalo County Extension

Cost: Full day \$40, Half day \$20

Register: <https://go.unl.edu/seniortempttry>



Photography - Morning Only

Hannah Dorn, owner of HG Images Photography, will lead this session with a focus on smartphone photography tips and tricks. A cellphone or iPod is required.

Glass Fusion - Afternoon Only

Learn how to make glass fusion art from Paint Paradise! Participants will be given pieces of glass and a backing. Projects will be left at the Extension Office so Paint Paradise can fire them in their kiln! Projects can be picked up at a later date.

Terrarium

Rooted Plant Co. will lead this session on how to make a terrarium! Each participant will choose their plants, container, and decorations to make a personalized terrarium to take home and bring to the fair!



Picture Frame Painting - Morning Only

Create a neat decoration for your room or home! Youth will have a choice of picture frame drawing. Youth will use acrylic paint to paint on the glass of the picture frame to make a neat piece of art!



Framed Watercolor

Kameran Dostal will teach watercolor techniques that they will use to create their own framed watercolor painting.

Scrabble Tile Heritage Project- Afternoon Only

Make a one-of-a-kind heritage project using old Scrabble pieces. Participants will make a Scrabble Board with names of their family members and glue the names, along with other provided 3D accents that represent their family, into a shadow box. Please have names written down before coming to the workshop to ensure there are no misspellings. Any special requests on decorations for your shadow box will need to be specified at time of sign up.

Door Signs

Create a unique door sign for your bedroom or front door. Kelsi Wilbur, a door-sign hobbyist, will lead this session. Wood rounds will be provided and youth will paint or stain one. Please fill out what you would like your door sign to say so that these words can be cut ahead of time. Participants will learn how to tie a bow if they would like to add a bow to their door sign. Other decorations will be available.