

Views from VanDeWalle

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Extension Recap from 2019

During the holiday season is often a time to reflect on the year. I have many blessings in my life. First and foremost, I would like to thank my family for being understanding with me as I often travel to evening meetings and conferences that pull me away from home. Secondly, I am fortunate to have great colleagues that help me out and work as a team. I'd also like to thank you, my readers, extension supporters, 4-H volunteers and others who have helped in some capacity with an extension or 4-H program. Without amazing Nebraska Extension supporters, programs wouldn't be as successful as they are.

While I'm not one to boast, I'd like to mention that Nebraska Extension is one of the leading Extension organizations in the country! Utilizing cutting-edge delivery methods and programming ideas, we focus on critical issues identified by Nebraskans through periodic needs assessments. Nebraska Extension is nationally-leading 4-H youth engagement by reaching 1 in 3 youth between the ages of 8-18 and we have extension faculty with national and international reputations. Finally, Nebraska Extension engages a large number of Nebraskans in Extension programming every year – from the agricultural community to sectors as diverse as nutrition, health care and technology. From border to border Nebraska Extension is making an incredible impact on the success of our state – its youth, its families, its farms and ranches, its communities and its economy. These are broad program accomplishments to look at from a balcony view, but what are some key impacts locally for Clay and Fillmore Counties?

Let's describe some key accomplishments in Clay County. Nebraska Extension in Clay County and Fillmore County reaches 1 out of 2 age-eligible youth. In 2019, the Clay County 4-H program reached 65% of youth in the county. This was accomplished through the use of afterschool, school enrichment and traditional 4-H programs. Sixty-nine youth in grades 3-6th who participated in afterschool workshops were all STEM based and over 300 youth participated in school enrichment programs. A Youth Entrepreneurship day-long event, called INVENTURE Day reached 65 seventh graders from across the county and 13 local community members served as mentors for the program. Eleven youth participated in 4-H clover kid five workshops and learned about various project areas and participated in engaging activities. Clay County Jr. Leaders teamed up with local community members to construct 2 Quilts of Valor to be donated to the Nebraska Quilt of Valor Foundation. Over 85 youth participated in Shooting Sports training including Archer, BB Gun, and Air Rifle. Clay County has 18 shooting sports leaders, 13 of which are certified. Development of skills within the discipline of shooting and life skills is implicit in the program curriculum and explicitly stated for volunteers. 4-H Shooting Sports promotes positive youth-adult interaction and peer leadership.

Fillmore (& Clay) County Extension staff held the 22nd AgVenture Day in collaboration with the South Central Cattlewomen. This year, 173 fourth graders participated in the ag literacy program. New to the program this year was a drone in-flight demonstration. One-hundred percent of teacher-reported they were very satisfied with the educational content of the program and 100% also were very satisfied that the program was relevant to classroom content. All teachers



agreed/strongly agreed that youth can identify the importance of technology in agriculture to help farmers feed the world. After the program, 100% of youth reported that they know farmers make good choices to keep our food safe and 100% better understand where their food comes from. One teacher even said, “Students will be more aware of the products they use and the food that they eat and where they come from.”

To complement the Shickley Public Schools beef booster program, Fillmore County extension staff provided lessons related to the importance of beef production. 118 students participated in age-appropriate lessons which included the Husker Mobile Beef lab offered to 4-12th graders which taught them the function of the four-chambered stomach of a beef animal and how ruminant animals convert grass to beef. Kindergarten-3rd grade students learned the basics of products obtained from beef cattle with an interactive game.

The Farmers and Ranchers College is a unique opportunity to educate agricultural producers in south-central Nebraska. 242 producers and agribusiness professionals participated in the 2018-2019 Farmers and Ranchers College programs. Producers attending these workshops managed over 100,00 acres and nearly 10,000 head of beef animals. Participants surveyed indicated a potential impact of nearly \$ 1 million in knowledge gained from the program. The eighteenth annual Partners in Progress Beef Seminar featured presentations by a variety of industry, university and agricultural organizations. A special program for the women in agriculture was held in 2019 featuring well-know “advocate”, Michele Payn. A Farmers and Ranchers College participant, said, “Farmers & Ranchers College has benefited our ag operation for several years.”

Of course, there are numerous more impacts and programming results to report, but these are some that I decided to include this this week’s column.

Wishing you all a very Happy Holiday Season!