



## View from VanDeWalle

Brandy VanDeWalle, Nebraska Extension Educator in Fillmore County

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### The “Buzz” at the Extension Office

Did you know there are 90 crops ranging from nuts to berries to flowering vegetables that require insect pollination. Managed honey bee colonies are the primary pollinators which add at least \$15 billion a year by increasing yields and help ensure high-yielding crops (USDA, 2017). As many of you have heard in the news, beekeepers have been steadily losing colonies. In fact, an article by the USDA states, “the number of honey bee hives in this country (U.S.) has decreased from 6 million in the 1940’s to about 2.5 million today. This has drawn attention to the importance of honey bees and seems to have even created a renewed interest in honey bees.

One of the great things about my job is how I am able to continue learning about a variety of topics and have been inspired by one of my own 4-H’ers! Madeline Kamler, a Fillmore County 4-H’er became involved in the Nebraska Beekeepers Association youth program. She received beekeeping supplies and was assigned a mentor to get her started with beekeeping and has learned so much! In conversation with her mom last year, I mentioned how I’d like to expand our landscape at the extension office to include a pollinator garden and she asked if we’d like to have our own bees at the office. With lots of help and tons of hours Madeline and her mom, Renae have spent the idea became a reality.

I’d like to give special thanks to the Geneva City Council and Fillmore County supervisors for their support of this endeavor. Since April of this year, we have been very fortunate to have our own hive north of the Fillmore County Extension office. The Fillmore County 4-H Council generously provided funds to get the project started. This project has been able to educate youth with 4-H workshops and even offer an adult program to the Geneva Garden Club. During honey extraction time, youth from Sowing Seeds Academy even had the chance to extract honey from the frames! I’m so excited for more opportunities to increase educational programming, not only related to beekeeping, but on the business and entrepreneurship side as well.

We extracted over 20 frames of honey in the end of July and have started to sell some of the honey! Proceeds from the honey go directly back into the production of beekeeping so the project will be able to sustain itself for future years. If you are interested in purchasing some honey, feel free to contact the extension office and we’ll gladly sell you some “Bee Sweet” 4-H honey.

Plans to continue this “sweet” educational endeavor are already being made for next year, with the potential of workshops this winter as well. Without the hours of labor, the Kamler family has so freely given, this project would not be as successful as it is, so I’d like to thank them for sharing their knowledge, resources and expertise to not only 4-H’ers and community members, but the extension staff as we’ve all learned so much!