



Agenda Item # 16
Date 2/7/24

January 30, 2024

EXTENSION
INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES
Dodge County

Bob Missel, Chair
Dodge County Board of Supervisors
435 North Park
Fremont, NE 68025

Dear Supervisor Missel:

Nebraska Extension is pleased to continue a strong tradition of making a difference in the lives of individuals, families, businesses and communities in Dodge County! Our programs address issues that Nebraskans 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 and 5) Samples of Extension newsletters, major program brochures, and other products that represent 2023 programming.

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 area communities. We look forward to making a difference in the lives of Nebraskans together with you for another year!

Sincerely,

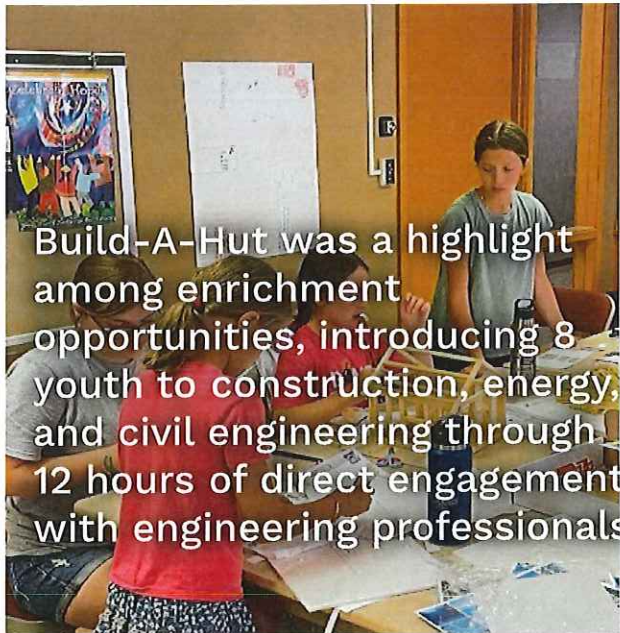
Kelly Abrahams
Chair
Dodge County Extension Board

Ian Peterson
Extension Educator
Nebraska Extension in Dodge County

Enclosures

1206 W. 23rd St. / Fremont, NE 68025-2504
(402) 727-2775 / Fax (402) 727-2777 / E-mail: Dodge-County@unl.edu / Internet: <http://dodge.unl.edu>

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN, COOPERATING WITH COUNTIES AND THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Build-A-Hut was a highlight among enrichment opportunities, introducing 8 youth to construction, energy, and civil engineering through 12 hours of direct engagement with engineering professionals.



Positive youth development is a collaborative effort in Dodge County, creating partnerships with schools, businesses, and nonprofits to provide a wide range of engaging educational opportunities. Through after-school, in-school, and summer programs, Extension professionals engaged 3,350 youth in lessons covering topics such as: gardening, STEM, childcare, nutrition and physical activity. Beyond knowledge, programs offer insight into possible career endeavors. "Without Build-A-Hut we would not have been able to experience or learn about engineering or even know it was a possible career option."

Programs At-A-Glance

- Dodge County Rooted in Relationships in partnership with the United Way implemented the early childhood systems of care to support social-emotional development of children.
- Extension Master Gardeners strengthened community bonds by donating over 250 hours to create beautiful spaces, grow food, provide landscape education, and engage with clientele.

232

Farmers received crucial insight and experienced cutting-edge exhibits at the Fremont Corn Expo.

**STRENGTHEN NEBRASKA
AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS**

1,741

Pounds of fresh produce raised for the community in the Growing Together Nebraska donation garden.

**INSPIRE NEBRASKANS &
THEIR COMMUNITIES**

4,605

Continuing Education hours awarded to childcare providers.

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



**Dodge County Tax Budget Account/Grant Funds
July 2022 to June 2023**

TOTAL INCOME	% Spent	Budget	Budget Amount Remaining	8.33% Jul-22	17% Aug-22	25% Sep-22	33% Oct-22	42% Nov-22	50% Dec-22	58% Jan-23	67% Feb-23	75% Mar-23	83% Apr-23	92% May-23	100% Jun-23	YTD Totals	
EXPENSES																	
PERSONNEL SERVICES, GRANTS																	
10305 Regular	110.72%	\$ 80,000.00	\$ (8,576.41)	\$ 6,220.35	\$ 7,772.44	\$ 5,819.80	\$ 5,819.80	\$ 8,729.70	\$ 5,819.80	\$ 3,558.10	\$ 3,306.80	\$ 3,306.80	\$ 3,306.80	\$ 31,609.22	\$ 3,306.80	\$ -	\$ 88,576.41
10405 Part time clerical	158.41%	\$ 2,000.00	\$ (1,128.28)	\$ 1,224.00	\$ 1,697.28	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 207.00	\$ -	\$ 3,128.28
OPERATING EXPENSES																	
20100 Postage	62.14%	\$ 2,100.00	\$ 795.13	\$ 400.00	\$ 93.02	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5.50	\$ -	\$ 400.00	\$ -	\$ 6.35	\$ 400.00	\$ -	\$ 1,304.87
20200 Telephone	86.57%	\$ 3,800.00	\$ 510.41	\$ 58.64	\$ 143.07	\$ 181.18	\$ 170.42	\$ 222.67	\$ 133.87	\$ 123.28	\$ 206.01	\$ 1,378.61	\$ 133.97	\$ 332.07	\$ 205.79	\$ -	\$ 3,289.59
20500 Utilities	104.59%	\$ 7,000.00	\$ (321.46)	\$ -	\$ 680.03	\$ 895.74	\$ 643.16	\$ 733.44	\$ 592.28	\$ -	\$ 821.23	\$ 905.93	\$ 908.95	\$ 920.82	\$ 419.88	\$ -	\$ 7,321.46
21101 Computer Expense		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
20505 Janitorial, Garbage, Snow	0.00%	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
21200 Office Equipment Repairs	0.00%	\$ 700.00	\$ 700.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
21704 Mileage, Meals, Lodging	100.84%	\$ 8,000.00	\$ (75.34)	\$ -	\$ 257.69	\$ 683.41	\$ 1,230.51	\$ 1,187.30	\$ 1,283.69	\$ -	\$ 432.30	\$ 116.46	\$ 512.21	\$ 151.96	\$ 2,219.81	\$ -	\$ 8,075.34
21801 Dues, Subscriptions, Registrations	84.00%	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 360.02	\$ -	\$ 92.00	\$ 85.00	\$ 71.99	\$ 119.99	\$ -	\$ 79.00	\$ 34.00	\$ 100.00	\$ -	\$ 118.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 639.98
22544 Software Maintenance	63.67%	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 363.00	\$ -	\$ 58.70	\$ 57.80	\$ 57.80	\$ 57.80	\$ 57.80	\$ 57.80	\$ 57.80	\$ 57.80	\$ 57.80	\$ 57.80	\$ 57.80	\$ -	\$ 636.70
22545 Maintenance Agreements	90.00%	\$ 200.00	\$ 20.00	\$ 45.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 45.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 45.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 45.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 180.00
SUPPLIES & MATERIALS																	
30101 Office Supplies	51.98%	\$ 9,000.00	\$ 4,323.24	\$ 44.14	\$ 8.52	\$ 637.89	\$ 510.96	\$ 75.48	\$ 24.96	\$ 227.07	\$ 159.05	\$ 443.76	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,544.93	\$ -	\$ 4,676.76
CONTRACTUAL-RENTAL																	
40501 Equipment, Office Rent	77.56%	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 2,240.78	\$ 230.43	\$ 938.91	\$ 228.93	\$ 1,039.63	\$ 819.25	\$ 228.93	\$ 228.93	\$ 656.68	\$ -	\$ 226.93	\$ 1,091.07	\$ 2,075.53	\$ -	\$ 7,759.22
CAPITAL OUTLAYS																	
50500 Office Equipment	82.52%	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 1,048.94	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 4,701.06	\$ 250.00	\$ -	\$ 4,951.06
Special Budget Request		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
TOTAL EXPENSES	99.42%	\$ 131,300.00	\$ 780.33	\$ 8,222.56	\$ 11,681.66	\$ 8,387.75	\$ 9,544.27	\$ 11,990.63	\$ 8,139.33	\$ 4,277.69	\$ 5,718.87	\$ 6,709.36	\$ 5,146.66	\$ 39,033.35	\$ 11,687.54	\$ -	\$ 130,539.67
Contractual Programs																	
																	\$ -
																	\$ -
	99.42%	\$ 131,300.00	\$ 780.33	\$ 8,222.56	\$ 11,681.66	\$ 8,387.75	\$ 9,544.27	\$ 11,990.63	\$ 8,139.33	\$ 4,277.69	\$ 5,718.87	\$ 6,709.36	\$ 5,146.66	\$ 39,033.35	\$ 11,687.54	\$ -	\$ 130,539.67



Nutrition Security-Monthly Meal Kits

Public Value

Nutrition security exists when all people always have physical, social, and economic access to food, which is safe and consumed in sufficient quantity and quality to meet dietary needs and food preference for a healthy and active life. The importance of proper nutrition is greater in children who require adequate nutrition to grow, learn, and reach their full psychosocial potential.

The Situation

Backpack programs are a typical food security effort that exists within schools. As a food security program, emphasis is placed on ready-to-eat and simply prepared foods, rather than on nutritional quality and typically serve elementary age students only, leaving older students vulnerable to hunger. Additionally, these programs provide little to no nutrition education or food preparation instruction. Youth, especially in lower-resource households, are often responsible for preparing food for themselves and younger siblings. Proper education related to food selection and preparation for health and wellbeing is essential.

Extension Response

In 2023, Beth Nacke delivered the Monthly Meal Kits (MMK) program, a nutrition security effort for middle and high school-aged youth. By targeting older youth, MMK addresses the gap in hunger relief and equips students with knowledge and resources to prepare healthy meals. Upon registration, students receive the MMK nutrition education and recipe workbook, up to 10 cooking utensils, and 1 kitchen appliance, providing access to safe food preparation methods. Each MMK is valued at approximately \$50 and includes non-perishable food for 5 nutritionally balanced recipes, and coupons for perishable food purchases.

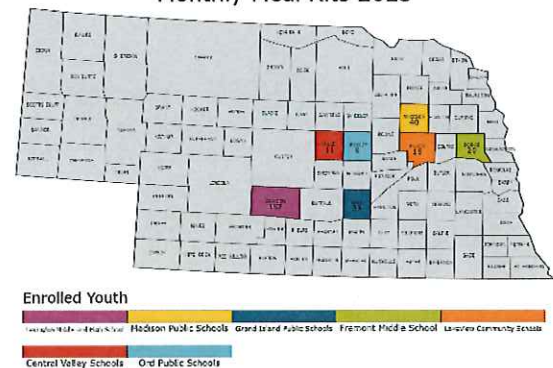
Impacts

Students complete quarterly surveys to determine the impact and assess the effectiveness of the educational

materials. Increased consumption was noted in two areas: fruits/vegetables (92.8%), and lean meats/dairy (77.1%). Overall, 88% of students found the educational materials relevant and helpful. Additionally, \$136,034.24 was infused back into 7 local economies through food orders and coupon redemption in locally owned/operated food stores.

Image/Infographic

Monthly Meal Kits 2023



Participants Feedback

"I'm excited to get my kit every month. I make each recipe with my grandma, it gives us a chance to do something together that's just us." – Student

"The additional \$6,500 in revenue each month is huge for our store." – Store Manager

Primary Contact

Beth Nacke, MS, RD
Food, Nutrition & Health Extension Educator
402-727-2775; bnacke2@unl.edu

Collaborators

Michelle Krupa, Kayla Hinrichs, Ashlynn Maier, Carla Byrnes

Extension Big 3 Alignment

- Strengthen Nebraska Agriculture & Food Systems
- Inspire Nebraskans & Their Communities
- Enhance The Health & Wellbeing of All Nebraskans

Beth Nacke 2023 Summary Statement

In 2023, I continued my coordination of the *Monthly Meal Kits (MMK)* program, expanding into new communities and deepening relationships with existing partners. The *MMK* program provides support for youth living with hunger, and addresses the need of healthy, safe food for individuals with limited access. *MMK* as a program has continued to improve partnerships with schools and retailers in 7 counties, engaged 308 youth and members of their households in nutrition education, increased access to safe and nutritious foods, and provide a boost to local economies.

The partnership with the Fremont Public Schools Physical Education department continues to be exceptionally strong, providing opportunities for youth in 4th-6th grades to participate in impactful and engaging nutrition education in the Physical Education classroom. This partnership helps to reinforce the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle by pairing nutrition and physical activity.

I continue to serve on the *Nebraska Extension Marathon Kids (NEMK)* leadership team. In 2023, the *NEMK* leadership team supported 16 coaches through scheduled updates, technical assistance, an immersive one-day training event, and recruitment incentives. My primary role in the leadership team is to develop and deliver professional presentations to expand program reach and position the team well for future research funding. Our program was presented twice in Nebraska at the NE SHAPE Conference and the Engaging Educators Conference. We were also selected and presented at the National Health Outreach Conferences held at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York to share the impact *NEMK* has on youth physical and mental wellbeing.

PARTNERSHIPS/COALITIONS

- Fremont Family Coalition
- Nebraska VOAD Food Security Task Force
- Community and Family Partnership Council-Serving Colfax and Platte Counties
- Nebraska Team Nutrition
- Whole Child, Whole Community Coalition
- Nebraska Department of Education
- Community Nutrition Partnership Council
- School Nutrition Action Committee

LEADERSHIP

- Nutrition Education Program supervisor
- Fremont Family Coalition Leadership Board-Executive Team
- School Wellness Team Coordinator
- Nebraska Extension Marathon Kids (NEMK) Leadership Team
- Monthly Meal Kit (MMK) Program Coordinator
- Nebraska Department of Education LIFT Contract Coordinator

GRANTS, CONTRACTS AND SPONSORED ACTIVITIES

Fischer, J. (Principal Investigator), Nacke, B. (Investigator), Sehi, N. (Investigator), 155024, Contract, "NDE Team Nutrition LIFT Year 2", Ne Dept Education, State Agencies, Public Service, \$39,800.00, Awarded. (sub: October 28, 2022, start: October 20, 2022, end: October 19, 2023).

Nacke, B. (Principal Investigator), 154607, Grant, "Monthly Meal Kits", Ne Dept Health & Human Serv, State Agencies, Public Service, \$366,600.00, Awarded. (sub: September 26, 2022, start: November 1, 2022, end: June 30, 2023).

Nacke, B. (Principal Investigator), Hinrichs, K. (Investigator), 143640, Grant, "NEChildren&Family Bountiful Backpack EZ8", Ne Children & Families Foundation, Associations/Foundation, Public Service, \$167,200.00, Awarded. (sub: December 16, 2020, start: December 1, 2020, end: June 30, 2023).

GRANT WORK

- Healthy Habits
- Growing Together Nebraska
- Nebraska Department of Education, Team Nutrition LIFT

PROGRAMS OF SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

- **Monthly Meal Kits**
 - 308 students enrolled.
 - Household reach: 877 youth, 676 adults
 - 8 locally owned/operated grocery stores
 - \$136,034.24 was infused into local economies in 7 counties.
 - Supervised student employee in editing and content of educational materials.
 - Created and distributed MMK resource manual in two languages.
 - [English](#)
 - [Spanish](#)
- **Little Free Pantries (LFP)**
 - Increase emergency access to shelf-stable ingredients, reduce hunger and ease financial barriers related to food access for low-resource Nebraskans.
 - PSE changes adopted as a result of the LFP project include novel distribution systems to reach high-risk populations, new food pantry or emergency food distribution site, and improvements in hours of operation for food distribution sites to improve convenience of/access to healthy food.
 - To evaluate the LFP, a survey (Link: <https://forms.gle/SkGFRf9nuztZCVxCA>) was created to collect community member feedback and thoughts related to the LFP. *no response data to report
 - LFP will purchase shelf-stable foods from locally owned and small grocery retailers and promote the support of retailers within the pantries.
 - Based on a needs assessment, LFP will be installed in counties, with the goal of at least one in every county.
 - Installed: Hall, Cherry
 - Planned Locations: Dodge County (9 sites), Lincoln, Logan, McPherson Counties (9), Dakota. Counties planning to install 1 pantry site: Buffalo, Douglas-Sarpy, Cedar, Box Butte, Sheridan, Dawes, Seward, Garden, Morrill, Phelps, Gosper, Saunders, Hall, Lancaster, Thomas, and Knox
 - Creation of the [LFP Manual](#).
 - In-direct education will be incorporated using: Recipes and handouts <https://food.unl.edu/> and/or <https://food.unl.edu/nutrition-education-program> that promote items within the LFP.
- **Healthy Habits - CATCH PE Nutrition lessons**
 - Fremont Public Schools-10 sites
 - 772 youth grades 4-8
 - 6 sessions
 - 9 lesson topics

- **Growing Together Nebraska (GTN) Team Awards**
 - 2023 North Central Region's - Team Excellence in Extension Award - Growing Together Multi-State Collaborative
 - 2023 National Excellence in Extension Team Award: The Growing Together Multi-State Collaborative
- **GTN-Dodge County**
 - Coordinated 3 garden locations.
 - Donated 1,741 pounds of produce to 1,547 low-resource individuals at 3 partner sites.
 - Engaged 7 volunteers (including 2 Master Gardeners) completing 240 volunteer hours.
 - Delivered 21 recipe demonstration sessions with nutrition education to 745 individuals.
- **GTN-Colfax County**
 - Coordinated with community garden committee for 1 garden location.
 - Donated 2,809 pounds of produce to 2,295 low-resource individuals at 6 partner sites.
 - Engaged 16 volunteers (including 2 Master Gardeners) completing 276 volunteer hours.
 - Growing Healthy Habits-Schuyler Community Schools Summer School
 - 17 youth grades 3-5 received nutrition and gardening education.
 - 5 sessions
 - 6 lesson topics
- **Local Indigenous Foods Training (LIFT)**
 - Co-coordinated grant, ensuring alignment with grant deliverables and contract expectations.
 - Led Chef's Table taste testing activities.
 - 4 school sites, 77 student participants, 10 school staff participants
 - Conducted full school taste test.
 - 4 school sites, 2,416 students received samples and submitted survey responses.
 - Provided technical support.
 - 6 school sites, 14 school food service and administration staff.
- **Marathon Kids Team Effort**
 - 16 trained coaches delivered 40 programs in 16 counties to 1563 Pre-K-12th grade youth.
 - A total of 59,537 miles, or over 2272 marathons were completed.
 - Additionally, 10 adults participated in NEMK and ran 55.5 miles.
 - Youth impacts noted at the end of the program: (n=132 pre; 113 post) significant differences in the following questions:
 - In the last 7 days, how many times outside of school did you do sports, dance, or play games in which you were active?
 - None decreased from 15% at pre to 4% at post.
 - 6+ times last week increased from 27% at pre to 36% at post.
 - I can do many types of physical activities if I work hard and practice.
 - Definitely Yes (68% -> 77%) 9% increase
 - I love to exercise.
 - Definitely/Somewhat No decreased from 17% to 9%; Somewhat/Definitely Yes increased from 83% to 91%
 - Physical activity is important to me.
 - Definitely yes (55% → 71%) 16% increase
 - I can set a physical activity goal.
 - Definitely yes (55% → 69%) 14% increase
 - (POST ONLY) I recommend Marathon Kids to other kids. 64% responded Yes, a lot; up from 47% in 2022.
 - (POST ONLY) I enjoy Marathon Kids. 63% responded Yes, a lot; up from 40% in 2022.



Pollinator Habitat Certification

Public Value

The health of our local food supply is dependent on pollination, of which the majority is performed by native insects. Creating habitats to support their populations benefits communities from the neighborhood scale all the way up to the agricultural. Attractive, healthy and native plant communities also benefit the physical and mental well-being of residents who can experience more green spaces.

The Situation

Pollinator and other insect populations are declining due to a lack of native habitat. Their numbers are critical to the health of regional food webs and ecosystems. Providing habitats of year-round shelter and food boosts their populations at the same time as it adds beauty and interest to neighborhoods and communities. Each year more residents, businesses and other institutions express an interest in establishing gardens dedicated to Nebraska and regional native plants. They do this mostly for the pollinators, but knowing the added benefit to attracting customers or educating neighbors.

Extension Response

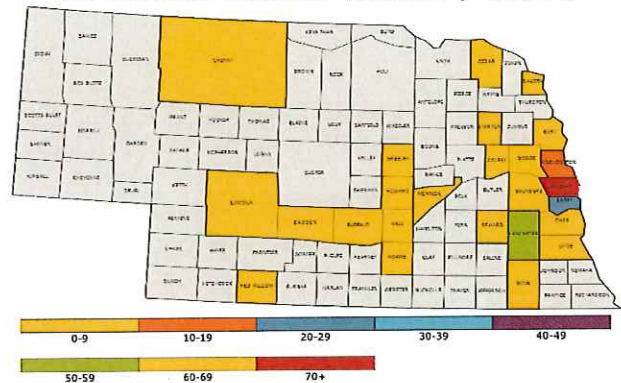
To better serve interested stakeholders, the Extension team developed the Certification Program to serve as a roadmap to establishing a successful pollinator habitat. The Program Application provides recommended plants for full-season food and shelter sources; non-plant features are encouraged to provide other necessities such as water and nesting materials; applicants commit to environmentally conscious management practices. A spring and fall newsletter, along with member-event site tours provide additional experiences and research-based information about plants, insects and updated management strategies.

Impacts

Since inception in 2016, the Habitat Certification Program has created a community of 221 member sites. According to a Fall 2023 survey of program

members, 29% have added non-plant features to their habitat; 48% have decreased or eliminated pesticide use; 77% add native plants every year; 96% find the information we provide in newsletters to be of value to them.

221 Certified Pollinator Habitats (12/1/23)



Participant Feedback

I have gardened for 40 years and when I was in my 20s, I obtained the associate degree offered at MCC in landscape design. Even so, I was surprised by the large increase in pollinators to my garden after incorporating the native plants on the list you provided. It's been most rewarding. – program member

Primary Contact

Ian Peterson
 Extension Educator
 402.727.2775; ipeterson4@unl.edu

Collaborators

Scott Evans, Extension Associate
 Mary Jane Frogge, Extension Associate
 Jody Green, Extension Educator

Extension Big 3 Alignment

- Strengthen Nebraska Agriculture & Food Systems
- Inspire Nebraskans & Their Communities
- Enhance The Health & Wellbeing of All Nebraskans





Ian Peterson 2023 Summary Statement

Since joining extension in June of 2023, I have had many positive experiences learning about how extension works and the many community connections that I am able to make. I have been finding my way with multiple groups within the Horticulture, Landscape and Environmental Systems program area and with both my local county office and with a number of the other offices within my accountability region. My main impacts in 2023 have been from my involvement with the Pollinator Habitat Certification team, my role as the Extension Board lead educator for Dodge County and frequent participation in other county Board meetings.

Pollinator Habitat Certification Program

I joined the Pollinator Habitat group because of my knowledge of and experience with native landscaping and native plants' importance as food sources and host plants for beneficial insects and other wildlife. In my first few months as a member, I helped review an updated list of Nebraska and regional native plants included on the certification application. When asked to help, I offered to also research and expand the list to include additional plant features such as habit, culture, color, associated pollinators and host status. My goal is to be able to create multiple types of resources for program members and members of the community to support their diverse goals with what they choose to plant. [The breakdown I created](#) is meant to help people understand the best path forward to create something that can function both aesthetically and showcase the diversity of nature one can bring to their home or community.

Having cultural characteristics available (e.g. height, water requirement, color) accomplishes multiple things:

- Continues the HLES mission of 'Right Plant, Right Place', where a natural landscape can thrive
- Minimize inputs and maximize homeowners' savings in the way of water management and pesticides, among other things
- Theme-based resources and publications for client needs and desires
- By having more accessible information, we should continue to see an increase in the number of pollinator habitats across the state – from the start of the program in 2016 through 2022 there were 182 habitats certified with the program. Another 38 were certified in 2023

There is clearly an interest in supporting pollinators, so being able to provide these kinds of resources can help reach a wider range of Nebraskans demographically and geographically. Having resources that are easy to read and interpret will hopefully open the door to more people, businesses and institutions being willing to rethink how they manage their landscapes. We are beginning to see more deliberate green spaces in communities across the state, empowering citizens to feel more ownership and comfort in their neighborhoods, parks and urban or rural spaces.

I have already been able to use my knowledge of native plants outside of the group by helping landowners and contributing to the Commercial Fruit and Vegetable group. I have been on site visits to: consult with a homeowner who wanted help expanding native prairie into 10 acres of brome grass and former crop land; create a multi-year plan for a client who wanted to transition 20 acres of corn field into native prairie; an Extension Board member in Washington County who wanted advice on how to manage the health of and expand an established acreage of native prairie plants. As a part of the Fruit and



Ian Peterson 2023 Summary Statement

Vegetable group, I am collaborating on a presentation about the benefits of conservation buffers and cover crops to, among other things, provide habitat for pollinators upon which so many of our food crops depend.

To finish out the year, I developed two surveys for program members to gather details on the function and experience of having a pollinator habitat as well as data on the value of learning from our publication, 'The Buzz', and ways to expand programming to the general public.

Out of 61 respondents to one survey:

- 48% said they have added non-plant features such as water sources or nesting structures
- 48% said they have completely, or nearly so, stopped using pesticides
- 77% add new native plants each year

On the other survey, out of 42 respondents

- 88% reported a positive level of satisfaction with the information in our spring/fall publication 'The Buzz'
- 79% indicated they would be willing to commit to an annual fee to support the program

Extension Board Lead Educator

Rather quickly, I took on the role of lead educator of the Dodge County Extension Board for my office and I have attended other Board meetings for my accountability region. In my role for Dodge County, I have continued the process from the previous leader and my zone coordinator of more deliberately leveraging the roles of the board members in their communities. As we share our own stories of Extension programming, we hope that they will take this information and communicate the work we do for the county, but most of the time it feels just surface level. We are currently working on a plan to expand what that the role of a board member means for 2024 and beyond by actually presenting portions of our programming so that members feel connected to our team and to their own ability to more specifically describe what we are able to do for the residents of Dodge County. In this way, hopefully they find more opportunities in their professional and personal interactions to not just spread the word of what we do, but perhaps even inspire someone, some group or some business to reach out and ask for our programs.

Each time I attended the Board meeting for another county, I walked away with a new networking connection. The experience has really driven home for me the fact that when people learn about the work we do in Extension, they essentially realize that we are who they have been looking for all along to be a part of a project or to provide education on a particular topic. I am excited to see what new relationships I can build in the coming years to really use my position as an Extension Educator for the benefit and education of the communities for which I am responsible.

In 2024 I will be holding programs that promote community health and food systems in the way of home and small-scale vegetable gardening and home hydroponic systems. I plan to inspire community health and action through publications and presentations about the benefits of regionally native plants and pollinators, and the ways that individuals can contribute through their own projects.



Ian Peterson 2023 Summary Statement

Building off of my successes with Extension Board involvement, but speaking more broadly, I have been able to make numerous connections across a number of the counties in my accountability region and within the HLES program area. From landscape design planning to high school career day presentations, I have been able to meet colleagues and take the first steps toward building relationships to make my Extension experience and impact more successful. I have also made many direct connections with residents through phone calls, emails and in-person conversations regarding their horticulture and landscape questions. Since starting in June, I have had 252 interactions with clients from across my accountability region.

In Saunders county I was able to start the process of reconnecting Master Gardener Volunteers to the ENREEC grounds manager so that, starting in spring of 2024, they can go back to a volunteer project that they enjoyed but have not had access to since before 2020. This will also allow us as a team to evaluate the native landscaping around the building to make decisions about how to move forward with a refresh and expansion to beautify the landscape and use it as an educational resource as the facility begins hosting more in-person programming. As a part of connecting with the educators and staff in Dixon and Dakota counties, I will be presenting programs this spring about small-scale home gardening, home hydroponics, and pollinator gardening.

During the growing season and into fall, I traveled around my accountability region to meet with Master Gardeners to learn about their various projects, as well as spend time with the coordinators for Douglas and Sarpy counties. Being new to Extension and the EMGV program, this allowed me to gain an understanding of the existing activities of volunteers for whom I am responsible and to see other established gardens around the Omaha area. I was able to learn from the other coordinators strategies for starting new garden projects and ideas of locations with regard to having broad educational impacts. Meeting the volunteers where they spend their time gave them an opportunity to showcase their work and, ideally, a sense of pride in all they have accomplished. Additionally, I had my own opportunity to ask how I could best support their efforts and their involvement in the program. By doing this I had two very positive experiences. On a visit to Fort Atkinson in Fort Calhoun, I got a tour of the gardens that volunteers were working on, some who were not Master Gardeners and, specifically, two who had not paid their dues and were considering ending their time with the program. After having a conversation with them and hearing their concerns, and them hearing about my goals, they decided to commit to staying on as Master Gardeners and representing the University in their duties with the Fort. On another occasion, I was able to connect with a former volunteer who has been out of the program for a few years but whose project I was told about. When I reached out, she explained why she had left the program, but was willing to meet and show me the work she still did as a volunteer for her town. At the end of this year, she recommitted to the program, writing in a note that it was the fact that I had taken the time to meet and talk with her that helped her make the decision.

My successes this year have been almost exclusively because of the personal connections that I have been able to make touring my accountability region and reaching out to colleagues about ways to get involved. Looking forward to 2024, I am committed to meeting and establishing relationships with all offices of my area, each extension board, and beginning to create community connections to expand my opportunities for educational reach.



Dodge County Fair kidZone

Public Value

Agricultural communities, recognizing the significance of educating future generations, provide unwavering support, enabling us to promote ag literacy, preserve their cherished traditions, and ensure the sustainability of their way of life.

The Situation

According to the American Farm Bureau Foundation, it may seem hard to imagine a world without agriculture. However, a majority of Americans do not have a basic understanding of where their food, fiber and fuel comes from. For them, Agriculture is simply not part of their world. One solution to this problem is education starting at a young age.

Extension's Response

The kidZone is designed to promote ag literacy through the eyes of a young child. Large agricultural informational banners are hung from the ceiling along with framed agricultural posters throughout the building to promote agriculture to adults as they watch their young children perform hands-on activities throughout the building.

Impacts

The kidZone had over 3,000 visitors during the four-day Dodge County Fair. Children were able to see and touch piglets, bucket calves, lambs, chicks, and kittens. This enhanced their sensory awareness and provided them new experiences. A large area was dedicated to free play with numerous farm equipment and a farmer's market that gave children the opportunity to practice skills that related to sharing, problem solving and decision making. Small and large motor development was seen throughout the kidZone as children gathered eggs, pushed combines, played in the sensory tables of corn & soybeans and pedaled tractors throughout the barn maze. Children and adults alike gained additional knowledge about food production from informational banners and hands-on activities.



"This is our favorite part of the fair! There is so much to do for the children, and they are learning too!"



Contact

Lisa Poppe, Early Childhood Extension Educator
lpoppe2@unl.edu

Collaborators

Dodge County Fair Board
 Dodge County Farm Bureau
 Dodge County 4-H

Extension Big 3 Alignment

- Strengthen Nebraska Agriculture & Food Systems
- Inspire Nebraskans & Their Communities
- Enhance The Health & Wellbeing of All Nebraskans

Lisa Poppe, Early Childhood Educator
Engagement Zone 8



One Hour, Once a Month - FHK (co-taught, marketer, evaluator) web-based training sessions were offered this year for 6 months. 3,050 childcare provider hours were awarded. 27,852 indirect children were touched by the knowledge gained. Our client's knowledge grew from 23% before the class who were very or extremely knowledgeable of the subject matter to after the class 77% of the providers were very or extremely knowledgeable of the subject matter. As a result of Fit and Healthy Kids programming 82% of our providers feel better about themselves and the work they do. Our providers stated a financial benefit because of behavioral changes they would implement because of the program: the total average (saved/gained) per month \$103,670 and the total average (saved/gained) per year \$1,244,040. A participant stated, *"A healthy relationship with families is such a crucial component in better understanding our children & how to build that positive relationship."* NEAFCS-Excellence in Multi State Collaboration Award- 1st Place National & Central Regional (Sponsorship \$300)

Discover and Design – FHK (marketer and evaluator) is a resource that provides age-appropriate, engaging activities for young children. New lessons are added quarterly. 436 users downloaded 2,464 lessons from 22 different states and 3 countries indirectly reaching 12,004 children. After a two-month post-evaluation, data reveals: 100% of users are very likely to recommend the lessons to others and 100% of users strongly agree that they will use additional Discover and Design activities in the future. Presented at the Get Connected Afterschool Conference.

In-Depth Learning Circle **Learning in the Heartland** – FHK (co-teacher, developer, evaluator), encompass a series of learning sessions with homework assignments in-between sessions. Childcare providers can take the knowledge gained from the learning sessions and practice it within their early childcare setting. Evaluation reveals: 100% of participants gained strategies to engage children in play through manipulatives, sensory experiences, and scientific explorations. Participants also gained strategies to bring community services to life in an early childhood setting. 72 childcare provider hours were awarded. Through Learning in the Heartland [materials](#) 427 users downloaded 851 lesson plans indirectly reaching 6,493 children in 14 different states.

On-Demand Classes – FHK (co-developer, marketer, evaluator, teacher) are two hours of continuing education classes for early childhood professionals that they can take at their own pace. Within the last 12 months 158 classes were taken. 316 childcare provider hours were awarded with 6,708 indirect children touched by the knowledge gained. After class, 78% of participants felt very to extremely knowledgeable and 86% felt they were more in control. 98% of participants stated they would use the information. A participant stated, *"This is super beneficial because we have a student in our program that is on the Spectrum, and I love being able to help him anyway that I can when he needs it. I think that other staff members can benefit from this class in so many ways."* The providers stated a financial benefit because of behavioral changes they would implement as a result of the program. The total average (saved/gained) per month \$854 and the total average per year was \$10,254. (Revenue generated - \$1,580)

The [Virtual Conference – Little Minds Big Ideas](#) – FHK (co-developer, marketer, evaluator) was multi-level learning over a duration of time. The conference is designed with hands-on experiences and interactions. These engaging training courses are delivered over a two-month span. 100% of participants stated they will provide opportunities for children with interactive challenges and activities to enhance brain development. After a two-month period a post evaluation revealed that 100% of participants stated that because of the hands-on activities at the conference, they were able to provide new learning experiences for children in their care. A testimonial from a participant: *“I enjoyed the different extensions of creativity through science, reading, and motor development. I also will be thinking more about activities that have a broader approach to documentation and evaluation.”* 64 participants were awarded 358 childcare provider hours, and 3,697 children were indirectly impacted by the knowledge gained. (Revenue generated - \$1,125; Sponsorships - \$1,000)

I have **co-authored** several on-demand lessons which are housed at **Penn State’s Better Kid Care**. In 2023, 18,495 courses were completed totaling 24,798 training hours. 87% of participants gained knowledge about Positive Relationships and will use the strategies provided in the lessons. Two evaluation questions were asked, *how much did you learn in this professional development course?* Mean 3.60 and *how much of what you learned will you be able to use with the children or families in your care?* Mean 3.53.

The **Co-Parenting for Successful Kids (teacher)** program requires parents who are in the process of divorce or custody modifications to take a class on communication. In 2023, the program served 1,947 participants generating \$97,350 for the Co-Parenting program. I graded 3,078 assignments which (generated funds of \$2,604) for my individual programming. Participants (n=670) reported their knowledge score increased on average by 41%, from 2.98 (fairly knowledgeable) to 4.2 (very knowledgeable), a difference of 1.22 (p<0.001). Topics with the largest average increases in knowledge include **parenting styles (+46.2%)**, **“I” messages (+40.8%)**, and **child-focused parenting plans (+40.5%)**. The average scores increased across all topics and were all statistically significant, indicating meaningful increases in knowledge. A participant stated, *“Basic categories of effective disciplines and their effectiveness. ‘Children win when they have BOTH loving parents involved in their lives to focus on their need and keep them securely out of the middle of conflict and adult games.’”*

Professional Development Specialist for the CDA Program (Child Development Associate Credential). I am certified in Family Home, Infant/Toddler and Childcare Center. I completed observations for three childcare providers. *“I had been working with children for about three years when I was given the opportunity to obtain my CDA. During the process I was able to gain so much knowledge about all aspects of caring for children and catering to their unique abilities and cultural differences that I undoubtedly saw myself as not just a caregiver but as an early childhood educator. Obtaining my CDA has become a confidence booster and steppingstone to furthering my education.”* (Generated funds - \$300.00)

I am a **coach** for the Dodge County **Rooted in Relationships** initiative. I taught three, 6-hour modules for 20 childcare providers and coached two childcare providers for 60 minutes every

month. External evaluators observed childcare rooms at baseline and again the second year. Classrooms demonstrated strong improvements in implementing Pyramid Model practices over time. Negative practices decreased and fidelity to the model increased. (Generated funds - \$2,040)

Other Contributions

Early Childhood Leadership Team – I organize the team meetings, provide the communication piece for the team with emails and notifications. I organize the face-to-face meeting once a year and the monthly meetings both leadership team (setting the agenda) prior to the group meeting and the group meeting. I assist in preparing the Team’s yearly Impact Report and the EC Team State Action Plan. I send out monthly [EC content for Social Media](#). We have partnered with seven different agencies to push out this content. (Radio Sponsorship - \$1500) I also attend the Extension Program Area Leadership Team meetings to provide input to Extension Administration and to keep up to date with big picture issues.

EC Team Evaluation – Co-developed an all-team evaluation system using common core questions. Set up a system to gather data in Qualtrics for the EC Team to utilize, which prepared them in 2022-2023 to incorporate the PEARS system for 2024. With the assistance of a grad student gathered data for the team and for individuals to assist them with their year-end reporting.

PEARS Advisory Team – In 2023, piloted the PEARS system to assist team members in the adoption of the system for the 2024 reporting year. I co-developed how-to-sheets for Individual Action Plans and prepared PEARS notebooks for each team member to organize year-end reporting, evaluation, and PEARS questions. I will continue in 2024 to teach team members how to do Program Activities in PEARS.

4-H Program – I continue to advise the Dodge County 4-H program in the absence of a Youth Educator in the areas of 4-H Council, judges, history of program, rules and operations, and the 4-H Foundation. I assist at the county fair with various activities and notably on static judging day. I have transformed the kidZone into an early childhood agricultural experience during the four days of the county fair. (see Individual Impact Statement)

Nebraska Cooperative Extension Association – I served as the President of NCEA in 2023, leading monthly board meetings and creating Ad Hoc committees to better serve our membership. We hosted our annual meeting in Kearney in November with special topics on revenue generation, University benefits, and professional development.

Advisory Groups - As a member of each one of these groups, I meet frequently with them at monthly meetings and share content as it relates to Early Childhood and Extension faculty in general.

- All Things Nebraska
- Dean’s Advisory
- North Central Quality Childcare Networking Group
- Nebraska Extension Communication

Mailson Freire de Oliveira 2023 Story: First months of challenges and opportunities

Commencing my role in September 2023, the initial five months were strategically dedicated to a multifaceted approach, focusing on networking, comprehensive onboarding, and continuous professional development. A significant portion of my efforts was directed towards successful grant writing, meticulous data analysis, and collection for ongoing research projects and CropWatch publications. In fulfilling my responsibilities, addressing stakeholders' inquiries emerged as a pivotal aspect of my role, and I actively engaged with 14 stakeholders, not only providing detailed responses but also cultivating partnerships to garner support for programming initiatives. As a newcomer to the field, I seized the opportunity to collaborate with seasoned colleagues, participating in the planning and execution of successful programs. This dynamic period of engagement and learning has laid a robust foundation for my ongoing contributions as an educator. Here are more details of my 2023 accomplishments.

Onboarding and professional development (51%):

In the course of my onboarding journey with UNL Extension, I seamlessly integrated into the system, establishing meaningful connections and engaging with the vibrant community within my office. My involvement extended beyond the confines of routine tasks as I actively participated in data collection initiatives and collaborated with colleagues in organizing and executing events. Notably, the collaborative atmosphere during onboarding led to the establishment of partnerships, culminating in the submission of a successful grant proposal. As part of my ongoing professional development, I took part in the Fall Conference, gaining valuable insights into building programs of excellence. My commitment to networking was evident in my interactions with stakeholders to garner support for an event we are organizing for 2024. These collective efforts not only enriched my understanding of extension practices but also underscored my dedication to contributing meaningfully to the objectives of UNL Extension. My experience at Husker Harvest Days proved to be a strategically invaluable opportunity to foster meaningful connections within the extension community. Networking with fellow extension educators and specialists allowed me to gain firsthand insights into various programs developed by UNL Extension, highlighting the substantial impact of extension services on farmers. Exploring the diverse array of programs reinforced my understanding of the pivotal role extension plays in supporting agricultural communities. Additionally, the chance to integrate at the Digital Agriculture booth provided me with a deeper understanding of the evolving landscape of agricultural technology. Furthermore, engaging with the On-Farm Research Network at the event enhanced my appreciation for the practical and research-driven initiatives underway within the extension system. Overall, the experience not only broadened my professional network but also enriched my perspective on the multifaceted contributions of UNL Extension to the agricultural community.

Data analysis and collection for research projects and CropWatch publications (16%):

I actively participated in the development of two highly viewed CropWatch publications. The first publication addressed the critical issue of maintaining high uniformity in water application for center pivot systems, providing essential insights for efficient and sustainable agriculture practices in this publication I helped on data collection, processing and writing. The second publication focused on guiding farmers in estimating harvest losses in soybean and corn fields, offering valuable information to optimize yields for this publication I helped on writing the final text. Together, these publications garnered a total of 1254 views, reflecting the significant impact of our efforts in disseminating practical knowledge to the agricultural community. These accomplishments underscore our commitment to advancing agricultural practices and promoting the mission of our extension organization. I collaborated on six On-farm research (OFR) trials under the Highboy Project across eastern Nebraska helping on biomass collection this exemplifies the effectiveness of team efforts in collecting high-quality and high-quantity data on a topic of significant importance to the region.

Program planning and executing Confronting Cropping Challenges Program (10%):

The most impactful work in 2023 was undoubtedly under the category of projects, particularly those conducted directly with growers on their farms. Being an integral part of the planning and facilitation of the "Confronting Cropping Challenges" event has been a pivotal and rewarding experience. As a member of the team dedicated to addressing the current and emerging cropping issues in the northeastern region of Nebraska during the 2023 growing season, I actively contributed to the development and execution of a comprehensive program learning from other extension educators with more experience. Our primary objective was to provide producers with valuable insights and practical solutions that would aid them in making informed decisions for the upcoming 2024 season. Collaborating with experts and stakeholders, I played a key role in designing sessions that delved into the intricacies of the challenges faced by the agricultural community in our region. From exploring technological advancements to addressing climate-related concerns, the event aimed to equip producers with the knowledge and resources necessary to navigate the complexities of modern agriculture. Through meticulous planning, effective coordination, and insightful discussions, the "Confronting Cropping Challenges" program emerged as a successful initiative, fostering a collaborative environment and demonstrating our commitment to supporting the resilience and success of local producers. Participating in the planning and facilitation of the "Confronting Cropping Challenges" event was a transformative experience for me as a new educator, providing invaluable insights and skills that will undoubtedly enhance the effectiveness of my future programming endeavors.

Other contributions (23%):

Handling stakeholders' queries was a significant component of my role, and in 2023, I addressed about 11 questions through phone calls or walk-ins, dedicating approximately 15 hours to providing assistance and studying for answers. As awareness of my role as an extension educator for Dodge/Washington/Cuming continues to grow, these numbers are expected to rise significantly.

As a result of collaboration on data collection and CropWatch writing I submitted a grant as PI for the Soybean board based on the results we had from the project that we collect the data. The total of the expected revenue generation is more than 10,000 dollars.

I also dedicated considerable time to contribute to the planning of two upcoming events—the Soil Health Conference and the Eastern Corn and Soybean Expo scheduled for 2024.

Below are some additional contributions:

Professional Development

- Search Process Seminar
- Workplace Appreciation
- 2023 Fall Conference

Attending extension board meetings

- 1 meeting in Dodge County
- 1 meeting in Cuming County
- 1 meeting in Washington County

Serving as Search Committee

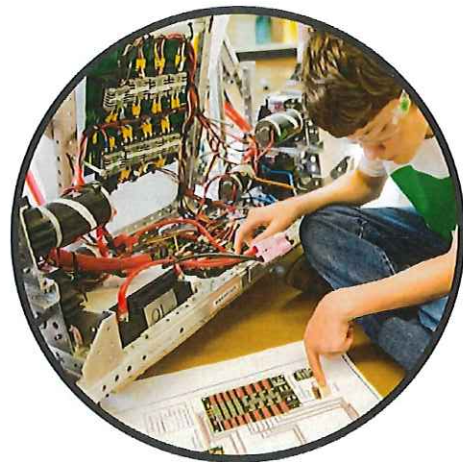
- 4-H Extension Instructor or Extension Educator position in Dodge County

Revenue Generation – grants submitted

- Eastern Nebraska Corn and Soybean Expo 2025 (co-PI) – Nebraska Soybean Board – **submitted**
- Artificial Intelligence to Detect Center Pivots With Poor Uniformity of Water Application (PI) – Nebraska Soybean Board – **submitted**



Dodge County 4-H



Public Value

Youth make up 21% of Nebraska communities. They will soon be filling critical roles in the economic and civic leadership of Nebraska. Preparing youth to thrive is essential to the economic vitality and civic wellness in Nebraska. 4-H is preparing youth to make informed decisions, engaging youth in STEM and Agriculture, and inspiring youth to be leaders and entrepreneurs.

The Situation

Youth are growing and emerging into adulthood during an ever-changing, uncertain, complex and ambiguous time and youth need developmentally appropriate opportunities to prepare them to navigate their futures.

Extension Response

Youth will develop an understanding of STEM principles, the science of agriculture and the environment; and identify how they connect to the world around them.

Impacts

Dodge County 4-H reached 40% of 4-H aged youth in 2023 through community clubs, school enrichment, summer activities, and after school programming. 255 youth enrolled in Dodge County 4-H and 50 volunteers completed the screening process to work with Dodge County youth.

Participants Feedback

We learned so much! We want to explore engineering more to pursue it as a career. Without this opportunity we would not have been able to experience or learn about engineering. We greatly appreciate your time and interest in our futures and the opportunities you provide.

- 4-H Youth Members

Primary Contact

Shane Ahrens, 4-H Assistant

shane.ahrens@unl.edu

402-727-2775

1206 W. 23rd St, Fremont, NE 68025

Collaborators

4-H is supported by many organizations and individuals. Extension Staff and UNL Faculty participate in programming. Dodge County supports the work that is done locally.

Extension Big 3 Alignment

- Strengthen Nebraska Agriculture & Food Systems
- Inspire Nebraskans & Their Communities
- Enhance The Health & Wellbeing of All Nebraskans

Shane Ahrens 2023 Accomplishments

Completed Onboarding as Nebraska Extension 4-H Assistant

Participated as a Vocal Search Committee Member for New 4-H Educator in Dodge County

Developed and Delivered Summer Workshops on Entomology, Healthy Living, and Home Environment

Planned and implemented a new Public Speaking Contest for Dodge County 4-H members which included video communications, presentations, and impromptu speech for the first time

Planned and implemented the Achievement Celebration for Dodge County 4-H members

Organized and executed the Dodge County Fair 4-H Animal Shows, Contests, and Static Exhibits. Volunteer hours, Educators and County Staff, Judges, Ambassadors, and Partner Organizations helped to deliver this opportunity to Dodge County Youth

Helped Bring Build a Hut Engineering and STEM Exploration for 4th-6th graders to Dodge County as a pilot project developed by Douglas/Sarpy County

Led Embryology and Farm in a Glove Ag Literacy Curriculum in 1st and 3rd grade classrooms in Dodge County Schools

Led Catch Kids Healthy Living Curriculum in 4th, 7th and 8th grade classes in Dodge County Schools

Led College & Career Success programming in Fremont Middle School

Coordinated the Dodge County 4-H Ambassador Program for 4 4-H Youth aged 15-18 to Grow Leadership and College & Career Readiness Skills

Provided Guidance, Delivered Reports, and Prepared Documents for Meetings of the Dodge County 4-H Council Bimonthly

Maintained, Updated, and Led 4-H families through the Extension Web Page for Dodge County

Publicized All Dodge County 4-H and Statewide 4-H Opportunities to Dodge County 4-H members through Smore Newsletters Weekly

Collected and Coordinated Judging for All Dodge County Achievement Celebration Documents – Scholarship Applications, Diamond Clover, Achievement Applications, Club of Excellence, and Ambassador Applications

Created and Distributed All Certificates for Dodge County 4-H Members and Volunteers Throughout the Year, Especially at the time of the Achievement Celebration

Worked with Beth Nacke and Other Collaborators on the Little Free Pantry Project Including a Presentation on Kaffeem with Kaffeem

Compiled and Submitted the Dodge County Annual Enrollment Report for 4-H Activities in Fiscal Year 2023

Ordered and Coordinated All Awards for 4-H Members at the Dodge County Fair

Supported the Dodge County Team at Livestock Judging during the PASE Competition

Taught YQCA In Person to 4-H Members aged 10-18 at 4 Different Trainings

Assisted with the Interview and Training Process for a 4-H Summer Intern in Dodge County

Managed the Dodge County 4-H ShoWorks Program for County and State Fair Entries

Helped Communicate and Coordinate the Animal ID, Nomination, and Entry Process for Dodge County 4-H Members

Taught the Corn and Soybean Lesson to 4th Graders at the Washington/Dodge County Ag Literacy Festival in Arlington

Talked to 4th Graders About the Importance of Pollinators at the Eco Fair in Fremont

Gathered Supplies and Materials for 4-H Events, Contests, Fairs, Workshops, School Visits, and Other Purposes, Including Trips to Grand Island for Embryology Hatching Eggs

Developed, Promoted, and Coordinated Beef Weigh Day for Dodge County 4-H Members

Trained, Provided Orientation and Update to Dodge County 4-H Leaders and Volunteers at the Annual Meeting

Assisted Nate Dorsey with the Fremont Corn Expo

Assisted Lisa Poppe with the Fremont 4-H Expo

Attended Weekly Plan and Report Meetings with 4-H Educator Dean Castillo

Developed the 2023 Community Club Calendar for Dodge County 4-H

Handled the Majority of Questions, Walk In 4-H Traffic, and Call In 4-H Related Topics

Through Collaborations and Partnerships, Achieved 40% Reach of Dodge County 4-H Aged Youth

Promoted, Supported and Monitored 4honline Enrollment for Dodge County 4-H Members

Other Contributions

Volunteered as a Judge and Assisted with Other Tasks at the Statewide 4-H Premier Communication Event

Assisted With Events at the Fremont 4-H Expo

Recorded a 4-H Promotional Radio Spot for KTIC

Entered, Prepared, and Transported 4-H State Fair Static Exhibits to Grand Island

Attended the Extension Fall Conference and Participated in Breakout Sessions

Attended 4-H New Worker Training

Attended Zone 8 Retreats and Regular Zoom Meetings

Attended NCEA Conference and Joined the 4-H Section

Assisted Office Staff in the Search and Interview Process for a New 4-H Administrative Assistant in Dodge County

Completed Clifton Strengths Testing

Delivered Reports to the Dodge County Extension Board Bimonthly

Contributed to a Video Recording of 4-H Assistants for the 4-H Assistant Cohort Group

Participated as a member of the College and Career Success Team

Attended Statewide 4-H Webinars, Refresher Courses, and Other Meetings throughout 2023

Provided Feedback for Hiring WCS & HLES Educators in Dodge County

Provided Coverage at the Front Desk as the First Point of Contact for Community Members, Routing Questions to the Proper Educator, Assistant, Specialist, or Community Partner

Provided Feedback to Build a Hut Coordinators at the Debrief Event

Corn and Soybeans Station Presenter at Saunders County Ag Literacy Festival

Bird Feeder Construction Station Leader at Saunders County Maker Day

Nature Hike Tour Guide at Conservation Day in Thurston County at Summit Lake

Announcer at 4-H State Fair Sheep Show

Ribbon Data Recorder at 4-H State Fair Goat Show

Canoe Experience Assistant at Douglas/Sarpy County Water Works Festival

Taught Multiple STEM Lessons at STEM Days in Millard Public Schools



Sleepless in Nebraska

Public Value

Sleep deficiency has officially been declared a public health epidemic. A staggering 73.7% of NE high school students report getting less than 8 hours of sleep each night while 31.1% of NE adults are getting less than 7 hours! Insufficient sleep is associated with increased obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes, mental illness, and more. This program will change the way you sleep, starting tonight!

The Situation

Sleep rules every moment of our lives, yet it is overlooked and underutilized as an aspect of health in American lives. Disseminating evidence-based information and practical strategies on improving sleep to the public is an important step in addressing current mental health and overall wellbeing concerns in the US. This program not only addresses the impact sleep has on mental health, but also physical health.

Extension Response

In 2022, I took this program over, as a co-lead, from a retiring Extension Educator. In the year and a half that we have been leading this program, we have reached 758 individuals. This is an engaging educational program that can be delivered as a lecture, lunch and learn, webinar, or a hands-on health fair for all ages. Participants learn about sleep cycles and the impact lack of sleep has on their whole body and walk away with the tools they need in order to address sleep quality that same night.

Impacts

542 individuals—youth and adults—reached in 2023

- 99% of adults learned something new
- 91% of adults plan on making a behavior change to improve their quality of sleep because of program participation.
- Before program participation, 17% of youth recognized the impact that sleep has on learning, mental health, and athletic performance. After program participation, this number increased to 78% of youth participants.



Participants Feedback

- "I do everything I'm not supposed to do.. I'm going to try one thing at a time. Make that a habit. Add another thing."
- "I learned that there are many things I do that affect why I can't sleep at night."
- "Excellent presentation, fun and practical presentation"

Primary Contact

Jordan Luxa—Food, Nutrition & Health Educator,
Jordan.luxa@unl.edu

Collaborators

Hannah Guenther—Food, Nutrition & Health Educator,
Hannah.guenther@unl.edu

Extension Big 3 Alignment

- Strengthen Nebraska Agriculture & Food System
- Inspire Nebraskans & Their Communities
- Enhance The Health & Wellbeing of All Nebraskans

My Story—2023 was my fourth full year as an FNH Extension Educator. This was a continued year of growth for me as I focused on highlighting my leadership abilities, strengthening existing partnerships, building new relationships, fostering consistent communication, and collaborating on a variety of projects both within my accountability region and across the state.

Farm to School (F2S)—I have spent the last 3+ years as part of the leadership and planning team for F2S efforts within Extension. Because of my role in farm to school I have also played a part in other local food efforts such as the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) Team Nutrition Local Indigenous Foods Training grant initiative, which started in 2022. This project aims to get more student-friendly, local foods in schools and aligns with USDAs effort to transform America’s food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production and ensuring access to healthy and nutritious food in all communities. I served as a Coach to Overton Public Schools (reaching approximately 300 youth) and assisted their school with Chef’s Table activities and cafeteria taste tests. The Chef’s Table activities involved hands on experiential learning for both middle school and high school students. I went in and taught them about two different local foods—turnips and beef—and then they got to make a recipe using those foods. They also had the opportunity to create marketing materials for promoting the recipe for the larger cafeteria taste test. After the Chef’s Table activities were completed, those recipes were then put into action in the cafeteria and the entire school got to try the recipes as part of the lunch meal.

Through my farm to school efforts, I have worked closely with NDE and their farm to school team. In 2023, NDE was awarded a formula grant that will allow Nebraska to partner with Kansas and Missouri over the next 3 years in efforts to host a tri-state Farm to School Institute in each state over those 3 years. I am part of that planning committee. The first Institute will be held in Nebraska so much of 2023 was focused on pre-planning and logistics—budget, venue, dates, timeline, etc. I will also be the lead for our Coach cohort since I have the experience of not only hosting an Institute (2021) but also acting as a Coach to one of our Nebraska teams at Vermont’s Northeast Farm to School Institute (2022).

Also in conjunction with NDE, I am part of the Harvest of the Month for Early Care and Education (ECE) Advisory Committee. [Nebraska Harvest of the Month](#) (HOM) features products available seasonally across the state. The HOM toolkit offers recipes for schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program; a taste test guide; a communications guide; and resources and activities like trivia cards, take-home newsletters; wearable “I tried it” stickers; and more. These materials are being modified to create new materials for the ECE audience. As an advisory member I have participated in regular meetings as well as provided advisement on the project, curriculum, toolkit, and evaluation.

Additionally, I am part of the team that was awarded a new 2-year USDA Farm to School grant (\$280,563) that will create a Nebraska F2S Network aimed to cultivate inclusive partnerships across the state. This project started at the end of 2023 right before I went on maternity leave. During that time our team held listening/asset-mapping sessions to dig into why participants care about F2S, what their communities are already doing, and what those communities biggest F2S assets and contributors are. Moving forward into 2024 we will work on visioning, root cause analysis, regional solution brainstorming and prioritizing, establishing a network, and finally launching that network at the end of 2024 at the Nebraska Farm to School Summit.

Growing Together Nebraska (GTN)—2023 marked year 4 of participating in the GTN project, which aims to increase nutrition security and promote healthy food access for families and individuals who are food insecure. This year focused solely on the maintenance of our garden. I oversaw 2 returning Extension Master Gardeners who volunteered a combined total of 90 hours. We donated 595 lbs of fresh produce and herbs to our local food pantry, and served 372 unique individuals. Additionally, nutrition education was provided to the food pantry via educational handouts and recipes. The Strategic Director of the food pantry shared that, *“Keep doing what you are doing! We really enjoy being able to share fresh food with the community”*. Our statewide Growing Together Nebraska team is part of a multi-state collaborative in which we were awarded Regional and National Excellence in Extension awards this year.

Sleepless in Nebraska (SN): SN seeks to help youth and adults sleep better to help prevent sleep related health, mental, and safety issues. This was my first full year acting as program co-lead after taking over the curriculum in June 2022. As co-lead I am responsible for updating and creating curriculum documents, evaluation tools, and marketing materials as well as delivering the program statewide. Major accomplishments include participating in lunch and learns, health fairs, and science and safety days. 542 individuals, both youth and adults, were reached throughout the year—more than doubling our reach from 2022.

- 96-99% of participants said they learned something new and 80-91% of participants were planning on making a behavior change to improve their quality of sleep because of program participation.
- Before program participation, 17% of youth recognized the impact that sleep has on learning, mental health, and athletic performance. After program participation, this number increased to 78% of youth participants.

Educational Programming—I taught 650 youth through in-person programming, in 7 different counties across the state. Lessons were delivered in classrooms, after school programs, health fairs, science and safety days, and summer workshops. Educational components were delivered using *Kids in the Kitchen*, *Choose Health: Food, Fun & Fitness*, *Teen Cuisine*, *School Enrichment Kits*, *Marathon Kids*, *CATCH*, and *Sleepless in Nebraska* curricula. These types of programs are making a difference in the lives of the youth and their families within our communities by teaching them the foundation of healthy living. Without nutrition education our youth are more likely to experience unhealthy lifestyles leading to obesity and associated risks such as diabetes and heart disease.

I have been consistently increasing my adult population reach over the last two years. In 2023, I taught 174 adults through in-person and virtual programming. Educational components were delivered using *Sleepless in Nebraska*, *Living Well with Hypertension*, and other healthy living curriculum.

- I, along with four other FNH Educators, delivered *Living Well with Hypertension* to 17 participants statewide. We did this virtually, over the course of 6 weeks. This series aimed to improve hypertension (high blood pressure) self-management. Topics included basics of hypertension control, nutrition, physical activity, tobacco cessation, medication management, stress management, and creating short-term and long-term action plans.
 - 90% of participants plan to make a behavior change after participating in program
 - *“I enjoyed hearing the perspectives and experiences of the other people in the group. I found the goal setting exercises particularly helpful. I will continue to use that method.”*
 - *“Thanks to all the presenters for great information and a friendly class atmosphere.”*

Lead Educator—Our Washington County Office has three co-Lead Educators. Typically, my main responsibilities include overseeing and supervising our office manager and providing leadership for the annual budget and financial operations. Additionally, I am responsible for office maintenance, renovations, technology and furniture acquisition, inventory, and vehicle maintenance. In 2023, our office decided to purchase a new vehicle—I led these efforts by receiving bids from multiple dealerships, making sure our budget was accurate, and taking our planned purchase to the County Board of Supervisors for approval. As part of planning our annual county budget, I implemented several new line items in order to best meet the needs of our office and ensure efficient spending.

I also helped lead Extension Board efforts much of 2023 since the Educator who previously executed those duties left and the position was empty from March-November; we spent a lot of time in 2023 trying to determine how best to engage our board members to make them feel value in their roles—this including a lot of meaningful conversation with the board which eventually led to us creating committees within the board. While our other Educator was on maternity leave, I also provided supervision to two 4-H Assistants and one 4-H support staff. I provided assistance with interviewing and onboarding one new 4-H Assistant. Additionally, I continue to organize and facilitate monthly all-staff meetings.

Media—I recorded 12 radio PSAs with KTIC Radio reaching approximately 30,000 listeners.

Leadership—In 2023, I have held a variety of leadership roles. I am currently providing mentorship as part of the Extension Mentor Program to one of our newer FNH Educators. I was nominated and selected to be part of the UNL Faculty Senate and Extension Exit Interview Committee. At the end of 2023, I was also asked to join our FNH Leadership Team as the County Educator Representative. Additionally, I was part of the application review committee for UNL's Master of Science—Professional Studies in Dietetics program for the third year in a row. Likewise, I served as Treasurer for the 3rd year for the Nebraska Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics.