

## Who Is K-State Research and Extension?

### AGRI-VIEWS

by Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent

I am regularly asked just what exactly the Extension Office is. Even people that use our resources regularly often feel that they know just that part of the Extension Office that they use. But who are we, really?

In 1862, President Lincoln signed the Morrill Act or Land Grant College Act that established institutions of higher education in each state dedicated to teaching the agricultural and mechanical arts specifically and more broadly, "...in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life." Kansas State University came from this act. Unfortunately much of the public was still unable to attend college and much of the awesome information that was being generated in these Land Grant Colleges was not getting out to the people that really needed it.

In 1914 the Smith-Lever act was passed that created the basis of the "Extension Service" which was designed to place people out in the 3,000 plus counties of this country to take this practical information right to the people. Each state was allowed to develop their Extension Service in the way that would best serve the people of that state. So while every state has an Extension Service, it is organized a little differently in each state.

In Kansas we are fortunate to have a great alliance with county government. Federal and State funds come into K-State to support the framework, administration and specialists of K-State Research and Extension. State, and especially county, funds then support the local extension offices. Far and away the biggest source of funds for the county extension office is county funds and in Geary County we are blessed by excellent support from the County Commissioners. But the State and Federal funds are very critical to the overall mission of Extension. Keep in mind that when you see talk of state support for Kansas State University, part of that is the Extension Service.

Extension in each county takes a little bit different face based on the local needs. We have locally elected county citizens that serve on advisory boards and an executive board that has oversight of the office. In Geary County we have three Extension Agents and we are all considered K-State faculty. We cover many subjects including 4-H and Youth Development programs. 4-H may well be the most visible of all Extension Service programs. We have programs in nutrition, health and wellness (many are familiar with Walk Kansas), personal financial management, family management, supporting family strength and wellness and many other programs that fit under the broad umbrella of family and consumer sciences.

Finally the programs that I work with which include all areas of agricultural production, home and commercial horticulture, natural resource management, and a little bit of community development as well. We answer questions, provide educational programs, and supply educational materials, often at little or no direct cost to you. These are all based on unbiased research conducted at K-State and other Land Grant Colleges. In essence, we aren't selling a product, we are helping you solve problems for a better life, community, county and country.

That is a whole bunch of information compressed into one brief column. If you have questions, call us. But remember, that we may answer the phone "Geary County Extension Office", but we're the local arm of Kansas State University, Research and Extension!