

Kansas Currents

K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION NEWS

Central Kansas Extension District

centralkansas.ksu.edu

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Dates: March 15-May 12

Cost:

\$10.00 per person registration.

Optional t-shirt \$9.50 plus tax.
per person.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE:

payment must be received in
Salina or Minneapolis Extension
office by 5 p.m., March 13th.

Walk Kansas is an eight-week,
team-based fitness challenge that
works by having individuals keep
track of their weekly minutes of
physical activity. Minutes can be
reported individually online, or
can be given to the team captain
and reported by them.

Although the name of the
program implies walking, many
forms of physical activity counts
towards Walk Kansas minutes/
miles. Swimming, jogging,
biking, basketball, or any other
activity that is performed at a
moderate to vigorous level. If
you wear an activity tracker you
can count steps you take after you
reach 6,000 for that day.

You get 15 minutes of activity for

every 2,000 steps you take above
6,000.

Walk Kansas uses virtual trails for
you to “walk” along. This is a fun
way to see the different sights of
Kansas without having to leave the
comfort of your community.

There are 3 challenge options to
choose from based on how
ambitious your team is. The routes
will trek you through the beautiful
Kansas scenery but completely
different from each other.

Challenge 1: Discover the 8
Wonders of Kansas! This journey
requires each person to get 2 1/2 hrs.
of moderate activity per week.

Challenge 2: *Go Cross Country*
From Troy (NE) to Elkhart (SW),
which requires 4 hrs. of activity per
person/week.

Challenge 3: *Little Balkans to
Nicodemus*—a trail that takes you
through SE Kansas and then up to
Nicodemus with interesting stops
along the way. This requires 6 hrs.
of activity per person/week.

Teams must consist of 4-6
individuals. Team captains will
register the entire team online.

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Then, the captain must bring the team registration form and payment to the Salina or Minneapolis extension offices by March 13th to complete the registration process. Captains will also add any t-shirt orders on their team registration form.

Walk Kansas is a simple and affordable program to be a part of. Organizing and registering your team is very easy. Here's what you need to do:

- First, recruit a team of up to six people motivated to exercise. If you can't find six people for a team, that 's ok! Teams can be 4–6 individuals.
- Choose a team captain and pick a name for your team.
- Team captains can register the entire team online at www.walkkansasonline.org **OR** pick up registration materials for your team from the extension office, in Salina or Minneapolis **OR** print team registration forms off the Central Kansas Extension District Website, www.centrankansas.ksu.edu. Team captains will be responsible for ordering the entire team's t-shirt through the store tab on the Walk Kansas website.
- Have your team captain turn in team registration form and one check payment for the entire team's registration and shirt orders to either extension office by March 13.
- Keep track of the minutes you walk, any strength training activities, water intake, and servings of fruit and vegetable consumption. Individuals can report their own totals online **OR**, you can report all totals to your team captain, who can enter the entire team totals online.
- Make sure you have shoes that are good for many miles of walking or exercising.
- Plan to have lots of fun!

Each Walk Kansas team will set a team goal (challenge) that requires each person to log 2 1/2, 4, or 6 hours of exercise per week. Think about your personal goal and what you can realistically accomplish each week as you discuss the team goal with your teammates.

What to Expect When Processing Meat

If you are new to taking your own animals to be processed, you may be surprised what you get after processing is done.



Changes occur when converting the live animal to a carcass. Even more changes occur to convert the carcass to a package of meat.

The dressing percentage, or yield, varies between animal species. Pork has the highest average dressing percentage of 70-75%. Beef averages 60-64% and lamb averages 54-59%. Loss factors include the animal blood, hide, internal organs, food in the animal stomach, and other factors.

To help guide you on what to expect before you take your animal to be processed, see these K-State Research and Extension publications available on our bookstore at: www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu

- How Much Meat to Expect from Your Animal—MF3394
- Pork Processing Options for Consumers—MF3396
- Beef Processing Options for Consumers—MF3395

Medicare Basics

Many people don't give Medicare a second thought until they approach 65 and find themselves in the middle of a big decision about their future. It's important to understand requirements, eligibility and benefits when considering your future health care coverage.



Demystify the world of Medicare at an informational session with a local expert. Those turning 65 in the next six months or over 65 and thinking about retirement are encouraged to attend, although all ages are welcome, especially those who help aging parents with insurance and financial matters.

Tuesday, March 17, 3:30 p.m.
K-State Polytechnic Campus
Welcome Center - Classroom #122

Saturday, March 21, 10 a.m.
Salina Public Library, 301 W. Elm
Prescott Meeting Room

Call 785-309-5850 to register for either program.

Women in Ag: Farm Programs and Crop Insurance

Farm Programs and Crop Insurance are the topic of this spring's Saline County Women in Ag meeting scheduled for Thursday, April 16. Panelists will include Amanda Ahrens and Kevin W Vondra with Farm Service Agency, Kristin Kuntz, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and Jay Wisbey, K-State Research and Extension.



Come learn what FSA and NRCS has to offer, including farm programs, conservation programs, livestock disaster programs, acreage reporting and payment eligibility. Crop insurance as a risk management tool will also be discussed.

If you are a woman involved in agriculture, whether producer, spouse, landlord, or are interested in learning more, plan to attend this free Women in Ag program. The session will be at American Ag Credit at 925 W. Magnolia, Salina, KS. Registration begins at 6 p.m., Thursday, April 16, followed by the meeting at 6:30 p.m. Drinks and dessert will be served. Pre-registration is requested. Call the K-State Research & Extension office in Salina, at 785-309-5850 by April 13 to register.

This Women in Ag meeting is sponsored by K-State Research & Extension-Central Kansas District, Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, American Ag Credit, Saline County Conservation District, and Saline County Farm Bureau.

Free Income Tax Assistance

VITA, the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program, offers free tax help to people who make \$54,000 or less. IRS-certified volunteers provide free basic income tax return preparation with electronic filing of the federal and state returns.

February 3 – April 15
Mondays 10 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Tuesdays 1 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Thursdays 1 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Saturdays 9 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.



The Salina VITA site is located at 145 B S. Santa Fe. No appointment is necessary. For more information, call 785-829-8135

6 Money-Smart Uses for Your Tax Refund

If you are expecting a refund this tax season, consider these six tips for using it wisely.



1. Pay down credit card debt. First, attach the card with the highest interest rate. If you can pay off the card in full, that is even better.
2. Build up an emergency fund. Tuck some of that tax refund into savings. Even a modest amount –as little as \$500 –can help soften the blow of typical unexpected expenses. If you already have an emergency fund, give yourself an extra boost toward reaching that three-to-six-month living expenses recommendation.
3. Invest in a retirement plan. Enhance your future now by using your tax refund to invest in a tax-deferred retirement plan. If you have an Individual Retirement Account (IRA), make a one-time, sizable contribution, or save your tax refund for a series of smaller investments over several months.
4. Prepay your mortgage or loans. For homeowners with hefty monthly mortgage payments, give yourself some breathing room by using your tax refund to pay ahead. For non-homeowners, contribute to your car loan or student loan, or prepay on your insurance premium.
5. Be good to your car and your home. Spend your tax refund on costly, but necessary, repairs to your home or vehicle. Replace that leaky roof or buy new tires for your car.
6. Treat yourself. If you have covered all of the above, then reward yourself –but do so responsibly. Spend your tax refund on a well-deserved vacation or buy yourself something you have been saving for.

How to Add an Authorized Representative

Would you like for a family member or caregiver to be able to call your health insurance company on your behalf? The company cannot give out your personal health information to anyone unless they have permission in writing first.

If you are enrolled in an employer group health plan, or have individual coverage, contact the company using their customer service number on the back of the card, or search their website for ‘Authorized Representative form’. If you have children over 18 on your plan, they will need to complete a separate form allowing you to discuss their coverage, even if the plan is under your name and you are paying the bills.

If you are enrolled in Medicare, you can complete form CMS-10106: Authorization to Disclose Personal Health Information and mail to them or submit online through your MyMedicare account. To submit the form online, log in to your account and follow these steps:

1. Click on your name in the top right corner of the page.
2. Click "My account."
3. Select "Manage my representatives."
4. Click “Medicare Authorization to Disclose Personal Health Information form.” Enter the requested information and click the "Continue" button.

To grant authorization for your Medicare supplement plan and prescription drug plan, you will need to contact the respective companies and ask them to send you the form to complete and return. You may also be able to find it searching the company website.

Protect Yourself From Social Security Scams

Scammers are pretending to be government employees. Scammers will try to scare and trick you into giving them your personal information and money. They may threaten you or your family and may demand immediate payment to avoid arrest or other legal action.

Don't be fooled! If you receive a suspicious call:



1. Hang up!
2. DO NOT give them money or personal information!
3. Report the scam to OIG.SSA.GOV

Social Security employees do occasionally contact people--generally those who have ongoing business with the agency--by telephone for business purposes. However, Social Security employees will never threaten a person, or promise a Social Security benefit approval, or increase, in exchange for information or money. In those cases, the call is fraudulent and people should just hang up.

Generally, the agency mainly calls people who have recently applied for a Social Security benefit, someone who is already receiving payments and requires an update to their record, or a person who has requested a phone call from the agency. If a person is not in one of these situations, they normally would not receive a call from the agency.

Social Security will not:

- Tell you that your Social Security number has been suspended.
- Contact you to demand an immediate payment.
- Ask you for credit or debit card numbers over the phone.

- Require a specific means of debt repayment, like a prepaid debit card, a retail gift card, or cash.
- Demand that you pay a Social Security debt without the ability to appeal the amount you owe.
- Promise a Social Security benefit approval, or increase, in exchange for information or money.

If there is a problem with a person's Social Security number or record, in most cases Social Security will mail a letter. If a person needs to submit payments to Social Security, the agency will send a letter with instructions and payment options. People should never provide information or payment over the phone or Internet unless they are certain of who is receiving it.

Source: Social Security Administration

Bitter Taste Could Be in Your Genes

While we encourage consumers to eat healthy vegetables, such as broccoli, cabbage, and brussels sprouts, to some, the bitterness will turn up their nose.



Turns out, this could be genetic. Researchers at the University of Kentucky School of Medicine discovered that we all inherit two copies of the TAS2R38 taste gene. There are two variants of this gene, the AVI and PAV variants. If you have two copies of the AVI variant, you are not as sensitive to bitter flavors those foods. If you have one of each variant, you perceive bitter flavors in the same foods. If you have two PAV variants, you are a "super-taster" and those foods will be very bitter and inedible.

Heat Processing of Food

There is a lot of science that goes into a home preserved jar of food. Home canners must respect that science by using reliable recipes to make the safest product.



Heat penetration experiments are conducted to determine how heat goes through a jar of food. The “cold spot” or the slowest-heating location is key in knowing the time it takes to achieve a certain level of “lethality”, or how well the heat process destroys pathogens or spoilage microorganisms. These heat penetration studies are done for each food. It is affected by the acidity (pH), consistency, texture, distribution of solid food particles and liquids, and more.

These experiments are lengthy, expensive, and time-consuming. Therefore, the variety of recipes available are somewhat limited. There is no easy formula to apply to a new recipe without doing experiments for safety.

Making up your own recipe and canning it can be dangerous because of these reasons and more.

No Canning Recipes for “One Jar Meals”

We all like the convenience of great-tasting “one jar meals”. But, any additions or deletions made to an approved canning recipe would need a new process time calculated for it. It is not safe to change the recipe and use the same process time for canning. One-dish meals often include thickening ingredients or are cooked down to a thicker consistency than expected for the process time for an individual ingredient. These situations are likely to result in hazardous foods. You may add your special ingredients after you open up a safe-

ly canned jar of food, to make a dish. Also keep in mind that after canning and storage, your special recipe may no longer taste exactly the same as when it is made fresh. Sometimes special recipes are best enjoyed as freshly made dishes.

Stock Your Pantry the MED Way

The Mediterranean way of eating emphasizes a lot of fruits and vegetables. There are a variety of options to achieve this goal.



Fresh fruits and vegetables choices change throughout the year based on growing season. But, many of these same foods are available in frozen, canned, or dried forms year round. Look for plain frozen fruits and vegetables without added flavors or sauces. Choose canned products without added salt for vegetables or canned in their own juice for fruit. Dried fruits can be eaten as is or can be rehydrated.

Fresh or frozen fish options are few in some locations. But canned tuna or salmon, packed in water or olive oil, are good choices.

Don't have fresh herbs? There are many dried herbs available to use instead. A general substitution is 1/4 teaspoon dried ground = 1 teaspoon dried whole/crumbled = 1 tablespoon fresh chopped.

If certain foods are not available in your local grocery store, ask the manager to order the item. You may not be the only person looking for it and it could become a regular item on the shelf.

Take a Nap: The Benefits of Napping and How to Make It Work for You

Do you take naps? Maybe you should! A good nap can get you out of that afternoon slump,

recharge your energy, and leave you more alert and in a better mood. Naps aren't just for kids anymore. Research has shown that, even among adults, naps provide many benefits

Benefits of Napping

Increased Alertness: It'll be easier to pay attention during your staff meeting — or while driving your forklift if you can avoid nodding off or spacing out.

Attitude Adjustment: After a nap, you'll be less impulsive and better able to deal with frustration — in other words, you'll be in a better mood. Napping kills the crankiness.

Improved Memory: When your computer crashes, you lose data. But when you crash on the couch for a while, it actually helps your memory. A nap can make it easier to recall facts learned earlier that day.

A Creative Mindset: You need sleep to learn new skills and to be creative (That's when your brain can finally process the info you've stuffed into it). The good news is: a long nap can be similar to a night's sleep to get you inspired.

Cash Saver: You probably know that energy drinks and too much coffee aren't good for you and aren't as good for your brain as a nap, but have you calculated how much money you'd save by replacing costly trips to the café with free naps?

How to Nap Smart



Maybe you've decided that napping sounds like a plan. If you're going to give napping a try, do it right. It's not as simple as nodding off anytime you feel an inkling to yawn.

When: Mid-afternoon is best (around 3 pm). Don't nap too late in the day, or you'll be wide awake at night and spoil your bedtime routine.

Where: Find a cool, quiet place to doze. Maybe your car during a break, if you don't want the boss to catch you snoozing. (That said, many companies are starting to wise up by letting employees lie down for a break.)

How 'Long: You don't want to wake up in the middle of deep sleep or you'll be even groggy than when you started. For a short nap, keep it to 20 minutes.

Note: if you still plan on supplementing your nap with a cup of coffee drink it before you nod off. It takes time for caffeine to activate, and it will likely kick in right as you wake up from a short snooze.

See Clearer with Green Foods!

March brings us closer to spring colors, such as fresh green foods! Some of those green foods contain lutein which helps keep our eyes healthier and could reduce the eye disease age-related macular degeneration (AMD). Lutein is a xanthophyll found in foods such as basil, parsley, kale, spinach, broccoli, peas and lettuce.



Some risk factors for AMD are out of our control such as advancing age, being female, having light skin and/or blue eyes, and having a close relative with the disease. Other factors include smoking, being sedentary, not consuming enough fruits and vegetables, and too much sun exposure.

How can you incorporate these green eye healthy foods into your diet? Add bright green vegetables to a party tray. Add a green salad as a side dish to lunch or dinner.

Central Kansas Extension District

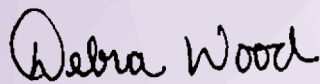
Salina Office

K-State Polytechnic
2218 Scanlan Ave
Salina, KS 67401-8196

Address Service Requested

The enclosed material is for your information. If we can be of further assistance, feel free to call or drop by the Extension Office.

Sincerely,



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