

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE



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- Water and Natural Resources
- Health
- Community Vitality
- Developing Tomorrow's Leaders

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## Grand Challenge: Developing Tomorrow's Leaders

**Title:** Youth nature experiences grow tomorrow's leaders

### Why is this issue important?

Educating youth about biodiversity and involving them in nature experiences is critical for sustaining the future of our biodiversity in Kansas and for their own well-being. Youth that have regular nature experiences are far more likely to: have a greater sense of community, quality of life, self acceptance, and the ability to grow.

### How did Extension address this issue?

K-State Horticulture Agent Jason Graves and Central Kansas District Extension Master Gardener volunteers offered nature experiences for youth in 2023. On Earth Day over 225 youth planted native trees and shrubs together at Lakewood Park. Throughout the year, youth were engaged in multiple events and sites with hands-on worm casting/composting experiences. Youth participated in the 2023 Eco Meet. Youth were engaged in children's gardening through the Salina Emergency Aid Food Bank Community Garden and multiple college students are participating in the Kansas Wesleyan University Tree Campus Higher Education project for 2023.



### What was the impact?

As a result of these nature experiences, over 375 youth and college students grew in their confidence and understanding of the natural world and are more likely to advocate for the benefits of nature and biodiversity with their peers and in their future endeavors. Youth received the many benefits that nature brings into our lives and they grew as people and in their connection to each other as a result.

### Success Story:

On Earth day over 85 native trees and shrubs were planted in Lakewood Park in Salina as a part of the celebration. Over 225 fourth graders got a hands on opportunity to walk a trail, learn about the benefits of native trees for biodiversity, view and appreciate wildlife, and plant trees and shrubs in small groups together.