

Western Prairie Food Farm and Community Alliance

2019 SUCCESS



Success in the Region

County Successes

Nine counties represent the Western Prairie Food Farm and Community Alliance and each one has had success. Let's take some time to see what they have been doing in 2019.

From the Chair

Learning from others

What a year 2019 has been. Northwest Kansas has had many successes but also has had to climb the hill to get to those success. As the Chair I also had many learning experiences.

RCD

Letter from the Umbrella

Sandy Rodgers, President of Western Prairie RCD pens an update to partners in Northwest Kansas about the success happening in this part of the state. RCD is the umbrella organization for the Alliance

Cheyenne	Rawlins	Decatur
Sherman	Thomas	Sheridan
Wallace	Logan	Gove

SUCCESS IN THE REGION

Nine counties represent the Western Prairie Food Farm and Community Alliance and each one has had success. Let's take some time to see what they have been doing in 2019.

COUNTY SUCCESSES



The **Gove County** Farm Bureau partnered with the Gove County Advisory Team (CAT) to purchase a 5-gallon salad spinner for USD 293. The district was using precut bagged salad mix that they ordered through the local distribution company. With the addition of the salad spinner, the district can now prepare and serve locally grown lettuce from 4B Farms, a hydroponic grower, located near Oakley, KS. The group hopes to expand this opportunity to the other two districts in their county, as well as the Gove County Medical Center.

The **Sherman County** CAT team partnered with USD 352, and the Sherman County Foundation to purchase a small greenhouse, plants, soil and other garden supplies. This project will initiate

an education program which teaches students the importance of healthy, locally grown food. The students will learn how to plant, maintain, and cook using the foods they have grown. The CAT team members represent USDA

Farm Services, local gardeners, a nurse, K-State Extension, Sherman County Conservation District and parents of various age groups. To date, the greenhouse has been purchased and delivered and will be constructed when the weather permits. The signage has been completed and delivered to the school. We were able to use the talents of a local NW Tech College Graphic Design student to design the signs. The second phase is to provide an ongoing education program in the classroom regarding the health benefits of healthy, locally grown food. The CAT team nurse and SNAP/ed member have volunteered to do these programs.



The **Logan County** HERO Implementation Grant helped the Logan County CAT team complete 3 projects in Logan County. The Seed Library Project was the first, with the Oakley Public library used an old card catalog to put the seeds in. The seeds were given free of charge to community members to start their own gardens and produce local grown food. The second project in the grant was used to improving the existing community garden. They also purchased grow lights and seed starting systems for the 3rd grade class to grow seedlings in the spring. Produce from the community garden was donated in the community and over 800 lbs. were donated in 2019.

The Final Project was a summer garden program the month of June. The CAT partnered with the Summer Recreation Program and had between 45 - 80 kids each week.

The first week they planted veggies and discussed what plants need to survive. They made origami pots and toilet paper roll pots and learned how to read seed labels to plant the seeds. During week two the students made hydroponic systems and planted leaf lettuce.

they discussed why people use hydroponics and how plants grow without soil.

They also showed the students how to make a system from a tote. In week 3 the group set up two worm factory 360 systems. They showed kids how to make a worm bin from a tote from the dollar store and discussed worm species and how to feed the worms. The Vermicompost will be used at the community garden. Week 4 they used a microscope with a camera to show students what is living in the soil. They looked at microbiology, bugs and insects and checked in on the worms from the week before. The group was excited to have the opportunity to provide this information to the community and strive to improve our local food system by helping the community gain access to locally grown foods. The goal is to educate our youth about the importance of locally grown foods.

The ***Cheyenne County*** CAT members started working on a Farmers Market. A Task Force group was designated in the Summer 2019 and successfully created a board of 5 members. The Board developed and passed bylaws. The Farmer's Markets were held from July 6-October 5, 2019 and had a steady flow of producers bringing in freshly picked, home grown produce. They also had several baked good vendors and several homemade/craft vendors each week as well. Fresh breakfast was available and provided most weekends. When an event was in town large crowds of people would stop by the Market. The Farmers Market became a social gathering spot for all sorts of vendors and customers where live music was provided a couple times throughout the summer. The Farmers Market Board is meeting and is starting plans for the 2020 season. The Board is currently working on fundraising events to help with 2020 expenses by holding their next event of selling hot chocolate and having a "stocking stuffers market" after the light parade. The CAT members are also looking into starting Simply Produce with their local grocery stores.



Funding opportunities through WPFCCA led to the construction of a kitchenette in the Ag Room of the ***Rawlins County*** High School. Construction was completed by the high school residential construction class, led by instructor Jeff Samson. The Ag teacher and FFA Advisor, Courtney Schamberger, use the facilities as a venue for teaching a food science course, ServSafe training with hands on skills testing for FFA youth that offer catering services as fundraisers and community education. This facility is the only arena in the USD 105 school district that supports any type of home economics curriculum.

In partnership with the WPFCCA, Jamboree Foods of Atwood is currently piloting the *Simply Produce*, bulk produce purchasing program. This framework is designed to increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables for all residents. The grocery retailer is showing increased sales, decreased freight costs and a strengthened "shop local" campaign. During the past seven months of implementation, Rawlins County has distributed over 13,000 pounds of fresh produce to residents

through this program. Visioning for incorporating locally grown products into the Simply Produce bundles is underway.

The **Wallace County** CAT members are meeting at least bi-monthly with a dedicated team of members attending the meetings. The team has continued support from the commissioners and other county partners. The CAT members have been working to develop a community kitchen for their community and this work has given them the opportunity to reach out to partners they wouldn't have normally reached out too. They have reached out to other communities and have been touring institutional kitchens to learn successes and barriers in developing a kitchen. They are in the beginning stages of their community kitchen work.



The City of Colby formalized a policy to designate public spaces in Colby to be used for food-growing initiatives and support the mission of the Alliance “to improve access to regionally grown health food options while promoting educational resources for the benefit of local populations.” In May 2019, Copeland Community Garden in Colby was developed as it was a neglected park and not used by the



community. City of Colby provides the land, electricity and water to the garden and provides manpower when needed. There are 36 garden plots and a greenhouse at the site in which several workshops were held at the Garden. The **Thomas County** CAT members have been able to leverage another grant funding to continually develop the garden. The creation of the Copeland Garden in the Copeland neighborhood brought resident support and allowed connection with the Latinx population. Because of the Garden connection, Latinx residents are looking at ways to have better

access to foods that are culturally relevant. For some, the garden will be a place to grow food, flowers and herbs in the company of friends and neighbors. For others, it's a place to reconnect with nature or get physical exercise. Others may take part in community gardening to build or revitalize a sense of community among neighbors.

Decatur County has promoted and further developed the local Farmers' Market. They are working with many organizations throughout the community to promote access to local fresh produce and products.

They encourage new entrepreneurs and consumers at the local level and are currently working with the city and county agencies to expand with each season. This past season gave them the opportunity to promote and establish a routine of an event styled market atmosphere at the Friday Farmers' Markets. The City allowed the market to use the Gateway parking lot for the event and inside the arena for inclement weather. Many groups and individuals gave their time and talents to help make this a success. This truly has been a community effort.

Some of the happenings included weekly hot-meal vendors, live music, dancing, face painting, and food usage demonstrations. The live music was donated by a local Disc jockey, a local band, and various others. The dancing was free for everyone, so many patrons joined in! Face painting was

available on a couple of occasions. And they had food demonstrations teaching about new ways that in-season produce could be used by the consumer at home.

Sheridan County CAT members have been through some changes in the last year and Josh and his team learned different aspects of the food policy system. The CAT members developed a community garden in Hoxie. The garden produce was available for anyone who could use it. The Hoxie Recreation used the garden produce for the kids who participated in recreation activities. A new restaurant was opened, and the owner provided local fresh produce to their patrons, so they utilized the produce from the garden.



From the Chair

Learning from others

What a year 2019 has been. Northwest Kansas has had many successes but also has had to climb the hill to get to those success. We will be highlighting those successes in this newsletter. Enjoy

2019 has been a year of learning for me. As I sit here at my desk thinking back over the year, I am reminiscing of all the time spent on the road heading to a place where I would be learning something new. January I was voted in as Chair which is the biggest learning curve. We finalized our Directory which lists producers, institutional kitchens, local restaurants, and grocery stores. In March, several counties had moved towards working in the Peer Learning Network which included working in developing and implementing a local policy. Four counties finalized their projects and wrote a grant to get their policy off the ground. Also, the HERO mini grants were rolled out and the counties could apply for money to help with a local food project in their county. JoEllyn with K-State Research and Extension started the process of rolling out *Simply Produce* which is similar to bountiful baskets but with a local flair. Twenty-six counties will be able to utilize this project in the next year or so. Jo and I were invited to present to the Board members of the Kansas Healthy Food Initiative in Manhattan. We gave them examples of how successful we have been and answered questions. I also got to work with Amy Briggs in Gove County to bring Gove County on as part of the Alliance. I had so much fun talking with Amy and the Commissioners about the work we do and how having them on board just helps in the end. April 2019, they signed a resolution to be apart of the Alliance. In July we had a visit from Mark Winne, Senior Advisor, Center for a Livable Future, to help tell our story. We toured Northwest Kansas and he met several different people who are apart of the Alliance. The article he wrote was greatly appreciated and he was able to tell our story. If you want a copy of the article, which is quite long, please let me know. My contact information will be on the last page. We have also had several pitfalls along the way that I believe has made the Alliance stronger. The biggest lesson I have learned in 2019 is that we do not need to chase the money. Sometimes the work that you must put in to receive the funds or the hoops you must jump through to get the funds is just not worth it. The Alliance works together as one and we will jump through our own hoops. I am so proud of the people that I work with on the Alliance. They are the most intelligent and funniest people I work with. Thank you to all of you for all your successes in 2019.

Handwritten signature of Mark Winne.

Letter from the Umbrella Organization



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT SANDY RODGERS

Another busy year has flown by and all of us on the Western Prairie RC&D Board would like to thank our sponsors for giving us the opportunity to accomplish our vision and mission statements again this year. We are proud to announce we are now nine counties strong. The Gove County Commissioners voted to join Western Prairie RC&D this year. We are so glad to have them on board and looking forward to working with Gove County. Thank you all so much for your support!!

The WPRCD Council Members are dedicated and committed citizens from each County that work together to promote a quality of life in rural America that we know and love. As President, I value the time and effort they put forth to make things happen. Our long time Treasurer, Diana Solko has resigned her position. She has been an amazing, dedicated Officer for many years and will be missed. Bev Elder (Wallace County) has been elected to the Treasurer's position and we are looking forward to another great year.

Last year our Annual Meeting was held Oberlin. We enjoyed a great meal meeting in the beautiful atmosphere of the Landmark Hotel. We are excited to hold our Annual Meeting in Sharon Springs at the new Towns End Tavern this year beginning at noon (MST) on November 5th. We have changed our format a little this year. We are moving our monthly meetings to the third Thursday of every month and will hold the meetings starting at 1:30 (CST) in Colby.

Western Prairie RC&D was awarded a Healthy Eating Rural Opportunities Implementation Grant from the Sunflower Foundation to continue the work initiated with the HERO Assessment Grant also from the Sunflower Foundation. Working through the Western Prairie Food, Farm and Community Alliance, seven of the nine County Advisory Teams have submitted projects and two have been completed.

The Northwest Kansas Conservation & Environmental Alliance is a sub-committee of RC&D. The NWKCEA members include 9 Conservation District Manager who plan, organize and implement two important educational activities. The "Roundup" which is an on hands conservation day that includes over 400 fourth graders from 9 counties and the "Women in Denim" event which is a rural retreat for women areawide. Western Prairie RC&D participates and financially assists these two educational programs.

We finished several projects this year noted in the report. It has been a great year for us, and we have more goals planned for 2020. Visit our website at wprcd.com. **Thanks again for your continued support!**

Western Prairie Food Farm and Community Alliance

Members

Decatur County

Amy Carman
2312 1600th RD
Oberlin, KS 67749
785-470-1575
amy.celebratinghome@gmail.com

Kem Bryan
1458 500th Rd
Oberlin, Ks 67749
785-475-3395
[krebryan@ruraltel.net](mailto:krbryan@ruraltel.net)

Cheyenne County

Dani Holzwarth
1145 Road 14
St. Francis, KS 67756
785-772-7016
dani.holzwarth@ks.nacdn.net

Candi Douthit, BSN, RN
Cheyenne County Hospital
210 W. 1st Street P.O. Box 547
St. Francis, KS 67756
785-332-2104, ext 170

Sherman County

Sandy Rodgers
Box 366
Goodland, KS 67735
785-821-2144
sandyr@st-tel.net or
sandy.rodgers@ks.nacdn.net

Wallace County

Virgie Popp
PO Box 446
Sharon Springs, KS 67758
785-852-4101
ronandvirgiepopp@yahoo.com

Aften Gardner
104 East 4th Street
P.O. Box 457
Sharon Springs, KS 67758
wcountyhealth@fairpoint.net

Rawlins County

JoEllyn Argabright
406 State St.
Atwood, KS 67730
785-626-3192
joargabright@ksu.edu

Chris Sramek
112 S 4th St.
Atwood, KS 67730
785-626-6082
chris@decisionweather.com

Thomas County

Maureen Ostmeyer
766 County Road 37
Oakley, KS 67748
785-672-5025
maureeno@nwksprevention.com

Nolan Hull
230 North Chickamauga
Colby, KS 67701
785-443-4496
nolhul@hotmail.com

Logan County

Dana Charles
Logan County Conservation District
1015 West 2nd
Oakley, KS 67748
(785) 672-3841
dana.charles@ks.nacdn.net

Taylor Ziegelmeier
KSRE
710 West. 2nd
Oakley, KS 67748
785-671-3245

Sheridan County

Josh Moss
785-657-1168

Gove County

Amy Briggs
Gove County Farm Bureau
317 Main Street
Quinter, KS 67752
785-754-2107
govefb@kfb.org

Western Prairie Resources, Conservation and Development

Appointee:
Misty Jimerson
350 S. Range, Suite 2
Colby, KS 67701
785-460-4596
mjimerson@thomascountyks.gov