



** This news release from K-State Research and Extension is available online at <https://ksre-learn.com/national-volunteer-week-impact>

Released: April 16, 2024

K-State extension programs report \$8.8M boost due to volunteers

National Volunteer Week is April 21-27

By Pat Melgares, K-State Research and Extension news

MANHATTAN, Kan. – Pick a 4-H event just about anywhere in Sherman County, and you're highly likely to find Colleen Duell there.

Duell is known in local circles as a steady presence at [Kansas 4-H](#) events, volunteering her time for such programs as the project learning day, summer day camp, 4-H Ambassador meetings, Fall Awards Day and more. She also is an avid photographer, taking pictures at numerous events.

"For me," she says, "it's an investment in our youth and the future leaders of our community. Volunteering is a way to give back and to help others."

Duell is among a handful of volunteers who received recognition from their local K-State Research and Extension units in advance of National Volunteer Week, April 21-27.

Last year, [K-State Research and Extension](#) – which encompasses the state's Agricultural Experiment Station and the Cooperative Extension System – reported that volunteers gave 309,345 hours of their time to programs carried out across the state.

Gregg Hadley, K-State's director of extension and assistant vice president, said the equivalent value of volunteer hours to the state is more than \$8.8 million, "or about 136 full-time equivalent employees."

"Without volunteers, we could not educate and assist as many Kansans as we do," said Hadley, noting that the number of total educational contacts made by extension professionals and volunteers surpassed 8 million people in 2023.

An educational contact, he said, is an exchange of information – not a single person. "We reach people more than one time per year," Hadley said. "We also reach people beyond Kansas via digital delivery."

Hadley said some of the major programs that benefit from volunteers include 4-H, horticulture (including the state's Master Gardener program), natural resources and food and nutrition programs.

"Our volunteers are passionate and extremely knowledgeable about the subject matter they volunteer in and are excited to provide assistance, service and education to the public on those topics," Hadley said.

"As a (volunteer) club leader, you get energy from 4-H youth," said Donna Maskus, a volunteer in the Cottonwood Extension District, which includes Barton and Ellis counties in western Kansas. "It's so much fun watching these kids gain life skills through their 4-H experiences."

Among her numerous volunteer assignments, Maskus escorted Kansas 4-Hers to the National 4-H Congress in Atlanta, and helped to organize a four-state convention in Kansas City.

"It's so healthy and enjoyable to be part of your community," Maskus said. "To work and see our youth in action is amazing, and those life skills that they learn in these programs eventually do develop and shine."

Duell, who often volunteers along with her husband and children, said it's gratifying to see youth build confidence.

"I watched a youth who could barely speak to an adult or peers eventually be able to give a public talk, then became a Club officer, volunteer, leader and productive person," she said.

"It always brings a smile to my face when someone sees success in their life, whether it be with an animal, cooking, running a meeting or even just catching a fish."

To learn about requirements and opportunities to volunteer for K-State Research and Extension programs, interested persons are encouraged to [contact their local extension office](#).

-30-

FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story
Kansas 4-H Youth Development, <https://www.kansas4-h.org>

K-State Research and Extension, <https://www.ksre.k-state.edu>

K-State Research and Extension statewide offices, <https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/about/statewide-locations>

K-State Research and Extension is a short name for the Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, a program designed to generate and distribute useful knowledge for the well-being of Kansans. Supported by county, state, federal and private funds, the program has county extension offices, experiment fields, area extension offices and regional research centers statewide. Its headquarters is on the K-State campus in Manhattan. For more information, visit www.ksre.ksu.edu. K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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