



River Valley District

K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION NEWS

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WAKEFIELD DESIGNATED AS 2023 COMMUNITY OF EXCELLENCE

Kansas communities commended for visionary projects, dedicated volunteers

By Cianna DeLeon, K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. — Nine Kansas communities have received the 2023 Community of Excellence award from the Kansas Community Empowerment program, located at Kansas State University.

Jaime Menon, co-coordinator of the program, said the Community of Excellence award is recognition for those communities that have completed a community assessment, address opportunities for community improvement and continuously work to identify and meet needs of their community.

The award is provided through a partnership with Kansas PRIDE Inc.

Those named a 2023 Community of Excellence are:

- Delia
- Grainfield
- Highland
- Lakin
- Leonardville
- Olsburg
- Russell
- Vermilion
- Wakefield

Menon said the Kansas Community Empowerment program has helped Kansas communities grow and prosper for 53 years. Through the program, communities identify what they want to preserve, create, or improve for the future.

Volunteers form a local PRIDE organization that works with K-State Research and Extension and the Kansas Department of Commerce to accomplish its goals. “There are some communities that go above and beyond with their workload and the Kansas Community Empowerment office would like to give them recognition,” Menon said.

Communities of Excellence are designated for a three-year period in which they can apply for multiple grants from the Kansas Community Empowerment program to address community needs.

The awards are given by the Kansas Community Empowerment program, a partnership of K-State Research and Extension, the Kansas Department of Commerce, Kansas Masons, and Kansas PRIDE, Inc.

“Local Kansas Community Empowerment/PRIDE groups work hard to make their community a better place to live and work,” Menon said. “They all deserve recognition for the beneficial projects they bring to their communities.”

More information about Kansas Community Empowerment is available at <https://kce.k-state.edu/> or by calling 785-532-5840 or emailing KSCE@ksu.edu.

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

THANK YOU SHICK COUNSELORS

Big thanks to these SHICK Counselors who helped Medicare Beneficiaries shop and enroll in Medicare Part D Prescription Plans during Part D Open Enrollment this fall. The River Valley Extension District appreciates all these counselors helping with open enrollment each year. If you see one of these counselors in town, please thank them. The counselors are awesome to volunteer their time and expertise! Thank you: Janet Elliott, Sonya Garwood, Bev Lange, Wann Sharp, Aimee Sharp, and Deanna Turner. We appreciate you!

BECOME A SHICK COUNSELOR

Do you enjoy helping people in your community? Become a Senior Health Insurance Counseling for Kansas (SHICK) Counselor. SHICK is a program of the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services. The rewards are numerous for helping Medicare beneficiaries in your county enroll in Medicare Part D Plans during Open Enrollment, October 15th – December 7th.

Senior Health Insurance Counseling for Kansas provides free, unbiased, and confidential assistance to Kansans who have questions about Medicare and related insurance issues. Beginning counselors self-study at home with one day training in-person. Returning counselors attend a one-day update training every year. The training helps to answer questions for Medicare beneficiaries.

During this Open Enrollment time, Jordan Schuette, Adult Development and Aging Agent, and Monica Thayer, Family Resource Management Agent, coordinate the Medicare Part D appointments at the District Extension Offices. We often have one or more counselors available to take appointments.

If you are interested in becoming a SHICK Counselor and helping members of your community contact Jordan Schuette at 785-325-2121 or jschuette@ksu.edu or contact Monica Thayer at 785-527-5084 or mthayer@ksu.edu. They will be happy to answer any questions and provide more information.

**RIVER VALLEY DISTRICT OFFICES
ARE CLOSED
MONDAY, JANUARY 15, 2024
TO OBSERVE
MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY**

PREVENTING FALLS

Falls can happen at any time during the year for older adults, age 65 and older. However, winter weather tends to make falling during the winter months more prevalent. These falls, unfortunately, can become serious. According to the CDC, these are some simple steps you can take to help prevent falling.

- Check Your Eyes
 - ◊ Schedule an appointment to have your eyes checked. It is important to have your eyes checked annually and update your eyewear if the prescription changes.
- Exercise
 - ◊ Specifically focus on exercises that improve balance and strengthen your legs.
- Home Modifications
 - ◊ Increase the safety in your home with some home modifications such as:
 - Installing grab bars in your bathroom (e.g. next to the toilet and inside or outside of the shower/tub)
 - Utilize non-slip mats in the bathroom (e.g. shower floor or bathtub)
 - Do you have enough light in your home? Assess the amount of light in your home and increase it by adding lights or utilizing brighter bulbs
 - Remove items that you could trip over
 - Install railings along staircases
 - Store commonly used items in easy to reach places, so you can avoid using a step stool
- Schedule a Doctor's Appointment
 - ◊ Ask your physician to assess your risk of falling and how you may address your risk.
 - ◊ Review your medications (both prescription and over-the-counter) with your physician since some medication side effects can cause dizziness or sleepiness.

Take the time to help prevent falls by preparing yourself and your home. For more information regarding falls and preventing falls check out <https://www.cdc.gov/falls/facts.html>.

CUT THE CLUTTER

As New Year resolutions go, decluttering and minimizing material items is a common one. If you are tired of staring at a mess, now is a great time to take some steps to cut the clutter.

Start with a positive attitude with everyone in the home on the same page. Encourage all family members to be involved to clean as well as maintain the home. It shouldn't be on one person's shoulders to do all the work as that typically isn't sustainable.

If there is a lot to clean up and organize, set aside several days to do the work. Take baby steps. Don't overwhelm yourself to the point of giving up.

Use the box approach to sort items in the space. Label

four boxes Keep, Store, Give Away/Sell, and Throw Away. Customize these boxes to your space. For example, if you have a lot of papers, you may also add a Recycle box.

Start at one point in the room. Move clockwise around the room sorting items into the boxes as you return to your start point. Once you have sorted everything into the boxes, pick one box to deal with at a time.

For your Keep box, put all items back into their rightful home. If you are storing any items, make sure to properly label the box/bin/tote so you know what is in storage. For example, "Monica's Winter Clothes". This can help save money, so you don't purchase items that you already have in storage.

For items in the Trash box, throw away or recycle things that are broken, torn, and stained. If you are no longer using the item and it still has life left in the Give Away/Sell box, decide what you will donate or sell. Take action so it doesn't get placed somewhere to be dealt with later.

Maintain that clutter-free home. Using the mantra, "Don't put it down, put it away." can be helpful. Once you are done with something, take the initiative to put it back where it belongs instead of on the counter, couch, floor, etc. where it adds to the clutter.

Consider having a household rule like only touching an item one time. For example, when you bring the mail inside, you immediately deal with it instead of setting it down.

Interested in minimizing overall? Use the trick of getting rid of one item per day in 2024. By the end of the year, your



home will be less 366 items due to the Leap Year. Think about how much easier maintaining a home with 366 less items will be.

For more tips and tricks on spring cleaning, check out the K-State Research and Extension publication titled "Cut the Clutter and Get Organized" online at <https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF2879.pdf> or contact Monica Thayer, Family Resource Management Extension Agent, at 785-527-5084 or mthayer@ksu.edu.

KANSAS RADON ACTION (KRAM)

One in four homes in Kansas have a high level of radon, which is a tasteless, odorless, and colorless radioactive gas that is naturally occurring. Most counties in the state of Kansas, including all four counties in the River Valley District, are known to have high levels of radon. Testing is the only way to know the radon levels in your home. January is Kansas Radon Action Month so now is a perfect time to check your home for radon.

Outdoors, radon is diluted and poses no problem. However, inside an enclosed space, radon can accumulate to dangerous levels. Radon can become trapped inside homes, schools, and workplaces through cracks and holes in the foundation. Breathing radon over time increases your risk of lung cancer. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States. Nationally, the EPA estimates that about 21,000 people die each year from radon-related lung cancer. Only smoking causes more lung cancer deaths.

There are steps you can take to check and mitigate radon if needed. You can purchase a radon test at your local River Valley Extension District Office today for a small fee. Each test comes with everything you need, including detailed instructions on how to properly implement the test. You'll mail the completed test with no additional cost to receive your results.

Once you receive your test results, if radon levels are high, installing a radon mitigation system is the answer. The Kansas Radon Program has a list of certified radon service professionals that can install a radon mitigation system. If you are a do-it-yourself kind of person, the Kansas Radon Program even has information on how to complete this in-depth project. Both these resources can be found online at www.kansasradonprogram.org.

Additional resources, facts, and information on radon can be found online at www.kansasradonprogram.org, at your local Extension Office, or by contacting Monica Thayer, Family Resource Management Extension Agent, at 785-527-5084 or mthayer@ksu.edu.

2024 UPCOMING LIVESTOCK MEETINGS AROUND THE DISTRICT

Join us on February 20th at the 4-H conference meeting room on the Clay county fairgrounds. The Preparing the Calf for Market: Calf Management and Marketing Strategies program will begin at 6:00 pm with a meal provided. Dr. Gregg Hanzlicek from K-State College of Veterinary Medicine will discuss with producers calf management, focusing on the topics of preventing early calf loss during pregnancy, and calf health management. Hear from industry professional Lynn Langvardt as he discusses marketing strategies for when producers are ready to sell their calves. An RSVP is requested by February 16th and can be made by calling the Concordia office. There will be a \$10 registration fee payable at the door.

The drought dried up many ponds in the River Valley District and in 2023 many of the ponds were redone. To keep these ponds thriving for years to come now is the time to start planning the management needed to keep these ponds happy and healthy. Join K-State Research and Extension specialist Joe Gerken as he talks about pond management from the ground up. Rounding out the night, producers will hear from K-State Research and Extension wildlife specialist Drew Ricketts on how to take care of those pesky critters that sometimes call ponds home. Beavers can have a big impact on your pond and knowing how to manage them will help keep the longevity of the hard work you did to maintain your pond. A Managing the Pond program will take place Tuesday February 27th starting at 6:00 pm in Belleville at the Commercial Building on the Fairgrounds. An RSVP is requested by February 23rd to be included in the meal count. There will be a \$10 registration fee payable at the door.

To register or if you have any questions, you can call livestock agent Kaitlyn Hildebrand at the Concordia office 785-243-8185 or by email to khildebrand@ksu.edu.

STRETCHING FEED RESOURCES

K-State cattle experts offer management advice when feed supplies run low.

When consumers are trying to extend their buying dollar at the grocery store, meal planning and shopping the sale items are two ways that they can manage their spending to get the most for their money. In a similar way, some cattle producers are already looking at ways to extend their feed resources because of the lack of moisture that may have cut those supplies short, said the experts at Kansas State University's Beef Cattle Institute.

Speaking on a recent [Cattle Chat](#) podcast, K-State beef cattle nutritionist Phillip Lancaster recommends turning out the cattle on crop residues as a way to extend the time before you need to feed them hay. "Grazing corn or sorghum stalks are a good feed resource for cows in mid-gestation that have their calves weaned off already," Lancaster said.

Another option he mentioned was the fall planting of cool-season annuals. "Those cool season annuals should provide some early grazing options in the spring assuming we get enough moisture for them to grow," Lancaster said.

If those strategies are not options, K-State veterinarian Bob Larson suggests producers limit the number of hours in the day that the cows are given access to hay. Larson said that cows given free choice access to hay tend to eat the most appealing part of the hay and don't as readily consume the less digestible parts.

"To waste less hay, make the cows eat all of one bale before they get the next one," Larson said. "Another tip is to limit the cows' access to the hay to 6-12



hours per day." In a situation where feed resources are even more limited, K-State Research and Extension beef cattle geneticist Bob Weaber said it may mean some voluntary culling to reduce the herd size.

"Anytime there is a short supply, changing the demand is an effective strategy, and that can be done through the early weaning of the calves as well culling some of the cows," Weaber said. He added: "If you are going into a feeding period where hay is elevated in price, you can decrease the demand for the hay by reducing the herd size down to the essential group of cows you want to preserve."

He suggested producers look at the current market prices as a factor when deciding which cows to sell. "If the choice is between selling a mature bred cow and a bred replacement heifer, think about which one will generate more value next spring when she calves," Weaber said. "On average, the mature cow will raise a heavier calf than the bred heifer."

The experts agreed that if feed resources are challenged and with the current favorable market prices, it may be better to sell now rather than feeding cattle through the winter and selling them in January. "Most importantly, producers need to have a plan now for what happens when feed runs short," Weaber said.

To hear the full discussion, listen to the [Cattle Chat](#) podcast online or through your preferred streaming platform.

TIPS FROM THE WHOLE GRAIN COUNCIL

Each month the Whole Grains Council features a different whole grain on its website, including information on its health benefits, cooking tips and recipes, historical/cultural facts, and more.

We start the New Year by celebrating Oats!

Oatmeal and porridges – though loved by many – have long been portrayed as simple, ‘stick to your ribs’ food. As a food source, oats have long played second fiddle to more prominent crops, such as wheat, and media darlings, like quinoa. Recently, the growing focus on plant-based alternatives has given oats a new lease on life. Not just for porridge anymore, oats are being used as a key ingredient in the fancy oat milk lattes popping up all over Instagram these days. Overnight oat recipes have taken the blogger sphere by storm.

How are Oats Used Today?

Oats are often steamed and flattened to produce rolled oats, sold as “old-fashioned” or regular oats. Flattening or ‘rolling’ oats does not strip the oats of any of their components — in fact oats are rarely refined. That includes instant oats! Instant oats are whole oats that have been pre-cooked, dried then thinly rolled to achieve their speedy cook time. Steel-cut oats, also known as Irish or Scottish oats, are oat groats that are sliced or chopped, not steamed or flattened. Steel cut oats take longer to cook and have a chewier texture and nuttier flavor than their rolled oat counterparts. Most commonly used in porridge, oats are also used in baking and commonly found in muesli and granola.

Nutrition

Oats, whether they are old-fashioned, instant, or steel cut, are almost always in their whole grain form. Oats are a popular breakfast food, and for good reason! They have been shown to keep you fuller longer and have high levels of protein and healthy fats. Oats can help lower bad cholesterol and control blood pressure. They contain Beta-glucan, a soluble fiber not found in other grains, except barley, that has been shown to suppress appetite and help promote gut health. Oats also contain compounds called polyphenols which have strong antioxidant, anti-itching and anti-inflammatory properties, potentially reducing the effects of chronic inflammation. Oats’ anti-itching properties make them a popular ingredient in beauty products. Oatmeal soaps and soaks have long been used to ease the discomfort caused by skin ailments such as rashes and the chicken pox.

Each whole grain offers a different mix of nutrients. Oats provide a good source (providing at least 10% of the recommended daily value) of the following nutrients: protein, selenium, fiber, iron, B1, magnesium, phosphorus, copper, and

zinc. Oats also provide at least 50% of the recommended daily value of manganese.

Time to Eat!

To cook steel cut oats, bring 4 cups of liquid to a boil. Add one cup of oats and simmer for 30 minutes. This will yield 3 cups of cooked grain. Oats work well in porridge and polenta recipes and steel-cut oats can be substituted for rice in risotto style recipes. Oats have a sweet, toasty aroma, and pair well with cinnamon, dried and fresh fruit, coffee and coconut, as well as thyme, mushrooms, and walnuts. One serving of cooked oats (¼ cup, uncooked) has 150 calories, 4 grams of fiber, and 7 grams of protein.

To learn more about oats or other whole grains check out the Whole Grains Council website: wholegrainscouncil.org. You are also welcome to call or email Kaitlin Moore, Nutrition, Food Safety & Health Agent at 785-243-8185 or kaitlinmoore@ksu.edu. Each month the Whole Grains Council features a different whole grain on its website, including information on its health benefits, cooking tips and recipes, historical/cultural facts, and more.

EXPLORING CHANGE FOR A HEALTHIER YOU

The New Year signals a time to make some changes for many Americans. If you are one of the millions of Americans who make resolutions, you know first-hand how hard it is to change a behavior and that setbacks are common. Behavior change has been studied a lot by researchers. One of the models used to understand behavior change is called the Trans-theoretical Model of Behavior Change or Stages of Change. People can move from one stage to the other in an orderly fashion, but most people skip around between stages. Knowing what stage you are in can help keep you on track to meeting your goal.

Bringing in the new year for many means making changes. The thought of losing weight, being more active, or even getting organized can seem exciting until we are faced with actually making the change. Change is not easy and old habits don’t just disappear on their own. Changing habits is a process.

Explore the stages of change to see where you fall in your quest for a healthier you

Are you thinking about making a change? This is the **contemplation stage**. In this stage, you may be thinking about making the change, trying to learn more about alternative behaviors, and trying to find the motivation to get started. The transition to actually making the change can be a challenge. Making a list of the benefits and a list of the barriers that could get in the way can be helpful. Review this list of pros

and cons and then ask yourself, how this change will affect my life?

Once you have made up your mind and are ready to take action you are in the **preparation stage**. In this stage you might actively work toward gaining new skills, you might hire someone, take a course, etc. As you begin to make plans and figure out specific goals, look at your list of pros and cons and make an action plan from those. Anticipate the types of barriers you may encounter and solutions that you can incorporate when barriers do exist.

If you have started making changes and acting on your plan, you are in the **action stage**. During this stage you are adjusting to the new changes and troubleshooting any challenges that take place. Changing a habit does not happen overnight. A habit is created over time and tracking your progress will help you make adjustments to stay in line with your goals. Slip-ups will happen so be prepared to get back on track when they do. Rather than allowing them to ruin your goals, focus on each step that you take on your journey.

Once you have created a new routine or a healthier habit, how do you maintain it and not slip back into the old ways? This is the **maintenance stage**. Your change has now become a habit and you have overcome challenges and have been able to stick with your plan. Often people reap the rewards of their efforts by this point. To keep this new habit fresh, add variety to your routine and stay motivated by rewarding yourself. Have a plan for any challenges. Consider expanding your goals.

Personal change is hard and it doesn't happen just because we want it to. Most successful changes require persistence, positive thoughts, and a strong support system. Are you ready to make changes in your health habits, interpersonal relationships, or finances?

Note: According to the Transtheoretical Model of Change, there are five major stages of change. The very first one is pre-contemplation. In this stage a person might not be aware there is a problem or that change needs to occur.

The information in this article was pulled from a couple different articles on Stages of Change, published by the University of Michigan Extension. Some information was also pulled from Rutgers Cooperative Extension, specifically their Small Steps to Health and Wealth messages.

Additional information about the Transtheoretical Model of Change can be found in the book Changing for Good by Prochaska, Norcross, and DiClemente.

Questions about establishing healthy habits can be directed to Kaitlin Moore, Nutrition, Food Safety & Health Agent at 785-243-8185 or kaitlinmoore@ksu.edu.

SAVE THE DATE FOR WOMEN IN AG 2024

New Series, New Topics, New Dates

Women in Ag is coming back to Washington in 2024!

The four week series will be held on Thursday's during the month of February. We will begin on Feb. 1, then continuing on Feb.8, Feb. 15, and ending on Feb.22.

Stay tuned for more information about this series!

RIVER VALLEY DISTRICT FAIR DATES

Don't forget to put the 2024 River Valley District Fair dates on your calendar!

Cloud County	July 16-21 2024
Washington County	July 16-21, 2024
Clay County	July 23-28, 2024
Republic County	July 29-August 3, 2024

SERVICES OFFERED BY THE RIVER VALLEY DISTRICT THAT YOU MIGHT NOT REALIZE WE OFFER

- 2024 Tax Guides
- Chemical Weed Control Books– 2024 coming soon
- Deterra bags– for destroying unused medications
- Farm & Household Account Record Books
- Neutroleum Alpha (for odor control)
- Pesticide Certification Testing
- Probes to borrow for soil and hay testing
- Soil, Feed, Water, and Radon Testing

FEEDING BIRDS IN WINTER

Do you enjoy feeding birds in the spring and summer months? If so, remember it is important to feed the birds in the winter months as well. There are three things birds require to survive, food, water, and shelter. Food is often the resource that is most lacking during the cold weather months. Many different bird food mixes are available because various species often prefer different grains. However, there is one seed that has more universal appeal than any other, black oil sunflower. If you are new to the bird-feeding game, make sure there is a high percentage of this seed in your mix. White proso millet is second in popularity and is the favorite of dark-eyed juncos and other sparrows as well as the red-winged blackbird.

As you become more interested in bird feeding, you may want to use more than one feeder to attract specific species of birds. The following is a list of bird species with the grains they prefer.:

- Cardinals, evening grosbeak and most finch species- Sunflower seeds, all types
- Rufous-sided towhee- White proso millet
- Dark-eyed junco- White and red proso millet, canary seed, fine cracked corn
- Many sparrow species- White and red proso millet
- Bluejay- Peanut kernels and sunflower seeds of all types
- Chickadee and tufted titmouse- Peanut kernels, oil (black) and black-striped sunflower seeds
- Red-breasted nuthatch- Oil (black) and black-striped sunflower seeds
- Brown thrasher- Hulled and black-striped sunflower seeds
- Red-winged blackbird- White and red proso millet plus German (golden) millet
- Mourning dove- Oil (black) sunflower seeds, white and red proso plus German (golden) millet

Remember that extended cold periods can also make water unavailable. Having a heated birdbath can be a tremendous draw for birds during times when all other water is frozen. If you keep water and food available, you will have feathered friends to keep you company throughout the winter months. If you have any questions feel free to stop by or contact me in the in the Washington office, 785-325-2121 or khatesohl@ksu.edu.



CONTROLLING VOLUNTEER TREES

Trees are a vital part of our landscapes, but there are situations where trees need to be controlled. Volunteer trees often come up in the wrong place, whether that is in a pasture or in your flowerbed. Sometimes control measures are needed to combat the spread of volunteer trees.

Volunteer trees can be difficult to control because some species resprout after cutting and some species will not resprout. Of the species that do not resprout, cutting is an effective control method. For example, eastern redcedar is a very common species that will not resprout after cutting. Some of those species that do resprout after cutting are Siberian elm, hackberry, Osage orange (hedge tree), oak, ash, aspen, cottonwood, maple, and sycamore, but these are just a few of the trees. If you are trying to eliminate any of these trees, they either need to be dug out or the cut stump will need to be treated with an herbicide after cutting.

When I say volunteer trees, I mean those that come up from a seed, not suckers that originate from the roots of an existing tree. The recommendations given in the remainder of this article are designed to kill volunteer trees not suckers. Using herbicides on suckers will damage and possibly kill the original tree. Trees that commonly produce suckers include honeylocust, black locust, hackberry, crabapple, and cottonwood. It is also possible for larger trees of the same species to become root-grafted. Even though root-grafted trees are not suckers, they do share materials between the individual root systems and therefore herbicides used to treat one tree can be passed along to its neighbor.

Let's say you have a tree that you want to control that is a volunteer and there is no other tree of the same species close enough to be root-grafted, what should be done? Well, if the tree is too large to be dug out and moved, then you should cut the tree down and use an herbicide on the cut stump.

The next question is what herbicide should be used on the stumps. Triclopyr and glyphosate are the herbicides most commonly available to homeowners. Triclopyr is found in many brush killers and glyphosate is found in Roundup as well as numerous other products. Read the label before purchasing to make sure that a cut stump treatment is listed.

Most often the undiluted product is applied to the stump immediately after cutting. A paint brush is often used for the application to the stump. It is important that the stump is treated immediately or at least within 5 minutes of being cut.

Trees do not need to be actively growing to be controlled. Actually, this time of year is a very good time to treat stumps as long as the applications are made when the temperature is above freezing.

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"2024 UP-COMING MEETINGS & EVENTS"**

DATE	TIME	PROGRAM	LOCATION
Jan. 1		River Valley District Offices Closed for the New Year Holiday	
Jan. 10	9:30-1:30pm	Phosphorous Management in Your Soil	Delphos- Delphos Auditorium, 206 W. 2nd St.
Jan. 15		River Valley District Offices Closed for Martin Luther King Jr. Day	
Jan. 16	6pm	Land Leasing Strategies	Washington-KSDS, 120 West 7th Street
Jan. 24	9:30-1:30pm	K,S,pH, SOM Management in Your Soil	Concordia- Cloud County Fairgrounds, Commercial Bldg.
Jan. 23	6pm	Land Leasing Strategies	Concordia-TBD
Feb. 1, 8, 15, 22	TBD	Women In Ag	Washington-TBD
Feb. 8	9:30-1:30pm	Farm Recordkeeping Workshop	Clay Center-Fairgrounds, Conference Center
Feb. 20	6pm	Preparing the Calf for Market: Calf Management and Marketing Strategies	Clay Center-Fairgrounds, Conference Center
Feb. 27	6pm	Managing the Pond	Belleville-Fairgrounds, Commercial Building