

# River Valley District

K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION NEWS

[rivervalley.ksu.edu](http://rivervalley.ksu.edu)

**May 2022**  
**Volume 17 # 5**

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[www.rivervalley.ksu.edu](http://www.rivervalley.ksu.edu)  
or on Facebook @ River Valley  
Extension District

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## Keys to Embracing Aging 101

What we do will affect our future, which is specifically true of issues related to aging. Keys to Embracing Aging introduces and reinforces 12 healthy and safe lifestyle practices that influence optimal aging. Join us to learn how to age successfully, gracefully, and with increased longevity.

Tuesday, May 17 <sup>th</sup>	Good Shepherd Lutheran Church 200 W 4 <sup>th</sup> Street, Washington, KS 66968	10:00 AM
Tuesday, May 17 <sup>th</sup>	River Valley District Extension Office 322 Grant Avenue, Clay Center, KS 67432	2:00 PM
Thursday, May 19 <sup>th</sup>	Cloud County Resource Center 107 W 7 <sup>th</sup> Street, Concordia, KS 66901	10:00 AM
Thursday, May 19 <sup>th</sup>	Belleville Public Library 1327 19 <sup>th</sup> Street, Belleville, KS, 66935	2:00 PM

There is no cost to attend. Please RSVP to the River Valley Extension District – Washington Office at 785-325-2121 or [jschuette@ksu.edu](mailto:jschuette@ksu.edu) at least 24 hours in advance to the session.

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Research and Extension | District

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## PREPARING FINANCIALLY FOR VACATION

School is almost out, so that may mean a vacation is in the near future. When preparing for a vacation, it's common to think of the who, what, where, and when. Who is going? What are we doing? Where and when are we going? These questions ultimately factor into the financial question of how to pay for this vacation.



Before planning the vacation, determine what you might be able to spend. Avoiding debt when possible is important to your overall financial health. You probably don't want to still be paying for last year's vacation when it is time to start preparing

for the current year's trip.

Decide what you can financially earmark to spend on a vacation. Make a written plan for how your vacation budget will be spent to avoid overspending by considering the who, what, where, and when.

Think about those you will be traveling with. How many people will you be responsible for paying the costs? When you know who is attending, consider their preferences. Will you travel by plane, car, or bus? Will you be staying in a luxury hotel or camping?

Next, consider where you will be going and what you will be doing. Will you be partaking in expensive activities or finding free or low-cost events to attend? Also, consider food costs. Will you be eating out each meal or have a kitchen space to cook in? Finally, when will you be traveling? Is it a peak time causing higher costs?

Considering these questions and your answers, do the leg-work to be able to finance your vacation. Shop around to find discounts. If being flexible is an option, you may be able to find some great last-minute deals. Think about going to your destination during an off-season or participate in a "staycation" to minimize costs.

Recognize that vacation means different things to different people. 'Stressful and expensive' or 'restful and restorative' are ways some may describe time away. Keep in mind that the amount spent on a vacation doesn't necessarily equal best vacation ever.

So, use your spending plan (also known as a budget) to help you be successful – financially and vacation wise! K-State Research & Extension has publications to get you started towards your personal money goals. Find these publications on our website at [https://www.rivervalley.k-state.edu/family\\_resources/index.html](https://www.rivervalley.k-state.edu/family_resources/index.html) or contact Monica Thayer, Family Resource Management Extension Agent, at 785-527-5084 or [mthayer@ksu.edu](mailto:mthayer@ksu.edu).



## MEDICARE BASICS PROGRAM

Each year many people are approaching their 65<sup>th</sup> birthday, contemplating retirement, and starting their journey with Medicare. Medicare, all it's parts, and the advertisements can be confusing. Let us help. Join Monica Thayer, Family Resource Management Agent and Jordan Schuette, Adult Development and Aging Agent for a Medicare Basics class.

Belleville – May 3<sup>rd</sup> (Tuesday)

4-H Building – NCK Free Fair Fairgrounds

901 O Street, Belleville, KS 66935

6:00 p.m.

Please RSVP for the Belleville Medicare Basics Program by calling the Belleville Extension Office at 785-527-5084.

Clay Center – June 7<sup>th</sup>

Clay Center Extension Office – Clay Center Meeting Room

312 Grant Street, Clay Center Kansas 67432

6:00 p.m.

Please RSVP for the Clay Center Program by calling the Clay Center Extension Office at 785-632-5335.

We do schedule one-on-one appointments in all four offices of the River Valley Extension District. If you are New to Medicare or have other questions about Medicare contact Monica Thayer in the Belleville Office at 785-527-5084 or Jordan Schuette in the Washington Office at 785-325-2121.

## MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

The K-State Research and Extension Stress and Resiliency Team is an issue-focused team of agents and specialists dedicated to providing relevant and educational information about stress, stress management and resiliency, or one's ability to adapt positively to difficult experiences, to Kansans. Originally created to focus on rural stress, the team focus shifted to include all types of stress and general mental health information, because stress impacts all of us – regardless of demographic.

One of the team's goals is to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health. Increasing awareness and people's willingness to talk about mental health will encourage more Kansans to get the help they need.

The Stress and Resiliency Team shares tips on how to manage stress on their Facebook page. Below are a few of the tips from their Facebook page:

- When you are feeling stressed try engaging in one of your hobbies for 20-30 minutes a day. When you engage in a hobby you enjoy, you are increasing your serotonin levels (feeling of happiness) and also contributing to lowering your blood pressure and reducing stress levels.

- Want to work on building resilience? Make progress towards one of your goals! Create small, achievable goals. Start with something you know you can do every day, like making your bed. By setting a realistic, achievable goal, you will begin to believe in your ability to accomplish tasks, making larger goals seem more manageable.
- Need a way to decompress? Have a good laugh! Laughing increases endorphins that are released throughout your body which helps reduce stress. Laughing also stimulates circulation and helps with muscle relaxation, which reduces stress in the body!
- Go outside! Exercise helps reduce stress levels in the body. Even sitting outside for 10 minutes can help reduce cortisol levels (stress hormone) in your body and help improve your mood!

More information about the Stress and Resiliency Team can be found here: <https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/health/stress-management/index.html>

Kaitlin Moore, Nutrition, Food Safety & Health Agent.  
Phone: 785-243-8185 Email: kaitlinmoore@ksu.edu

## THE POWER OF SLEEP

Sleep has a major impact on overall health and quality of life, including the way we feel, look, and perform on a daily basis. Your body needs sleep to repair muscles, consolidate memories, and regulate hormones and appetite.

Sufficient Sleep Positively affects:

- Learning and memory. Sleep helps the brain commit new information to memory through a process called memory consolidation.
- Metabolism and weight. Enough sleep helps with weight control. Chronic sleep deprivation may cause weight gain by impacting the way our body processes and stores the food we eat, and by altering levels of hormones that affect our appetite.
- Safety. A good night's sleep reduces accidents. When we don't sleep through the night, there's a greater chance we will fall asleep during the daytime. This may cause falls or mistakes such as medical errors and roadway accidents.
- Mood. Sufficient sleep reduces irritability, impatience, inability to concentrate, and moodiness. Too little sleep can leave us too tired to do what we like to do.
- Heart Health. Getting enough sleep improves our heart health. Serious sleep disorders have been linked to high blood pressure, stress, and irregular heartbeat.
- Disease. Enough sleep helps fight disease. When we don't get enough sleep our immune function is altered. Keeping up with sleep may help fight cancer.

Sleeping Tips:

- Maintain a consistent bedtime routine.
- Keep a sleep journal.
- Turn off the TV and other electronic devices.
- Exercise in the afternoon or early evening.
- Eat a balanced diet and don't eat heavy meals before bed.

- If you can't fall asleep within 20 minutes, get up and participate in a quiet activity.
- Practice relaxation techniques such as deep breathing at bedtime.
- Do not lie in bed once awake in the morning.

Source: This information is from a publication developed by Ashely Svaty, the Nutrition, Food Safety & Health Agent for the Post Rock District (Lincoln, Mitchell, Jewell, Osborne, & Smith counties) as part of the Post Rock District's monthly newsletter titled Building Strong Families.

For more information on sleep and other ways to improve health contact Kaitlin Moore, Nutrition, Food Safety & Health Agent. Phone: 785-243-8185 Email: kaitlinmoore@ksu.edu

## SPRING CLEANING- CUT THE CLUTTER

With spring weather finally showing up, many start to look at cleaning their homes. 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 until you return to your starting 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 it, put it in the Give Away/Sell box. Take action right away, 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.

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](mailto:mthayer@ksu.edu).

## PREPARE FINANCIALLY FOR DISASTERS

With spring comes the heightened chance of storms, especially here in ‘Tornado Alley’. Taking a few steps to prepare financially before a disaster can help lower the stress during a high stress time.

As with most financial wellness topics, an Emergency Fund is important. If you are ever without income, your emergency fund can help cover necessary costs to live. It is suggested that every household have at least 3-6 months of expenses available in a safe, accessible location, such as a bank or credit union. Keep in mind that cash can be stolen, lost, or destroyed.

Next, conduct an Insurance Review. Simply put, insurance is your asset protection. Whether you have a farm, rent an apartment, or anything in between, it is important to check that you aren’t underinsured for a disaster or emergency. Remember, if you rent, your belongings are not covered by the owner’s insurance, so it is highly suggested to have renter’s insurance. Talk with your insurance agent to check your coverages.

Complete a Home Inventory. If you had a disaster, would you be able to list everything in your home? Doing a home inventory can be a huge undertaking, but it is so important during a disaster or emergency. If your home is a total loss to a fire, tornado, etc., you will need to know what you need to replace – furniture, appliances, clothes, shoes, linens, and more. You can complete a home inventory with paper and pen at (<http://extension.msstate.edu/sites/default/files/publications/publications/p0633.pdf>), on a computer (<https://uphelp.org/buying-tips/how-to-create-a-home-inventory/>), or through an app (<https://content.naic.org/consumer/home-inventory>). It is also suggested to take photos/videos of belongings – open drawers, cabinets, and doors. For big purchases, keep receipts with your home inventory.

Finally, create a grab-and-go box or file with important documents, such as copies of identification, home inventory, financial records, property titles, and more. It is recommended that this box or file is waterproof, fireproof, and lockable. Store this box/file in a safe, but easily accessible spot so that it can be taken with you in a moment’s notice.

For more tips and tricks on financially preparing for a disaster, check out the K-State Research and Extension publication titled “Get Financially Prepared: Take Steps Ahead of Disaster” online at <https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF3055.pdf> or contact Monica Thayer, Family Resource Management Extension Agent, at 785-527-5084 or [mthayer@ksu.edu](mailto:mthayer@ksu.edu).

## River Valley District Fair Dates 2022

Cloud County	July 5 <sup>th</sup> - 9 <sup>th</sup>
Clay County	July 19 <sup>th</sup> – 23 <sup>rd</sup>
Washington County	July 19 <sup>th</sup> – 23 <sup>rd</sup>
NCK Free Fair (Republic Co)	August 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 6 <sup>th</sup>

## MULCHING TIPS

Now is the time of year when people are thinking about mulching their landscape beds. Mulching is an important gardening practice that offers many benefits to the soil as well as your plants. The most important benefit of mulch is that it helps to conserve moisture and keep the soil cooler during our long, hot summers. Mulch is also great at stopping unwanted weeds in your landscape. A freshly mulched area is the finishing touch, like frosting on a cake. Mulching is pretty easy, but there are a few common mistakes that should be avoided.

When mulching around trees the most common mistake is applying mulch too close to the trunk. Prolonged exposure of the trunk to the moist mulch results in decay of the bark layer, leading to poor growth or death. When properly applied mulch should start a few inches away from the trunk and extend at least three feet out from the base. The depth of the mulch layer should be about three inches and no more than four inches. When mulching trees, keep in mind the mulch pile should look like a doughnut, not a volcano.

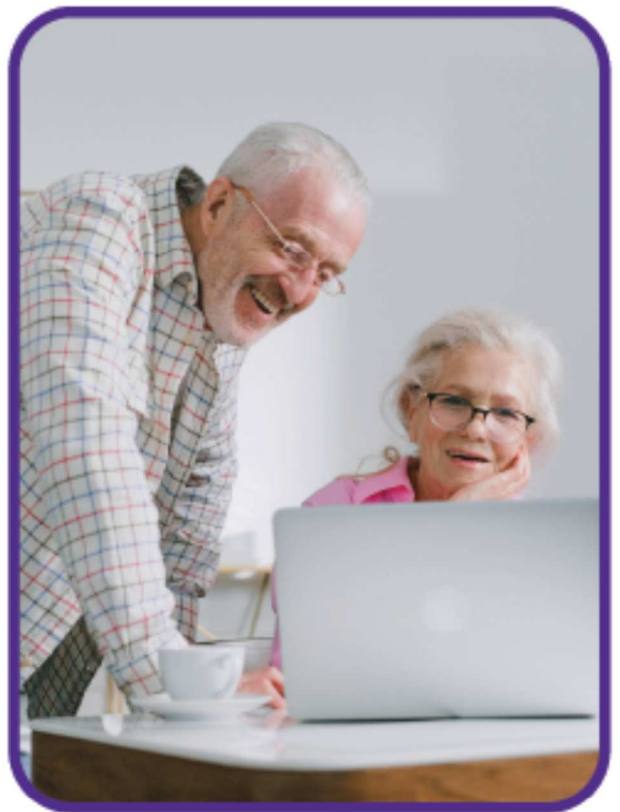
When mulching around shrubs follow the same depth guidelines as trees. When piling mulch around the base of the plant, place mulch a few inches away from the base. Shrubs look best in the landscape when large beds or groupings of plants are all mulched together. Remove any grass between the shrubs or other plants and mulch the grouping as a whole.

When mulching around flowers and vegetables a three-inch layer is recommended. A finer textured mulch could be used around flowers. Vegetable gardens are best mulched with materials such as straw, leaves, or grass clippings that will break down by the end of the season and can be incorporated into the soil.

When choosing what kind of mulch to use, that is a personal preference. All mulching materials that are organic, except rocks, provide the same basic function. The difference is in the texture, color, lasting power, and of course, cost. Trees and shrubs look good mulched with just about any material. Flower gardens look best against a darker color and finer grade of mulch. No matter what type of mulch you choose, it is important to follow these tips, not only for a beautiful landscape, but for healthy plants as well. 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](mailto:khatesohl@ksu.edu).

# SHICK VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

Senior Health Insurance Counseling for Kansas (SHICK) is a free program of trained volunteers who educate and assist individuals with Medicare.



Make a difference in your community. Become a SHICK volunteer.  
Join us to learn more about this opportunity.

Thursday, May 5  
2 p.m.

Cloud County Fairgrounds  
Commercial Building  
Industrial Rd, Concordia

Wednesday, May 11  
2 p.m.

RVD Extension Office  
Meeting Room  
322 Grant Ave., Clay Center

RSVP to RVD-Concordia Office at 785-243-8185 or RVD-Clay Center at 785-632-5335 at least 24 hours before the meeting.

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# Defensive Driving

**When:** Thursday, June 23, 2022

**Time:** 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

**Location:**

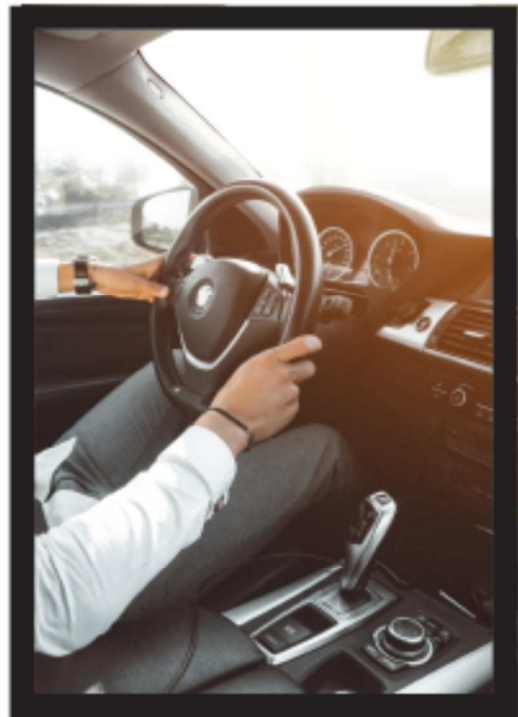
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church -  
Washington, KS

**Cost:** \$20 per person  
(need a minimum of 15 to sign up)

**Registration Due:**

Thursday, June 16, 2022

**RSVP:** Washington Office at  
785-325-2121



Many defensive driving tips will be presented by Trooper Ben Gardner from the Kansas Highway Patrol. Participants do not drive or take a test. Insurance companies recognize the benefits of defensive driving classes and many provide a 5-10% premium discount to graduates of this course. The certificate received is effective for three years.

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**RIVER VALLEY DISTRICT OFFICES  
WILL BE CLOSED  
MONDAY, MAY 30, 2022  
IN OBSERVANCE OF MEMORIAL DAY**



**RABBITS IN THE GARDEN**

When you think about the biggest problems in a garden the first thing most people think of is insects, but usually the main problem is rabbits. Rabbits in a garden is a perennial problem because of the wide variety of plants they can feed on. This time of year, they gravitate to young vegetables and flowers. There are some vegetables that are rarely bothered like potatoes, tomatoes, corn, squash, cucumbers, and some peppers. The question is how do you protect the plants that are more susceptible? Fencing provides a quick and effective control method.

The fence does not need to be tall; 2 feet is sufficient for cottontail rabbits. The mesh must be sufficiently fine (1 inch or less) so young rabbits will not be able to crawl through it. When building your fence be sure to secure the fence into the ground, so the rabbits can't push the fence up and crawl under.



Often fencing is not an acceptable choice because it affects the attractiveness of the garden. A couple other ways to control rabbits include repellents or trapping. Repellents are often suggested for control, but often do not last long and require frequent reapplication. Also, many are poisonous and cannot be used on plants or plant parts destined for human consumption. Live traps can be used to collect and move the rabbits to a rural area several miles away from where they were trapped. A number of baits can be used to entice the rabbit to enter the trap including a tightly rolled cabbage leaf held together with a toothpick. However, rabbits often avoid baits if other attractive food is available. Repellents and traps might work, but are not 100% effective.

Another possibility to help control rabbits is to use a motion-activated sprinkler. These are attached to a garden hose and release a short burst of water when motion is detected. Just remember to shut it off before you go work in your garden or you might get a little wet! 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](mailto:khatesohl@ksu.edu).

**STORM DAMAGE IN THE GARDEN**

As gardening season begins, so does thunderstorm season. Anyone with a garden knows how damaging a storm can be, from the excess rain to the wind and hail damage. Here are some tips to try and help your garden recover from severe weather. There are three main concerns when dealing with storm damage: heavy rain, standing water, and hail damage.

When dealing with heavy rain, you need to think about the force of the rainfall pounding on the soil. It can result in a thick crust that will prevent seeds from emerging and it will partly block oxygen from getting to the roots of your plants. A way to keep the crust from becoming a problem is to lightly scarp the soil surface after it has dried out. Be careful not to till too deep next to your plants so you don't damage the roots any further.



With heavy rain, what follows after, standing water. Standing water can be just as harmful to your plants as the heavy rain. Standing water cuts off the oxygen supply to the roots, which can cause plant damage if not drained off quickly. Hot, sunny weather can make a bad situation worse, by making the water hot enough to "cook" the plants. Most plants can withstand 24 hours of standing water without harm, but the sooner the water is removed the better it will be for your plants. There isn't a lot that can be done to remove standing water, other than creating a channel that will allow the water to drain off your garden.

Luckily, not all thunderstorms come with hail, but unfortunately, some do. Dealing with hail damage can be the trickiest part of storm damage. Plants should recover quickly as long as only the leaves were damaged by the hail. Most vegetable plants regenerate leaves quickly, so the most of the time the damage is minimal. If the stem or fruit of the plants are damaged, that is not as easy to recover from. The plants can recover from a few bruises, but if it looks like the plants were mowed off by a weed whip, and only a "twig" remains, then it's time to replace those plants.

When you go out into your garden after a storm, fully inspect your plants. If the wind or rain has caused your plants to lean, leave them alone. The plants should start to straighten up on their own after a few days. If you try to bend them back up, they could easily break off. It's best to let them recover by themselves. Hopefully this gardening season will be plentiful without too many damaging thunderstorms. 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](mailto:khatesohl@ksu.edu).

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PERMIT NO. 3****Address Service Requested****RIVER VALLEY DISTRICT****“2022 UP-COMING MEETINGS & EVENTS”**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>PROGRAM</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>
Mar. 27-May21		WALK Kansas	State Wide Extension Program
Mar. 29-May 3	1:30-3pm	Powerful Tools for Caregivers	Virtual Class Series
May 3	6pm	Medicare Basics	Belleville– 4-H Building on the Fairgrounds
May 5	2pm	SHICK Volunteer Recruitment	Concordia– Cloud County Fairgrounds Commercial Bldg.
May 11	2pm	SHICK Volunteer Recruitment	Clay Center– RVD Extension Office Meeting Room
May 14	8-5pm	Tractor Safety	Great Bend
May 17	10am	Keys to Embracing Aging 101	Washington– Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
May 17	2pm	Keys to Embracing Aging 101	Clay Center– RVD Extension Office Meeting Room
May 19	10am	Keys to Embracing Aging 101	Concordia– Cloud County Resource Center
May 19	2pm	Keys to Embracing Aging 101	Belleville– Belleville Public Library
May 30		River Valley Offices Closed for Memorial Day	
June 23	9-3pm	Defensive Driving	Washington-Good Shepherd Lutheran Church