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By ROBERT PIERCE

- Leader & Times

Rates of food insecurity among rural households are generally lower than urban households, but slightly higher than the national average.

The irony is that many of these food-insecure households are in the very rural and farm communities whose productivity feeds the world and provides low-cost wholesome food for American consumers.

Statistics from the organization Feeding America show that 15.4 percent of all rural households are food insecure, an estimated 3 million households.

Now, six counties in Southwest Kansas are working to combat the hunger problem in the area, and on Tuesday, through its annual Hunger Awareness Day, K-State Research and Extension will be using various events throughout the day to help kids become more aware of what they can do to help end hunger.

Extension offices in Meade, Seward, Stevens, Morton, Haskell and Grant counties are teaming up to “End Hunger in Southwest Kansas.”

The day will start at 10 a.m. in the Seward County Ag Building in Liberal. Seward Extension

agent Kathy Bloom said the activities throughout Hunger Awareness Day are designed for both 4-H and non-4-H youth alike.

“We’ll learn about hunger,” she said, adding that some of this may include “brainstorming to see what they can do about hunger issues.”

Bloom said the area group of K-State agents were the first in Kansas to do an activity like Hunger Awareness Day, and now, other agencies are following suit with similar events.

The Seward County agent said in the past, Hunger Awareness Day has involved youth being divided into different age groups to make various foods, with younger kids making simple foods.

End Hunger in Southwest Kansas is made possible through an Invest an Acre grant, which was written by Extension agents in Morton and Meade counties.

Through the Invest an Acre program, farmers can donate the proceeds of one or more acres of crops to help feed hungry families in their own communities. The proceeds from one acre of crops can help provide thousands of healthy meals to your neighbors in need.

Some of the activities young people will take part in include kid friendly speakers, a food bucks buffet lunch, a tour of Liberal’s Stepping Stone Shelter and a few games.

“Judge Webb from Sublette will be a speaker,” Bloom said. “We will pack weekend food backpacks.”

Hunger Awareness Day is free, but registration is necessary. Registration can be done by calling the Seward County Extension office at 624-5604 or by e-mailing sw@listserv.ksu.edu by Monday.

“We need the folks to RSVP ASAP,” Bloom said.

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