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By ROBERT PIERCE

• Leader & Times

Frigid weather persists outside, but that hasn't stopped officials with Seward County's K-State Research and Extension office from planning activities for people of all ages.

Many of those events will take place when the climate is expected to be considerably warmer, but some things will be taking place during the cold of winter – in the warm indoors of course.

Extension agents Kathy Bloom and Kylee Harrison were at Monday's Seward County Commission meeting to update the board on what has been happening with the office lately.



Bloom began the presentation with an announcement that the Extension had received more than \$100,000 in grants in 2013. This, she said, has enabled more programming and the allowance for more workers.

“We, at the office, employ five full-time positions for a total of seven people, and several of

those are grant funded,” she said. “That makes an impact in Seward County.”

Harrison then spoke about the Extension’s recent Women in Agriculture Conference.

“We had about 35 participants there,” she said. “It touched on the global food systems and just an overall viable community. We did a survey afterwards, and it was really interesting. We asked about how many acres the participants represented.”

Harrison said about 21,000 acres of local land was represented at the conference, and producers were able to take the information from the conference and begin applying to what they do in everyday life.

The Extension also plays host to the Master Gardner program. One of those classes was scheduled to start this week, but thanks to the cold weather outside, the class has now been rescheduled to start next Wednesday.

Harrison then talked about the possibility of a community garden being put in place north of the Extension office on Stadium Avenue. She said after talking to some people, including Liberal Parks Director Bill Hauk, the project is likely not feasible at this time.

“The water meter at our office was not large enough to handle that big of a capacity,” she said. “We would have to look at putting in a new one, and the grant that I was looking at getting to start the garden, the new water meter would take up three fourths of the grant. We kind of decided that right now, that’s not a feasible thing for us.”

Harrison said current master gardeners have, however, been talking about doing a similar project in another area of town.

“They’re planning on renting a plot from the community garden down on Pine Street,” she said. “That’s going to be in the programming coming up that they will actually put on.”

Harrison said 14 people have registered for this year's Master Gardner class.

"They're going to be talking about landscape designs, some low water usage plants and things that are good for this area and community vitality," she said.

There will be a tree pruning workshop at the Seward County Activity Center on Thursday, Feb. 13, starting at 6 p.m. The guest speaker will be John Klempa from the Southwest District Forest Service.

"This is open to anyone in the public," Harrison said. "It doesn't cost anything. Klempa is going to be coming down and talking about how to properly prune your trees."

This Friday and Saturday, the Extension will host the Ready When You Are! Crockpot class.

"It's a crockpot class about how to cook healthy economical meals at home," Bloom said.

Bloom said the class has been very popular in the community.

"We took a flyer out to the school system, the county," she said. "Within an hour, it was full. I decided to open a second session. Within another hour, it was full. It's something that's really in demand."

Bloom said the crockpot class certainly shows a need in the community.

"People are always looking for ways to save time and money and eat at home and eat economically and healthy," she said.

Bloom next talked about the upcoming Walk Kansas program, which is scheduled to start March 16. She said a few things are different for this year's event.

"People will be able to go online and form their team and report their weekly reports," she said. "We look for some great things coming out of that this year."

The Extension also recently received a \$20,000 donation from former local attorney Rex Sharp, who now works for a law firm in Kansas City.

"I think he helped sue the big huge companies like the tobacco companies," Bloom said. "You see the commercials on TV all the time where it says, 'If you had this surgery, call us, and you might be entitled to some money.'"

Bloom said the fund, Education for Kansas, comes from the Kansas Rural Communities Foundation and is actually made up of money not claimed from those settlements.

"They have set up a foundation where this money goes into this fund, and it's distributed around the state of Kansas. They chose Seward County 4-H to give \$20,000 to."

Harrison said the Extension hopes to put up a new 4-H building near the Stadium office, and Bloom said some of the Education for Kansas money could be used for that.

"We have a good little seed money," Bloom said.

Bloom added in addition to the building campaign, the money will be used to support an optional trip for Seward County 4-H'ers to Washington D.C. and student-led leadership opportunities.

Harrison said with 4-H events taking place in many various locations throughout the county, a new building would come in handy.

“It would be great to have one central location with all the storage that we need,” she said.

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