

By ROBERT PIERCE • Daily Leader

On Dec. 6, 2007, an interim final rule revising food packages for the USDA's Women, Infants and Children program was published in the Federal Register.

The WIC food packages are changing to better meet the nutritional needs of WIC participants. The new food packages align with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and infant feeding practice guidelines of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

WIC foods are intended to "supplement" participants' food intake and should be consumed along with other wholesome foods needed for a balanced diet.

State WIC officials began phasing in the changes in February 2008 and hope to finish by next month.

State agencies will determine their specific implementation timeframe of the new food packages based on the state assessment of changes required to its management information system, the training needs of staff, vendors and participants and development of a new state food list.

The new food packages were just some of the education local officials brought to residents last Wednesday during WIC Fund Day at the Seward County Ag Building.

After registering, Seward County WIC Director Tiffany Krause said participants began with a booth about dental issues.

“They tell you about healthy dental and some of the dental hygiene you should be doing with your children,” she said. “The next one is the exercise area, and we teach you about how to do fun exercise on a low budget.”

Next, visitors to Fun Day learned about breast-feeding, particularly how important it is to start children on it and what Seward County’s WIC office does to promote breast-feeding.

Krause said the K-State Extension office was one of the big sponsors for Wednesday’s event.

“They helped us set up a lot of our booths today,” she said. “We want to say thank you to them. A lot of them have been in and out helping us with our clients’ kids.

“We’re showing them how to make healthy snacks with foods they can buy from WIC,” she said. “We’re giving them samples and have a little smoothie shop set up over there.”

Krause herself talked to locals about some of the new food packages for WIC.

“I’m explaining our new food packages to them and the changes coming about,” she said. “One of the biggest changes is they are now going to be able to get fresh, frozen or canned fruit and vegetables with their check vouchers. They’re also going to get whole grains on their vouchers.”