

Quarterly Report

Third Quarter FY21



BE BOLD. Shape the Future.
**College of Agricultural, Consumer
and Environmental Sciences**
Cooperative Extension Service
Otero County Extension Office



Grassroots Planning Session

The Otero County Extension advisory committee met in March and was very well attended by members representing various geographical areas of the county as well as multiple agencies and organizations. The format of the meeting consisted of an overview of Extension programming from the previous year, followed by time for advisory committee members to provide suggestions in determining priorities for Otero County Extension programs. Members provided topics and program ideas that will be used to direct the course of Extension program efforts and outreach. The Extension Agents also received some excellent ideas on expanding the visibility of Extension.

The advisory committee is vital to Extension operations because it helps focus the efforts of Extension staff in the areas of importance to the communities served by Extension. The Extension Agents are grateful to the members participating in what makes the Extension Service unique among governmental agencies, grassroots-driven programming.

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4-H MEETINGS & WORKSHOPS

have continued virtually, hybrid (online and in-person at the same time) and in-person following COVID safe practices.

Enrollment for youth wishing to compete in the current 4-H year was completed February 1st through the *4-H Online* system. In order to accommodate families without regular computer or internet access, agents provided a computer for use and assistance for enrollees via phone, email and office appointment.

The 4-H agent held *4-H 101* workshops for new members to help new families understand 4-H and how to get the most of the program. These workshops provide information on the over 200 projects that 4-H encompasses, how to make a selection and complete projects, annual opportunities for learning, community building, competition and camps. *4-H 101* also provides information on 4-H structure, leadership and an opportunity for parents and members to answer questions in a smaller setting.

Community clubs in Otero County continue to meet digitally via Zoom, providing interactive opportunities for youth members to socialize, practice parliamentary procedure and practice public speaking. Monthly meetings allow officers and members to make decisions regarding upcoming events and the direction of their club for upcoming months.

Organizational leaders who were comfortable providing some in-person programming met with officers in-person for officer trainings and meetings to prepare for upcoming club meetings. Other trainings were offered by the 4-H agent and leader digitally such as livestock handling, selection and public speaking. Leaders also met with families and the 4-H agent to discuss project selection.

4-H and agricultural agents held volunteer trainings and workshops in horsemanship, horse judging and hippology at the Otero County Fairgrounds. Youth learned basic terminology and judged live classes of performance and halter horses, provided oral reasons, practiced decision-making skills and public speaking. Youth who brought horses practiced basic horsemanship in both a beginner class and an intermediate class. Agents also held a volunteer leader training in horsemanship to help bolster the ability of leaders to assist in horse-related projects in their community clubs.

Shooting sports practices resumed at the Otero County Fairgrounds and the Roadrunner Trap Club. Youth are learning about hunter's safety, firearm safety, range calls and teamwork during practices. Practices held included archery, rifle, and shotgun. The 4-H agent also assisted in holding a safety meeting where all participants were briefed in 4-H standard safety as well as COVID safety and how practices would be conducted.



The 4-H robotics group began holding building days at the Otero County Fairgrounds. The group is working on a robot in preparation for competitions held later in the spring and earlier in the summer. Youth not only build the robot, but program it to perform tasks through a course.

Agent Responds to Agriculture Needs

Despite COVID, home and farm call questions continue. Pruning, soil, weed control and proper watering are common calls received regularly by the county agricultural agent but with the mild weather, these calls started earlier and with a higher frequency of home calls and questions. Making the most of the water available is vital and therefore the agent educates the public on proper water use practices.

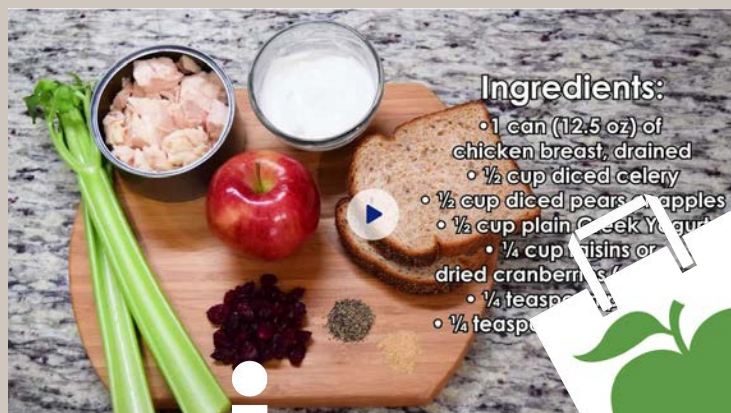
An afternoon was spent with a commercial fruit grower learning pruning techniques for different fruit trees to help expand the agent's knowledge on pruning. Every year, Extension receives more and more questions on pruning.

Due to the dryer summer last year, there has been an increase in tree damage (part of the reason for experiencing more pruning questions). As the arrival of spring has come so has the increased number of sick and dying trees. There was quite a bit of heat damage last year and the agricultural agent continues to see this damage on trees and shrubs as they come out of dormancy. Proper watering of trees is always an issue in Otero County but as the warming trend continues, the agent has seen a spike in tree health issues.



The agricultural agent has also experienced an increase in pistachio questions and interest in growing pistachios. Some farms have changed hands however, inquiries have also come to the agent about starting new farms. The agent is hopeful interested growers will become educated on what pistachio production entails before they try to start an orchard. Otero County is the largest grower of pistachios in the state.

The work with the *Cooperative Weed Management Area* is going strong this spring and African rue spraying has continued in full force. In addition, the agricultural agent is on the *New Mexico Cattle Growers Association* advisory committee and that committee met via Zoom to discuss legislative issues that impact the cattle industry in New Mexico and the nation.



Ingredients:

- 1 can (12.5 oz) of chicken breast, drained
- ½ cup diced celery
- ½ cup diced pears
- ½ cup plain Greek Yogurt
- ¼ cup raisins or dried cranberries
- ¼ teaspoon
- ¼ teaspoon



The Otero County ICAN (Ideas for Cooking and Nutrition) Educator continues to offer virtual education through [cooking video lessons](#). In addition, educational nutrition materials have been provided to community partners providing home delivery and drive-thru services such as food pantries and senior centers. The mission of the ICAN program is to inspire New Mexico's families to make healthy food and lifestyle choices and to make those choices possible by creating health-friendly communities.

In February and March, the family and consumer sciences (FCS) agent co-facilitated a six-week virtual Diabetes Self-Management Program (DSMP).

Developed and tested by the Stanford School of Medicine Patient Education Research Center, DSMP has been proven to improve the quality of life for adults with a chronic health condition such as diabetes. Each session consisted of a high level of interaction amongst participants focusing on building skills, sharing experiences, and supporting each other. Some of the weekly session topics included nutrition, healthy eating, monitoring blood sugar levels, dealing with stress, exercise, dealing with depression and working with a health care professional. The goal of the DSMP program is to "help people gain self-confidence in their ability to control their symptoms, and control how their health problems affect their lives" (Self-management Resource Center). Because DSMP is evidence-based, it has been thoroughly evaluated and found to provide effective tools to help people with chronic health conditions. Quotes received from participants include: "Because of this program, I've gained resources that can help me accomplish my goals of eating more healthy and staying active." and "This program has given me something to look forward to attending during COVID."



Foods, ____ Nutrition & ____ Wellness

A food preservation webinar on how to dry fruit safely was offered in March. Topics covered included selection of food dehydrators, how to dry foods in the oven, making fruit leather, additional equipment needed for drying foods at home and storage of dried foods for the best quality and safety. Recipe demonstrations were conducted during the webinar of strawberry fruit leather and dried apples. Retrospective pre/post evaluations showed 80% of participants increased their knowledge for drying fruit and 75% increased their ability to use equipment, supplies and instructions needed for safely drying fruit and fruit leather. A comment from one of the participants: "I actually thought I knew more than I did on dehydration. But, the information was so good and I learned that I didn't know as much as I thought. Anyone dehydrating should definitely take this class."

For many, February is the month of love, but it is also American Heart Health month. In Otero County, one of the leading causes of death is heart disease (per New Mexico's indicator-Based Information System for Public Health). The FCS agent provided a virtual program that focused on how the Mediterranean diet can be an all-inclusive dietary eating pattern, emphasizing whole foods that are beneficial to the heart and body. Rather than focusing on "eating this", "but don't ever eat this" type of ideology, the Mediterranean diet encourages consumption of more plant foods, olive oil, fish, beans and grains. This type of dietary pattern has been linked to positive health outcomes. Providing reliable, research-based nutrition information through Extension programs positively impacts the lives of individuals and families in Otero County.

The 4-H agent began holding STEAM workshops via Zoom for 4-H members and with home-school groups around the county. These workshops included education in electricity and basic circuitry, allowing youth participants to build their own light-up circuits. Youth participated in a learning session that helped in understanding natural sciences of electricity, electrons, charges, circuits, and uses for electricity in our day-to-day lives. They then were able to complete a St. Patrick's Day card with an electrical circuit using copper tape, an LED light bulb and battery that lit up when a button was pushed. Lesson plans were tailored to a novice/junior age group (ages 9-12 years) as well as a senior age group (ages 13-18 years).

The 4-H agent also judged the home-school group's annual science fair digitally, volunteering over twenty hours to critiquing, judging and assisting in the group's awards ceremony. She provided feedback on use of the scientific method, procedures, and ideas for further experimentation. Youth provided both a scientific journal and a final report which was then presented via a PowerPoint over Zoom to a panel of three judges.



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