



EXTENSION

Blaine County Extension Office

Address

212 N Weigle Ave
Watonga, OK 73772

Phone

580-623-5195

Email

Ally Nix
ally.nix@okstate.edu

Social Media

Facebook: Blaine
County OSU Extension



November 2025

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OSU Extension is working to help struggling families put food on the table

By Trisha Gedon



Caption: More people will be relying on food pantries to feed their families due to their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits being suspended because of the federal government shutdown. (Photo by Mitchell Alcalá, OSU Agriculture)

STILLWATER, Okla. – If the government shutdown continues, more than 680,000 Oklahoma families who rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program will struggle even more to put food on the table when their food-supplement benefits are suspended.

SNAP, also known as food stamps, is a federal program that provides benefits to more than 42 million low-income families across the country, helping them afford healthy food.

Currently, SNAP users will not receive new benefits after Nov. 1 due to the ongoing federal government shutdown, which started on Oct. 1, said Nila Pradhananga, Oklahoma State University Extension food and nutrition state specialist.

“Unless Congress reaches a funding agreement, SNAP users will not receive new benefits,” she said. “With grocery prices continuing to rise, many families are feeling the pinch at the grocery store, especially those who rely on this program to supplement their food budgets. Unused SNAP benefits will still be available.”

Local food pantries are valuable resources for families throughout the shutdown. Keep in mind that food pantries are different than food banks. Food banks are warehouses that collect and store food donations and the proceeds from food drives, and then distribute this food to local food pantries. Food pantries, in turn, provide free food to local families.

The Food Finder app is a helpful tool for locating food pantries in the area. To find local food banks, visit the Feeding America: Find Local Food Banks website. Additionally, check the local city or county government websites for more information.



OSU Extension is working to help struggling families put food on the table, cont.

By Trisha Gedon

"People who are able are encouraged to support their local food pantries with both food and monetary donations," Pradhananga said. "The food pantry can buy in bulk at a lower cost, which makes monetary donations go further, but food donations are welcome."

Some high-demand donation items include shelf-stable proteins, such as canned tuna and chicken, as well as canned and dried beans and peanut butter. Canned fruits and vegetables, pantry staples and whole-grain foods are encouraged. Non-food items, including diapers, cleaning supplies, paper products and personal hygiene items are also needed. Food pantries are also seeking volunteers to help stock shelves and assist families while they shop.

"Thousands of Oklahoma families will be relying heavily on food pantries as long as the government shutdown continues," she said. "OSU Extension is a valuable resource for information that can help families who are already balancing tight budgets."

Blaine County Food Assistance & Church Pantries

Below is a verified list of food-assistance sites and church pantries serving Blaine County, Oklahoma. All information was checked in November 2025 using sources from the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma, Opportunities, Inc., and local church/community listings. Always call ahead to confirm hours.

Opportunities, Inc. Watonga Resource Center (county food pantry hub)

Address: 117 W. Russworm Dr., Watonga, OK 73772

Phone: (580) 623-7283

Details: Main county food resource.

Office hours Mon-Fri 8:00 am-5:00 pm (closed 12-1 for lunch).

Operates Watonga pantry and mobile sites in Longdale, Canton, and Okeene.

Partnered with Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma.

Geary Food Pantry / New Life Assembly of God (Geary)

Address: Geary, OK

Phone: Check Facebook: 'Geary Food Pantry' or New Life Assembly of God (Geary)

Details: Distributes monthly food baskets and emergency assistance.

Typical hours include 2nd Wednesday 10:30 am-1:00 pm and 4th Monday 6:30-8:00 pm. Call or check Facebook for updates.



OSU Extension is working to help struggling families put food on the table, cont.

By Trisha Gedon

Okeene – First United Methodist / Okeene Food Pantry

Address: 302 S 5th St., Okeene, OK 73763

Phone: (580) 822-3404

Details: Local church pantry with regular distribution (commonly Wednesday evenings). Call to verify current hours and ID requirements.

Canton – Canton Foodbank / Grand Connection (Canton)

Address: 113 W Main St., Canton, OK 73724

Phone: Check Facebook: 'Canton OK Foodbank' or contact Opportunities, Inc.

Details: Community-based pantry with regular distributions. Verify hours via Facebook or Opportunities, Inc.

Canton CT Food Bank (Canton, OK)

Address: Canton, OK

Phone: Check Facebook: 'Canton CT Food Bank' (Canton, OK)

Details: Operates a community food pantry serving Canton and nearby rural areas. Distribution dates and times are posted regularly on their Facebook page. They provide food boxes and assistance to local families in need.

Longdale – City Hall distribution (Opportunities, Inc. partner site)

Address: Longdale, OK

Phone: Call Opportunities, Inc. at (580) 623-7283

Details: Mobile distribution site, typically 1st Wednesday of each month, 9:00–11:30 am.

Zion Community Pantry (Okeene area)

Address: Okeene, OK

Phone: Call Opportunities, Inc. for details

Details: Community pantry partner site associated with Opportunities, Inc. and Zion Church Community Center.



OSU Extension is working to help struggling families put food on the table, cont.

By Trisha Gedon

Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma (county network & school programs)

Address: Main office: 3355 S. Purdue Ave., Oklahoma City, OK 73179

Phone: (405) 972-1111

Details: Supports Blaine County food pantries, school pantries, and backpack programs. Contact for referrals or updated partner listings.

NOTE: Hours and distribution days can change – please call ahead or check the organization’s Facebook page before visiting.

Contact the county OSU Extension office (ally.nix@okstate.edu) for more information about local resources. The OSU Extension fact sheet Smart eating: Balancing health, budget and waste reduction offers consumers timely tips.

OSU Extension uses research-based information to help all Oklahomans solve local issues and concerns, promote leadership and manage resources wisely throughout the state's 77 counties. Most information is available at little to no cost.

MEDIA CONTACT: Trisha Gedon | Office of Communications & Marketing, OSU Agriculture | 405-744-3625 | trisha.gedon@okstate.edu

For more resources and information, visit: <https://www.koco.com/article/snap-oklahoma-interactive-map-resources-how-to-help/69195387>



Healthy Foods

FOR BUSY DAYS

Does your family eat fast food often? If so, be mindful about the choices you make.

Most fast food meals and snacks are:

- High in fat, sugar, calories and salt. These are things to eat in small amounts.
- Low in fiber, calcium, potassium and Vitamin D. You need to get enough of these nutrients.
- Short on fruits, vegetables, whole grains and milk.

Super-sized servings may not be a good deal. Instead, they provide more food than your family needs. They encourage people to eat until they are stuffed instead of eating until satisfied. This sets the stage for overeating and weight problems. Regular size and child size servings have enough nutrients for most adults and children.

Young children have a natural ability to follow hunger signals and appetite. They know when they are hungry and when they have had enough to eat. Big portions from fast food restaurants may overwhelm their natural ability to stop eating when they are full and cause them to eat more than they need.

Choose Foods with Less Added Sugars

- Instead of soda, order milk, 100 percent juice or water for your child. You may want to choose unsweetened tea, coffee or a diet soda.
- Instead of fruit pie or cookies, choose fruit. Some restaurants have fruit on the menu. If not, have an apple, banana, grapes for something sweet when you get home.

Choose Foods with Less Fat

- Order regular-size burgers, burritos and tacos instead of the larger sizes.
- Split a small order of fries, or skip the fries and order a side salad or fruit.
- Order grilled chicken instead of fried chicken.
- Skip the extra cheese on pizza.
- Use mustard instead of mayonnaise.
- Go easy on sour cream and butter.

Choose Foods with More Bone-Building Calcium

- Drink low-fat milk instead of soda with fast foods.
- Order cheese on a burger or sandwich.

Continued on Page 3

Healthy Foods

FOR BUSY DAYS

(Continued)

Choose More Fruits and Vegetables

- Ask for tomatoes, lettuce and other vegetables on sandwiches
- Get a salad or fruit instead of fries
- Order a pizza loaded with vegetables

Children learn many of their food habits from watching their parents at home and when eating out.

It is important to choose and eat healthier foods in normal size portions. Help your child choose healthful food items, then let him or her decide how much they are going to eat.

Reviewed by: Jenni Kinsey, MS, RD, LD & Hasina Rakotomanana, MS.

References:

American Academy of Pediatrics (2016). Choosing Health Snacks for Kids. Retrieved from <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Choosing-Healthy-Snacks-for-Children.aspx>

USDA. (2017) Nibbles for Health. Retrived from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/nibbles-health-nutrition-newsletters-parents-young-children>

USDA & USDHHS. (2015). Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015–2020. Retrieved from <https://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/>



Oklahoma Cooperative
Extension Service

Deana Hildebrand, PhD., RD,LD, Associate Professor & Extension Specialist
Christine Walters, RDN, LD, MS, Extension Program Assistant
Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service
Nutritional Sciences Department, Oklahoma State University



Keep Food Safety

On the Menu This Holiday Season

It's the time of year when ingredients for treasured family recipes top the shopping list, table decorations come out of the cabinet and great-grandma's china set adorns the table. These preparations are in anticipation of a memorable holiday meal shared with family and friends.

While ensuring everything has a festive flair, don't forget about food safety, said Christi Evans, Oklahoma State University Extension food safety specialist. "For most families, turkey is the star of the meal," she said. "No matter what your secret is for a succulent and tasty main dish, proper handling of the turkey – from shopping, storing, thawing and cooking – must be a priority." One key is to plan ahead. If purchasing a frozen turkey, remember it will take time to thaw. Evans suggests the following thawing methods to ensure food safety.

- Refrigerator thawing is the safest and most recommended thawing method, as it allows the bird to defrost slowly and evenly. Count on 24 hours for every 4-5 pounds of turkey. For example, a 15-pound bird will take three to four days to thaw completely. It can then be stored for an additional one or two days before cooking.
- Cold-water thawing is a faster option than refrigerator thawing. Submerge the turkey in cold water. Allow 30 minutes per pound. To ensure the turkey stays at a safe temperature, change the water every 30 minutes. Once thawed, cook the turkey immediately.
- Microwave thawing is less common since most turkeys are larger than the microwave, but it can be done with smaller turkeys. Use the defrost setting and follow the manufacturer's instructions. Cook the turkey right away after thawing. (continued on page 5)



Keep Food Safety

On the Menu This Holiday Season (Continued)

As the meal is being prepared, use a food thermometer to ensure all foods reach proper internal temperatures. Cook the turkey to an internal temperature of at least 165 F.

“One of the best things about a big Thanksgiving meal is all the great leftovers,” Evans said. “Although everyone may want to catch a quick nap after the meal, refrigerate the leftovers within two hours of serving,” she said. “It’s best to divide large amounts into smaller, shallow containers, which allows foods to cool more quickly.”

When reheating leftovers, most foods need to be reheated to at least 165 F. OSU Extension offers additional food safety information in fact sheet L-474 Keep food safe.

Even though the turkey may be the star of the show, pies are another holiday favorite. Food safety protocols are essential because many pies contain eggs or dairy. Some homemade pies contain milk, cream cheese, cheese or eggs and should be kept refrigerated. These pies are high in protein and moisture content, which provides a desirable environment for bacterial growth at room temperature.

Evans said fruit pies typically contain enough sugar and acid that they don’t need to be kept refrigerated, although refrigerating them can extend their shelf life.

“With some planning and a few simple precautions, everyone can enjoy a delicious and safe Thanksgiving meal,” she said.



MAKING *Introductions*



Hello Blaine County!

My name is Ally Nix, and I'm excited to introduce myself as your new Family and Consumer Sciences and 4-H Extension Educator. I officially began my role with OSU Extension on September 30th, and I'm thrilled to be serving the community I've always called home.

I was born and raised right here in Blaine County, and I currently reside in Canton, Oklahoma. With a degree in Health Science, I have a deep passion for nutrition and health, but what truly brings me the most joy is helping others and making a positive impact in people's lives.

Though I'm new to the educator role, I'm adjusting well and eager to become even more immersed in our community. I look forward to engaging with families, youth, and local organizations through meaningful programs that support well-being, learning, and growth.

Thank you for welcoming me—I can't wait to work alongside you and help make Blaine County an even stronger, healthier place to live!

Warmly,

Ally Nix

Blaine County FCS/4-H Extension Educator

Email: ally.nix@okstate.edu

Office Number: (580) 623-5243





EXTENSION

MAPLE SYRUP PRODUCTION BASICS



8:30 – 9:00 a.m. Registration and Networking.

9:00 – 9:10 a.m. Welcome and Introductions. Holly Dobbs, Rogers County Horticulture Extension Educator and maple workshop co-chair.

9:10 – 9:40 a.m. Overview of Cherokee Nation. Ollie Starr, 2019 Recipient of the Oklahoma Women's Hall of Fame; 2017 Recipient of the Cherokee Nation Lifetime Achievement Award, Claremore, OK.

9:40 – 10:30 a.m. Introduction to Maple Syrup Production, Part I. David Knudson, Montana MapleWorks Sugar maker, Owner and Consulting Arborist, Missoula, Montana.

10:30 – 10:45 a.m. Break and Networking

10:45 – 11:45 a.m. Take Home Tips for Tapping in Oklahoma. Bob Heinemann and Casey Meek, Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent, respectively, Kiamichi Forestry Research Station, Idabel, OK.

11:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Lunch on your own with several nearby restaurants.

1:00 p.m. – 1:50 p.m. Introduction to Maple Syrup Production, Part II. David Knudson.

1:50 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Outdoor tapping demonstration. David Knudson and OSU personnel.

3:00 – 3:30 p.m. Evaluation; workshop wrap up and opportunity for one-on-one consultations with David Knudson and OSU.

3:30 p.m. Workshop ends

**LOCATION: ROGERS
COUNTY BUILDING
416 S. BRADY
CLAREMORE, OK 74017**

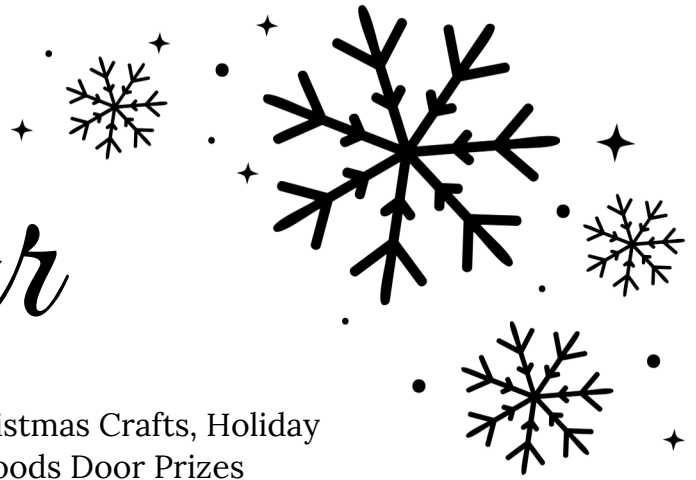
**Friday, November 14
9 A.M. to 3:30 P.M.**

Special thanks to the USDA for project funding

**Attendance is free of charge
No registration necessary**

OSU is an Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity, E-Verify Employer. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communications, program information or reasonable accommodations, need to contact Mike Schnelle, workshop co-chair at mike.schnelle@okstate.edu or 405-744-7361 at least two weeks prior to the event.

Holiday Bazaar



Vendor booths with Christmas Crafts, Holiday Decorations, and Foods Door Prizes

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2025
9am to 4pm

BLAINE COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS, FOLEY BUILDING
807 N Newer, Watonga, OK
FREE ADMISSION - OPEN TO PUBLIC
Concession stand available

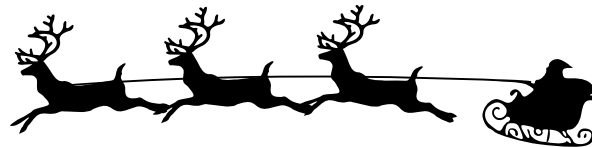
Bring the kids for special activities (at no cost):

12:30pm - Christmas Story Time

1pm - Christmas Craft Workshop (repeated at 1:30pm)

2pm - Christmas Craft Workshop (repeated at 2:30pm)

1pm to 3pm - Pictures and Visit with Santa and Mrs. Claus
(bring your own camera)



Sponsored by: Blaine County Oklahoma Home & Community Education (OHCE)



For information, call Blaine County OSU Extension at (580) 623-5195





EXTENSION

*IN ALL
Things
GIVE
Thanks*

dates

to remember



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November 11th – Veteran's Day
OSU Office & Courthouse Closed

November 27th & 28th – Thanksgiving
OSU Office & Courthouse Closed

December 6th – Holiday Bazaar
Blaine County Fairgrounds
Foley Building, Watonga

December 25th & 26th – Christmas
OSU Office & Courthouse Closed

January 1st – New Year's Day
OSU Office & Courthouse Closed



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