



**OKLAHOMA COUNTY
EXTENSION**

REPORT TO THE PUBLIC November/December 2024

Extension Staff Hosts Reality Check Program



In partnership with Francis Tuttle Technology Center, Oklahoma County OSU Extension educators, OHCE (Oklahoma Home and Community Education) and Goodwill Industries volunteers held a Reality Check event for 130 high school students.



This consumer education activity is a fun, hands-on approach to teaching teens about the financial responsibilities of adulthood. Each student is assigned an adult identity with a specific career and family. Throughout the experience, the teens visited booths to purchase housing, insurance, vehicles and childcare, among others.



Knowing their monthly income, the students had to stick to a budget while paying for their family's needs. This was eye-opening to the participants, who often became frustrated when they realized that adulting is difficult and expensive. Some students learned that the annual income of their assigned career could not cover the cost of living and were forced to get a second job. The overall response from the students was positive, with many expressing that they didn't know how their parents did such a good job providing for them.





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Extension Community Garden Received Lowe's Donation

On November 12th, 12 Oklahoma County Extension Master Gardeners constructed 7 newly raised garden beds at the Extension's Community and Giving Garden. The garden is located behind the Northeast Regional Oklahoma City/County Health Department. The materials for these beds were donated by the Lowe's corporation and included concrete mason blocks, re-bar and liquid nails.

The newly constructed beds will be utilized in the spring to grow vegetables for the OKC metro food-insecure population. Native plants will also be introduced to support a variety of pollinators, such as bees and butterflies.

These new beds will add to the already established plots which produced over 3000 pounds of vegetables for local food banks in 2024. This area also served as a site to teach vegetable gardening to community members.





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4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**

Oklahoma County 4-H HUGS Service Project

During November, the Oklahoma County 4-H youth program sponsored its annual H.U.G.S. Service Project. The initiative was designed to collect essential winter wear for those in need. The items donated—hats, underwear, gloves, socks, and other warm clothing—benefited two local organizations: Citizens Caring for Children and The Homeless Alliance.

Thanks to the generosity of community members and participants, over \$1,600 worth of items were donated. This made a significant impact on those facing homelessness and hardships during the colder months. A special thank you was extended to everyone who contributed to this important cause.

Oklahoma County Assessor, Larry Stein, and his office contributed a donation, which allowed expansion of the scope of outreach and further supported partner agencies. Their contribution was instrumental in ensuring the success of the project and amplifying its positive effects.

The H.U.G.S. project not only highlighted the Oklahoma County 4-H program's commitment to community service, but also underscored the power of collaboration in addressing the needs of vulnerable populations.





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Supporting Youth Mental Health in Oklahoma

Youth Mental Health Specialist, Danyelle Kuss supported a variety of wellness needs in Oklahoma communities during the months of November and December. Kingfisher County's 8th grade Health Conference reached 240 youth.

Youth attended a variety of programming that included a focus on the connection between their mind and body. Some of which utilized yoga exercise as a stress relief tool. Blaine County 5th graders processed stressful situations and practiced identifying the feelings that were caused by these scenarios. Students were taught to make a personalized plan to manage their stress levels using healthy coping skills.

Teaching these skills to the youth is essential. Just as important is helping adults learn how to support Oklahoma youth with their mental wellness in the best way possible. Oklahoma Extension educators had the opportunity to become certified in Youth Mental Health First Aid in November.

Danyelle also offered a Youth Strong Program in Stillwater to help adults know how to support the mental health needs of youth and their families after a natural disaster.





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Strong Dads celebrates another graduating class

On December 12th, The Strong Dads program celebrated the graduation of its 4th class, marking the end of a transformative 12-week journey for the participants.

The graduation was held at Top Golf in Oklahoma City, which for many, was their first time participating in an outing like this. The event showcased the program's impact, bringing families closer and creating lasting memories.

One particularly inspiring story came from a graduating dad who gained full custody of his five children during the program. Equipped with the skills and support he developed in the workshop, he now embarks on a new chapter in fatherhood.

This group exemplified the positive power of Strong Dads, with every participant having reported personal growth and stronger connections with their children. Graduation programs like this highlight the critical role of community support in helping dads succeed.





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Papas Fuertes Graduating Class

Papas Fuertes is the Spanish 12-week program equivalent of Strong Dads. It is designed to equip fathers, within the Spanish speaking community, with the self-awareness, compassion and sense of responsibility that every parent needs.

The fathers are taught how to set and achieve goals to help them be intentional in parenting. They also learn skills that evolve with the growth mindset of their children.

This last class graduated 7 fathers and took place at Elim Church in South Oklahoma City. These fathers celebrated completing the class on December 4th, 2024 which took place at the OSU-OKC campus. Dinner was provided with around 52 attendees present.





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Extension Staff:

LaDonna Hines - Extension Director

Lisa Hamblin - Family & Consumer
Sciences Educator

Taylor Conner - Family & Consumer
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Julia Laughlin - Horticulture Educator

Mason Huddleston - Urban Ag
Natural Resource Educator

Andrew Fleet - Water Conservation
Educator

Cody Yount - 4-H Educator

Serena Woodard - 4-H Educator

Lori Goodbary - CNEP Area
Coordinator

Danyelle Kuss - 4-H Youth Mental
Health Educator

Aleshia Maldonado - Strong Dads
Educator

Kenny Garcia-Taveras - Strong Dads
Educator

OSU Extension provides research-based resources you can use to improve your home, workplace, and community. We offer programs and services that are specifically designed to solve the problems that county residents face.

Please check out our website for the calendar of events <https://calendar.okstate.edu/oces/> to learn of new workshops or programs being offered.

You can follow us on Facebook for a glimpse into how your Oklahoma County Extension Educators and staff are serving you and the community.

Be sure to check out Oklahoma County OSU Extension's monthly podcast "The Urban Gardener" with Julia Laughlin, Horticulture Educator, Mason Huddleston, Urban Ag Natural Resource Educator and Andrew Fleet, Water Conservation Educator



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