



## All Together Now

### Combining County Programs Gives Kids Added Learning Opportunities

IOLA, Kan. – About 30 4-Hers in southeast

Kansas were able to explore their interest in veterinary science thanks to a program offered by the Southwind Extension District.

District director Carla Nemecek said pulling youth from three counties together in one class made the program – including a trip to Kansas State University’s Veterinary School – possible.

“I think if we were just to offer that on a county level, I may have had 3-7 kids participate,” Nemecek said. “But when we can offer it for all three counties at one time, we had much greater participation.”

The Southwind Extension District serves Allen, Bourbon and Neosho counties in southeast Kansas.

“There are opportunities for experiences in single counties, but when there’s fewer participants – say three or four – it’s not quite as worthwhile to take a Saturday to go to Manhattan for a field trip, or ask my local veterinarian to help us on a weekday when they could be making money,” Nemecek said.

“But it seems like there’s more enthusiasm to have those specialty learning experiences when there’s a greater number of youth participants.”

The program helped kids explore an interest in farm and domestic animals. Nemecek said kids learned basics of caring for animals, reproduction, quality assurance and common health problems.



Southwind Extension District director Carla Nemecek says combining county programs has led to new learning opportunities for kids

Meetings were rotated between the District’s counties to minimize travel for each family participating.

“I think the interaction of the youth from different counties has been one of the greatest benefits,” Nemecek said. “It is really rewarding as an agent to watch our kids grow together, get to know kids from other counties, and see that those kids have the same backgrounds and learning experiences. I think they’ll carry those friendships on as they go to college or 4-H camp or Discovery Days or things like that.”

The program was so successful in 2012 that Nemecek believes it will continue to be offered. She hopes to offer more advanced learning, too, such as immunology and lessons on animal’s skeletal system.

“We want to offer experiences to kids that you just can’t get by reading a book or watching an online YouTube video clip,” she said.

“As a district, we are really interested in offering these great experiences to our 4-Hers, and we don’t want folks to feel like they are missing out on something if they don’t have that local participation. We are offering them a greater diversity of things to choose from, hopefully finding some interests that meet the needs of our kids.”