K-STATE Research and Extension

Making a Difference

2012–2013

K-State Research and Extension Hosts Regional Aging Expos

The Situation

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 18.5% of Americans and 18.4% of Kansans are age 60 or older. The state and national population is aging as the baby boom generation (those born 1946 to 1964) moves into later life. Older adults are more likely to experience disability and chronic diseases, so this demographic shift will have significant consequences in terms of the population's health and wellness. Research-based educational opportunities that address aging and disability-related issues are timely and relevant. K-State Research and Extension provides community leadership for adult development and aging programming to enrich the lives of older Kansans, adults with disabilities, and their families by addressing health and wellness needs.

What We Did

Approximately 250 participants attended two regional senior expos, one in southeast Kansas and the other in the northwestern part of the state. Family and consumer sciences agents from K-State Research and Extension and key community partners planned and hosted the events. Each had a specific theme: "'The Best is Yet to Be' Full Circle … An Aging Expo for 2013" in the northwest and "Aging with Attitude Regional Expo" in the southeast. Each session included notable speakers, and educational sessions covered topics such as:

- Bucket Lists and Looking Back
- Adapting to Life's Challenges
- Legal Issues and Farm Succession
- Intimacy and Aging
- Financial Preparation for a Disaster
- Safety and Fall Prevention
- Prescription Drug Interactions
- Tourism in Southeast Kansas
- Who gets Grandma's Yellow Pie Plate?
- Physical Activity and Introduction to Tai Chi
- Money Tips for 2013 and Beyond
- Meals for One or Two
- Conversations About Safe Driving

As a joint project, agents from K-State Research and Extension's Northwest Area, and staff from Northwest Area Agency on Aging and the Department of Health and Human Performance at Fort Hays State University offered a professional track during the expo. It provided in-depth programs geared for those actively working with the elderly. Sessions included information and tools participants could take back to the workplace. Continuing Education Units (CEUs) were available for each session, with the possibility of earning as many as six CEUs. Topics included mental health issues, team-building initiatives, intimacy and aging, and the interplay among generations.

Outcomes

Surveys completed by participants indicated the following:

- 90% said they learned something new.
- 76% planned to take action or make a positive change in life.
- 83% stated that because of the expo, their attitude about aging had changed.
- 55 participants underwent bone density screening.
- 100% said they feel more prepared to update necessary documents before a disaster.
- 100% stated they understand the desire for intimacy continues throughout the lifespan.
- 94% stated they understand health includes physical, mental, and social well-being.
- 91% realize options are available as they prepare for family business or farm succession.
- 88% understand lifestyle changes may decrease their chances of falling.

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service
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In a 3- or 5-month follow-up survey, participants indicated the following:

- They have a better understanding of aging issues today as a result of their attendance.
- More than half had taken an action or changed something in their lives.
- They had used information from presentations (such as fall prevention) in their own lives or shared information with others.
- They contacted a vendor or used information received at the resource fair.

Success Story

In the hopes of preventing dizziness and falls for her 79-year-old mother, one participant (a registered nurse) who attended with her mother took the prescription list to a pharmacist. She found that four of her mother's prescriptions might cause dizziness and falls. The daughter plans to ask the doctor about changing medications to reduce the number that might cause dizziness. She is also encouraging her mother to consider a minor surgical procedure to eliminate the need for one drug.

Another participant who is caring for parents said it was the "best thing I've done in months." She said she learned how to better help them and gained a different perspective about their stage in life. She expressed thanks for the education she received.

At the end of the "2013 Full Circle . . . An Aging Expo" conference, a couple thanked the group for offering the conference. They said they had both gained a great deal over their years of attending Full Circle. The wife said they liked being able to attend separate sessions and later sharing with each other. The husband stated that when they both attended the same session, each came away with something different. They enjoyed being able to compare notes and share what they had learned.

Comments from participants:

"I collected all my medical and medication information and gave a list to my family members."

"I have been motivated to get up and move more."

"I have been more careful when driving my car."

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