

# Norton County gets life grants

School nurses, teachers and administrators in 55 Kansas counties will be able to deliver at-school programs aimed at improving the health of Kansas children by sharing \$148,798.73 in Healthy Habits for Life grants from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas Foundation. The Foundation distributed the funds in mid-December to 159 schools, allowing school personnel to deliver programs in 2013 that will help students reduce their cardiovascular risk, increase their physical activity or learn healthy habits.

"Childhood obesity is a growing trend in our state, and Kansas school personnel - such as nurses, physical education, health and consumer sciences teachers, and principals - are leading the charge to reverse the trend by helping our young people develop healthy eating and physical activity habits," said Marlou Wegener, chief operating officer of the BCBSKS Foundation. "The Foundation is proud to be part of that effort by providing the funds these dedicated professionals need to bring their programs to fruition."

Each year, grantees use the funds on a variety of programs, such as purchasing nutrition curriculum, exercise equipment or healthy snacks,

or organizing walking programs and family health fairs. Since the grant program's inception in 2006, the BCBSKS Foundation has distributed 600 Healthy Habits for Life grants in excess of \$573,000.

"On behalf of the BCBSKS Foundation board of directors, we are pleased with the response to this year's call for grant applications and are thrilled to support the efforts of 159 school staff members who are committed to improving the health of their students," Wegener said.

"With children spending so much of their time at school, the Foundation understands that schools are a great place for children to learn the healthy habits that will serve them well throughout their entire lives," she said. "We also recognize that schools face ever tightening budgets making it more difficult for them to provide such health-related programs."

### 2012-2013 Healthy Habits for Life Grant recipients by county

Norton County  
Joan Bolt, PE teacher-Eisenhower Elementary School, \$1,000  
Angie Babcock, school nurse-Northern Valley School, \$1,000

# 2.8 million acres opened up for drought

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced recently that the U.S. Department of Agriculture's measures to open conservation land to emergency haying and grazing during the 2012 drought freed up a record 2.8 million acres and provided as much as \$200 million in forage for producers facing critical feed shortages. Vilsack made the announcement during the national drought forum in Washington, D.C. co-sponsored by numerous federal agencies, governors' associations and academic partners.

At the height of the 2012 drought, the Secretary announced expanded use of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres for haying and grazing including a two-month extension for emergency grazing on CRP acres without incurring an additional CRP rental payment reduction. By providing this flexibility, USDA freed up forage and feed to benefit all livestock producers during a critical period, on top of additional USDA actions, including lowering the interest rate for emergency loans and working with crop insurance companies to provide flexibility to farmers.

USDA's Farm Service Agency reported to the Secretary today that roughly 2.8 million acres under 57,000 CRP contracts utilized the emergency haying and grazing option, compared to just over 1 million acres in 2011. In 2005, producers utilized roughly 1.7 million CRP acres for emergency haying and grazing, the previous record. USDA estimates of the gross value of forage provided in 2012 run from \$140 million to \$200 million.

The Secretary also announced today a new pilot program administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Kansas and Colorado to remove sediments from ponds to help provide more water for livestock or for irrigation. Part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the pilot provides an additional conservation option for producers who face drought-related issues on their agricultural operations. Also, for the current fiscal year, NRCS has made available over \$16 million through the EQIP program to farmers and ranchers for water conservation, practices, and wildlife habitat that have been affected by the drought. Those funds are in addition to the over \$27 million provided to farmers ranchers in 22 states for drought mitigation during fiscal year 2012.

Additionally, Secretary Vilsack noted that over the period of the recently expired Farm Bill, conservation systems installed with support from NRCS programs reduced water withdrawn from the Ogallala Aquifer by at least 860,000 acre feet. This is more than enough water to cover the area of Washington D.C. nearly 20 feet deep and is

equivalent to the domestic water use of approximately 9.6 million individuals for a year (based on USGS estimated use of 80 gallons per person per day). The quantity represents about 1.1 percent of the total groundwater irrigation withdrawals from the aquifer over the same period. At the agricultural sales level from the 2007 Census of Agriculture, an extension of aquifer life of 1.1 percent would transfer into sales "today" of about \$82 million. These reduced water withdrawals have also resulted in a related energy savings of the equivalent of at least 18 million gallons of diesel fuel.

The NRCS Ogallala Aquifer Initiative supported over one-quarter of these reduced withdrawals, approximately 238,000 acre feet, and achieved these reductions in the most sensitive areas of States in the Ogallala region. Funding through the initiative is targeted to areas where there has been a significant (over 25 foot) decline in the level of the aquifer or where there is a significant vulnerability for contamination of the aquifer through groundwater recharge.

While USDA's efforts during the drought have delivered assistance to those who need it most, Vilsack noted that the Department is hampered in its efforts by lack of a Farm Bill and he urged Congress to take action so that programs that could assist affected producers could be used to help them. Vilsack also announced that, in the wake of a series of regional drought conferences with farmers, ranchers, business owners and other stakeholders, a memorandum of understanding is being entered into with the Department of Commerce, including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), to improve sharing of data and expertise, monitoring networks, and drought forecasting efforts. The MOU is a direct outcome of the regional conferences, Vilsack said. In recent months, USDA has partnered with local governments, colleges, state and federal partners to conduct a series of regional drought workshops. Hundreds of producers met with government officials to discuss needs, and programs available to them. Vilsack kicked off the first meeting in Nebraska, and additional meetings were held in Colorado, Arkansas, and Ohio.

In addition, nearly 2,000 producers have taken advantage of funding from NRCS. So far, these drought recovery efforts have impacted over a million acres of farmland.

In recent months, USDA has also announced:

Purchased approximately \$170 million of pork, lamb,

chicken, and catfish for federal food nutrition assistance programs, including food banks, to help relieve pressure on American livestock producers and bring the nation's meat supply in line with demand.

Updated the emergency loans application process to allow these loans to be made earlier in the season.

Filed special provisions with the federal crop insurance program to allow haying or grazing of cover crops without impacting the insurability of planted 2013 spring crops.

Authorized up to \$5 million in grants to evaluate and demonstrate agricultural practices that help farmers and ranchers adapt to drought.

Granted a temporary variance from the National Organic Program's pasture practice standards for organic ruminant livestock producers in drought impacted states in 2012.

Authorized \$16 million in existing funds from its Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to target states experiencing exceptional and extreme drought.

Transferred \$14 million in unobligated program funds into the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) to help farmers and ranchers rehabilitate farmland damaged by natural disasters and for carrying out emergency water conservation measures in periods of severe drought.

USDA worked with crop insurance companies to provide flexibility to farmers, and one-third of all policyholders took advantage of the extended payment period.

Authorized haying and grazing of Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) easement areas in drought-affected areas where haying and grazing is consistent with conservation of wildlife habitat and wetlands.

Lowered the reduction in the annual rental payment to producers on CRP acres used for emergency haying or grazing from 25 percent to 10 percent in 2012.

Simplified the Secretarial disaster designation process and reduced the time it takes to designate counties affected by disasters by 40 percent.

The National Drought Forum is co-sponsored by: NOAA, USDA, EPA, DOI, FEMA, National Drought Mitigation Center, National Integrated Drought Information System, Western Governors' Association, Southern Governors' Association, Midwestern Governors' Association, and the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research.

# State launches new health care program

With the launch of the state's new Medicaid program known as KanCare, the State of Kansas continues its efforts to ensure Kansans who depend upon Medicaid and Healthwave continue to receive all the care they need and have come to expect.

"We continue to work diligently to improve the coordination and quality of care for Kansans on Medicaid and Healthwave. During this transition we are very aware of the accessibility concerns brought up by consumers, advocates and providers, and we will continue to be responsive to those concerns," Kansas Department of Health and Environment Medicaid Services Director Susan Mosier, M.D. said.

KanCare is Kansas' innovative new system to provide Medicaid services through an integrated care model that achieves measurable goals and focuses on wellness and care coordination. In addition to current program benefits, KanCare also adds services such as heart and lung transplants, bariatric surgery and adult preventive dental care at no cost to the state.

Dr. Mosier stressed the state's KanCare Continuity of Care Plan includes a number of protections the three managed-care organizations contracted by the state must meet in order to preserve KanCare consumers' existing health care services.

"The most important fact KanCare consumers and their families need to know is that their medical care and the services they receive will continue - uninterrupted - when KanCare launched on January 1st," Dr. Mosier said. "We cannot stress this enough - the three Managed-Care Organizations must honor all existing plans of care, prior authorizations and established provider/member relationships - even if the established provider is not in the managed-care organization network."

The KanCare Continuity of Care Plan also provides:

Managed-Care Organizations must pay Medicaid fee-for-service rates to established providers through the first 90 days - even if the provider is not in the managed-care organization network.

Managed-Care Organizations must pay Medicaid fee-for-service rates to residential providers for the first year for KanCare consumers currently living in a Medicaid-reimbursed residential setting, such as a nursing facility - even if the residential provider is not in the managed-care organization network.

Managed-Care Organizations must pay Medicaid fee-for-service rates to Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) providers up to an additional 90 days for KanCare consumers with existing plans of care if a new plan of care is not in place within 90 days of Jan. 1, 2013 - even if the HCBS providers are not in the managed-care organization network.-more-

All KanCare consumers have until April 4, 2013, to switch their managed-care organization

to one of the other two. Any changes made after Jan. 1, 2013, will take effect the first day of the following month.

Managed-Care Organizations must make sure specialty care is available to all members. They are required to meet distance or travel time standards. If the managed-care organization does not have a specialist available to members within those standards, it must allow members to see out-of-network providers. If the managed-care organization is unable to provide medically-necessary services in its network, it must cover those services out-of-network and must have single-case arrangements or agreements with non-network providers to make sure members have access to covered services. The rate will be negotiated between the plan and the provider. Providers cannot bill members for any difference.

Managed-Care Organizations cannot limit emergency services to in-network hospitals. As required by federal law, the state's KanCare contract requires each managed-care organization to cover and pay for emergency services, including services needed to evaluate or stabilize an emergency medical condition-regardless of whether the provider that furnishes the service has a contract with the managed-care organization.

For other out-of-network services-after the transition-Managed-Care Organizations will pay out-of-network providers that choose to serve Medicaid members 90 percent of the Medicaid rate. Under federal law, the KanCare consumer cannot be made to pay the difference in standard rates and those paid by the managed-care organization.

"The Managed-Care Organizations continue to build their provider networks-and they won't stop on January 1st when KanCare launches," Dr. Mosier said.

The Administration also began daily KanCare Rapid Response calls this week. Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services Secretary Shawn Sullivan said the calls allow consumers, providers and stakeholders to ask questions about their individual concerns about the transition to KanCare.

"Of course when starting down any new path, there are occasional bumps along the way. We take these very seriously and have built into the system ways to remedy these situations quickly and fairly," Sec. Sullivan said.

Sec. Sullivan encouraged Kansans with any questions or concerns about KanCare health plans, providers or services, to join the KanCare Rapid Response call held Monday - Friday at 9 a.m. CT at 1-877-247-8650 and use ID code 79687456. (Note: Because of the New Year's Day holiday, there will not be a call on Tuesday, Jan. 1.)

If Kansans are unable to join the daily call, they also can call the KanCare Consumer Assistance Line at 1-866-305-5147.

# CLUB NEWS

The annual Mid-Winter Rally of Kansas Lions will take on a "New York" flavor as they play host to Past International Director Doug Alexander, on January 18-20, 2013 at the Ramada Convention Center in Salina.

The Kansas Lions Council of District Governors conducts four meetings each year to assess progress towards goals for community service by the 7000 Kansas Lions & Leos (school students) who serve in the 290 clubs from all parts of the state. In addition, most of the State Committees and Lions Foundation Boards will meet to evalu-

ate annual goals.

The Kansas Lions Council of Governors is the controlling authority of Kansas Lions. They are: DG Sheryl Brenn of 17-L (west); DG William Sander-son of 17-I (north-central); DG Beverly Nichols of 17-O (north-east); DG Mel Barnett of 17-N (south-central); and DG Bill Kincaid of 17-S (south-east). The Council Chairperson is Helen LeBlanc of Valley Center.

Past International Director Douglas Alexander is a retired Vice President of J.P. Morgan Chase Bank, and a member of the Bedford Stuyvesant Lions

Club of Brooklyn, NY. While attending the International Convention in Sydney, Australia, he was elected to serve a two-year term as International Director for the club years 2010-2012. PID Townsend has held many offices in Lionism, and received numerous awards, including two International Presidential Awards, and is a progressive Melvin Jones Fellow.

In addition to his Lions activities, PID Alexander is active in numerous professional and community organizations. He has served as chairperson of the advisory board for the New

York Urban League and as a board member of the St. Francis DeSales School for the Deaf. He has also received the Congressional Record Award.

The International Association of Lions Clubs is the world's largest community service organization with 1.35 Million members in 46,000 clubs, in 206 countries of the world. In Kansas there are 7,000 Lion and Leo Club members serving in 290 clubs, all dedicated to serving their hometown communi-ties.



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