



# Making a Difference

2016 – 2017

## Adult Development and Aging Program Focus Team Enriching the Health and Wellness of Aging Kansans

### Grand Challenges

K-State Research and Extension: providing education you can trust to help people, businesses, and communities solve problems, develop skills, and build a better future.

Erin Yelland  
Assistant Professor and  
Extension Specialist  
785-532-1905  
erinyelland@ksu.edu



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### Situation

The population of the nation, and of the state, is growing older as the Baby Boomer generation (those born during 1946-1964) moves into later life. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that nearly 25 percent of Kansas' population will be over age 60 by the year 2030, an increase of 32 percent from 2012. As older adults are more likely to experience disability and chronic diseases, this demographic shift will have significant consequences for the health and wellness of the aging population.

### What We Did

K-State Research and Extension offered educational opportunities for Kansans on enriching their overall health and wellness, completing advance health care directives, the warning signs of Alzheimer's disease and benefits of early detection, caregiving, simple home modifications, and developing empathic responses to the sensory and functional challenges of older adults. These curricula and outreach efforts helped Extension agents reach community members and educate key stakeholders and leaders within communities on pertinent aging-related topics.

### Outcomes

K-State Research and Extension provided more than 200 aging-related educational outreach initiatives in the past 12 months. Evaluation results from Keys to Embracing Aging, our healthy aging program, showed 77 percent of participants incorporated a healthier diet into their daily life and 70 percent increased the amount of physical activity they engaged in after attending the program. Results such as these will lead Kansans to reduce their risk of chronic disease, heart attack, stroke, diabetes, and obesity thus lowering overall health care costs across the state.

K-State Research and Extension also collaborated with the Kansas Department of Aging and Disability Services to provide Operation Red File, a community-sponsored and supported medical emergency preparedness tool, to more than a dozen counties in the state. In the next year, we anticipate at least 15 more counties will adopt this grassroots initiative to better prepare older adults and individuals with disabilities for medical emergencies.

### Success Story

"I have been struggling with severe depression and haven't really been out of the house for a year. When I started coming to the Keys to Embracing Aging program offered by my local extension office, my mental health really improved. Before I was isolated and lonely, and now I feel like I have learned to have a purpose again," — program participant.

"Because of attending the Keys to Embracing Aging program, I have decided to become an RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program) volunteer. I love being able to socialize more and help others," — program participant.