



# Making a Difference

2016 – 2017

## Nutrition, Food Safety and Health Program Focus Team Hand Washing

### 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.

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### Situation

Diarrhea-related sicknesses and respiratory infections negatively impact Kansans in many ways. Children miss school, adults miss work, extensive medical costs are incurred, and people could be hospitalized or even die. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control describes hand washing as a “do-it-yourself vaccine,” which can help prevent such illnesses. In fact, studies have shown that proper hand washing can prevent one in three diarrhea-related sicknesses and one in five respiratory infections, such as a cold or the flu. Handwashing education is important to remind people when and how to wash effectively, to lead to better health.

### What We Did

K-State Research and Extension agents taught handwashing in various food and health-related classes across the state, including childcare provider training, babysitting clinics, and schools (PK-12th grade). They also engaged kids and others in classrooms, health fairs and various events using a powder that fluoresces in black light (“glogerm”) to teach about handwashing and taught a “high-speed hand washing” method of washing hands. K-State Research and Extension personnel have also answered questions and disseminated information through the general media, Extension newsletters, social media, and summer meal sites on handwashing. Agents have also set up displays at their local Health Departments and WIC clinics, put up handwashing signs and provided information on handwashing to 4-H clubs before they work in the food stand at events such as county fairs.

### Outcomes

K-State Research and Extension put on at least 160 programs across the state on handwashing, which directly reached at least 3,750 youth and 140 adults. In addition, 28 trials were conducted comparing high-speed handwashing to regular handwashing in school classrooms, which reduced water use by 90 percent and saved eight minutes of time on average. Lack of time is a common barrier to proper handwashing among school children, so this method could help more school children to actually wash their hands. In follow-up evaluations for all the handwashing efforts, multiple teachers said they see kids washing their hands more frequently and thoroughly after receiving handwashing training. Teachers also reported that students improved on knowing when to wash their hands and that more kids wash their hands more often.

### Success Story

One student said, “I don’t want the bad guy germs on my hands.” Another student wrote, “I learned it is good to wash our hands or else germs will multiply.” Educators reported they can see the improvement in student handwashing techniques from year to year and that kids remember the information from year to year and in subsequent years, wash their hands without being asked.

