



## Helping Kids, Schools Coordinator Fills District's Need for After-School Programs

WAKEENEY, Kan. – Now that she's gotten her feet wet, Ashley Conness says she's ready to take her show on the road.

A relatively new employee in the Golden Prairie Extension District, Conness started an after-school program in 2011 for kids in grades K-6 at Wakeeney Elementary School. She was hired to specialize in youth development programs, including 4-H

"We haven't had an after-school program for a few years, so that got started when my position was created," Conness said. "We did a program on rocketry, different one's on gardening where the kids made their own little garden... I've had [4-H] members come in and help me do a program on foods and nutrition."

In the first year, Conness had 20 kids in Wakeeney participating in the after-school program, which is 4-H-based but also open to non-members.

"I think the community has benefitted from this program because there are things that we can teach kids or do through extension that schools aren't necessarily able to provide to the kids," Conness said.

"Being in the district, for us, has really been helpful. Wakeeney benefits from being in a district, having extra support to be able to provide programs to the community. I think that when we were a single county, we were not able to provide as much to the community as we do now."

Golden Prairie district  
program coordinator  
Ashley Conness says after  
school programs have  
benefitted communities  
in the district



Conness' early experience with the after-school program in Trego County has set the stage for her to start offering the program in Logan and Gove counties, which are also part of the Golden Prairie district.

As a district program coordinator, Conness expects to be able to work more closely with agents in those counties; she's already done the planning, and now additional schools will reap the benefits.

"The agents in Gove and Logan counties have done stuff within schools but [not] the 4-H after-school program like I do," Conness said. "[In Wakeeney], there are a lot of kids that have joined 4-H just from doing the after-school program. So I think that that's something that should be done in both counties and would really increase [membership in] our 4-H programs."

After-school activities in the Golden Prairie district are scheduled throughout the school year, Conness said. Throughout the state, similar programs are available to all youth, and more information is available through local extension offices.