

News Column Week of 5/27/19

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Thank Older Americans

Show your appreciation to Older Kansans. May is Older Americans Month. This year's theme is, *Connect, Create, Contribute*. It encourages older adults and their communities to:

- Connect with friends, family, and services that support participation.
- Create by engaging in classes that promote learning, health, and personal enrichment.
- Contribute time, talent, and life experience to benefit others.

Today's older Americans are not sitting on the porch rocking. They are working longer, trying new things, and they are active in their communities. Older Americans are taking charge, striving for wellness, focusing on independence, and advocating for themselves and others. They look at growing older as an opportunity to try a new goal or an old interest.

12 older Kansans in Washington recently participated in a K-State Research & Extension Stay Strong, Stay Healthy class taught by District Agent, Sonia Cooper and me. The twice a week, eight-week workshop helped them work on their strength, flexibility and balance. They rose up against any physical ailments returning to class as soon as they were able. Determination is a strong asset of many older Kansans. Most strive to improve, maintain, and increase their healthy lifestyle.

Who volunteers at the feeding programs in many of the communities? Older Kansans are lining up people and distributing food. The contributions of older Kansans are tremendous. Volunteering in their communities makes a positive impact in the lives of all people.

Communities that encourage the contributions of older adults are stronger! By engaging and supporting all community members, we recognize older adults play a key role in the vitality of our neighborhoods and lives. They are a wealth of information with all of their knowledge and experiences. It is a joy to work with older Kansans.

How many older Kansans are in the River Valley District? Older Kansans, age 65 and older, make up 15.4 % of the population. In the River Valley Extension District four counties, they comprise an average of 23.75% of the population. The lowest percentage is Cloud County at 21%, Clay County at 22.6%, Washington County at 23.8%, and Republic County at 27.6%. This data was compiled on July 1, 2018. They are a vital and vibrant part of Kansas communities. Thank an older American for all they do to make to make the community a better place. Thank them for the help they given you throughout the years.

Going to a family reunion this summer? Thank those people who made and are making a difference in your life. Sharing their skills and values may have enriched your life. Show your appreciation to those special older Americans! Have a great summer!