



Enhancing Health Equity: NE Extension Youth Health Equity Project

Dr. Michelle Krehbiel
 Jean Ann Fischer
 Dr. Lisa Franzen-Castle
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Team Members

Leadership – Nebraska Extension

Michelle Krehbiel
 Jean Ann Fischer
 Lisa Franzen-Castle
 Kathleen Lodl

Finances

Michelle Krehbiel
 Becky Baumfalk

Advisor/Technical Assistance

- Liz Hamm
- Courtney Eitzmann
- Emily Gratopp

Reporting/Evaluation

- Joseph Gardella

Nebraska FCCLA

- Chelsey Greene

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Purpose of the Project

Examine local health equity issues in rural Nebraska through youth–adult partnerships.

Partnerships

This project is a partnership between Nebraska Office of Health Disparities and Health Equity, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Nebraska Extension, and Nebraska FCCLA

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Main Goals

- 1** *Engage in learning about health equity and social determinants of health*
- 2** *Determine local health equity needs*
- 3** *Communicate results of the youth-driven project in a spring 2024 showcase*

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YHEP Teams

- **Team size:** Three to six youth (24 teams, 200 youth)
- **Target age of youth:** Grades 7-12
- **Time invested:** 400 hours
- **Role of youth:** Co-leaders in investigating, researching, and reporting on selected health issue
- **Role of Adults:** Advise and coach youth on all phases of the project

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Funding

Teams received \$6,000.00

Community coaches received
\$2,300.00

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Community Coaches

Work collaboratively with youth on conducting a community health needs assessment on daily, weekly or biweekly basis.

Utilize professional development and technical assistance and engage with local health department.

Complete required reporting.

Exhibit project results at YHEP Showcase in April 2024



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Training & Technical Assistance

Google Classroom
 Webinars
 One-on-One coaching
 Office hours

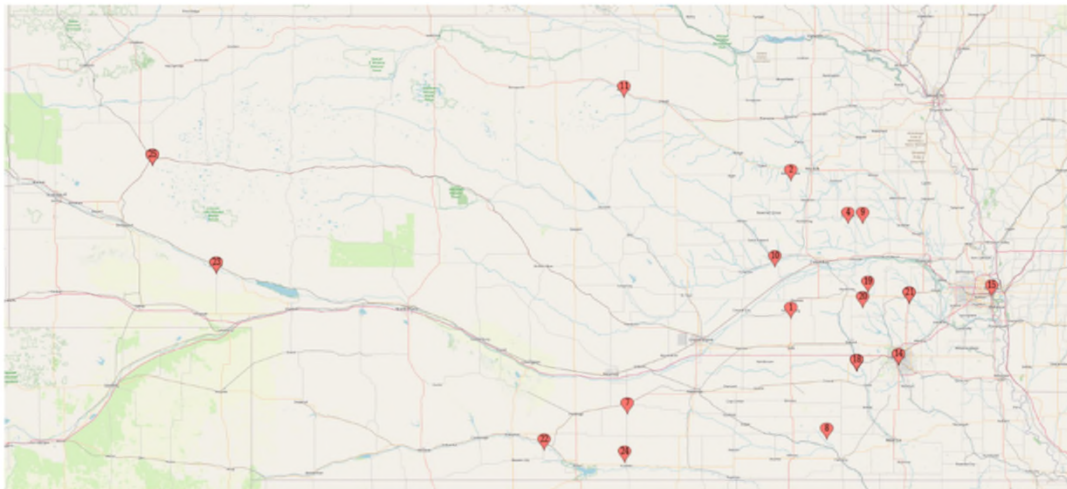
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Timeline

- **Summer 2023**
 - Professional Development and Technical Assistance
 - Recruit and select teams
- **Fall 2023 – Spring 2024**
 - Youth Engagement
- **April 8, 2024**
 - Spring showcase in conjunction with the State FCCLA Meeting in Lincoln

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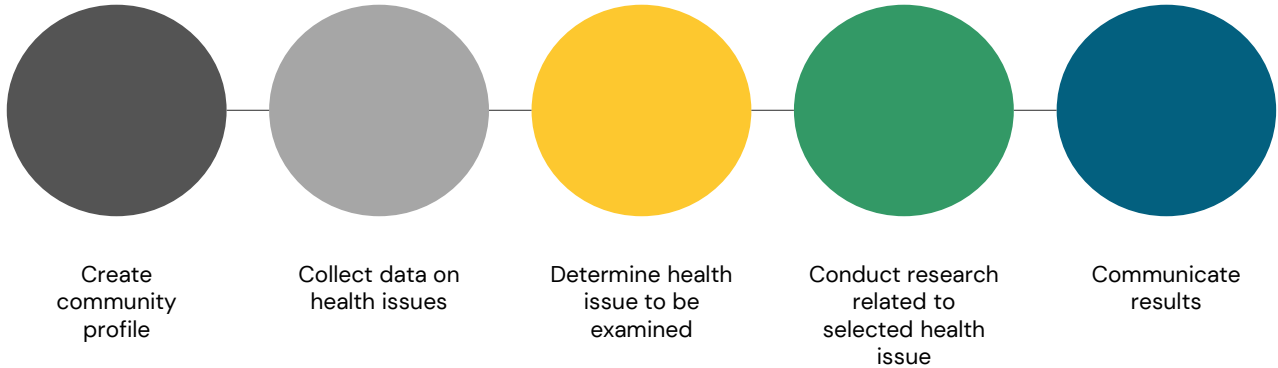
Location of YHEP Teams



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Steps in YHEP

Getting started: Key elements of YHEP



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Youth Research Topics

Physical health, Life expectancy, and Mortality

- Driving safety
- Sleeping health
- Vaping cessation
- Weight loss
- Food insecurity

Mental health

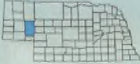
- Use of social media
- Healthy use of technology
- Social health in the home
- Mental health challenges among farmers
- Psychological resilience among rural youth

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Youth Showcase– April 8, 2024




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MENTAL HEALTH OF FARMERS AND RANCHERS

GARDEN COUNTY 4-H
Korryn Bebernis, Carver Corfield, Jase Roberson & Cable Larson

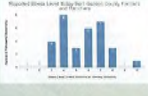


QUESTIONS

- What is the average stress level of our local farmers and ranchers?
- How do we improve the mental well being of farmers and ranchers in rural areas?

RESEARCH

Mental health is defined as including "our emotional, psychological, and social well-being, it affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices" (CDC, 2023). Farming and ranching is a way of life for a lot of people especially in Garden County. Many operators stress about lots of things, including handing the operation down the line. The different times of year can really affect the amount of stress on a farmer/rancher. Due to these high stress situations, farmer's suicide rate has increased 3.5 times since 2019 (Kroll, 2022). Rural areas can be more impacted by mental health issues due to the lack of behavioral health providers and other sources of treatment and support. Severe implications on relationships, personal health, ability to perform work related tasks, and overall quality of life (United States HHS, 2023). In order to help, universities are creating resources and trainings that help farmers and ranchers all across the country deal with stress, depression, and anxiety.




FINDINGS

Twenty-one participants choose to take the survey consisting of eight females, 12 males, and one rather not identify their gender. They ranged in ages 25 to 65 plus. All of them farmed in Garden County with four also stating that they farmed in another nearby county as well. Surveys were given out the first two weeks of February 2024. In order to establish a baseline for stress levels, it was asked what your stress level was today on a scale of one to ten with one being not stressed to 10 being very stressed. Participants of this survey showed that the average level of stress today was 5.0 out of 10 with an average year stress level being at 5.3 out of 10. The results showed that spring was the most stressful season. Of the participants surveyed, 42.9% said spring was the most stressful and 33.3% said winter was the most stressful. Counselors are overwhelmed with clients and continue to see more and more new clients having to wait long periods of time before seeing someone. We were also told that sometimes male clients tend to be more reserved.

REFLECTIONS & SUGGESTIONS

Exploring mental health of farmers and ranchers has an impact not only on agricultural farms but also on the communities in which they live. Farmers and ranches may sometimes feel alone but their work and presence in the communities and world are so impactful. If resources can be created to better support our farmers and ranchers in Nebraska, we may see better agricultural practices and farmers and rancher being more successful. Crystal Leach, Counselor for Regional West Garden County, helped us understand the importance of reducing the stigma and understanding that it is OK to talk to someone. Many people see this as a sign of weakness but normalizing the need for counseling is going to be the biggest impact we could ever make on our society. In order to achieve this, we are going to start young by having conversations with our peers as well as putting out flyers and information around our communities.



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Project Outcomes

Showcase: April 8th, 2024

Podcast: Youth Health Equity- UNL MediaHub

National Recognition: Youth Presentations



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Empowerment

- Capability to affect social change
- Capability to conduct research
- Inspire confidence
- Inspire to speak up about issues

Broaden perspective

Foster interest in research
Foster resilience/problem solving mindset

Developing awareness/knowledge:

- Knowledge of research process
- Knowledge & awareness of public health issue, improved health behaviors
- Knowledge of process of social change



Program Evaluation Results

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Community Coaches Quotes

“For me, it has been a learning experience. I have been amazed that students could work together—without me directing everything. For the students, they have learned about using surveys to gain information. They have learned about helping others.”

“This project has been great for the students and me in learning more about food insecurities in our community. It has also given them a sense of pride in the ability to help others with their food needs.”

“They [the youth] have learned a lot about research, the process to go through it, and developed their own creativity/critical thinking to a much deeper level. They were not surprised by the results, but it was still very eye opening to them. Many of them have cut back on their screen time because of the results and have been making a lifestyle change.”

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What I learned from this project was....

- “Food insecurities are bigger in your community than you’d expect”
- “How mental health is effected by social media”
- “Somethings are a community problem not an individual problem”
- “The effect that mental health has on farmers and ranchers”
- “Farmers need help to support them”
- “How one small difference can change lives”
- “I learned to have good time management skills!”

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Questions



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Contact Information


Michelle Krehbiel
mkrehbiel2@unl.edu

Jean Ann Fischer
Jfischer6@unl.edu

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The project is a partnership between Nebraska Extension, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, and Nebraska FCCLA.

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Project Purpose and Scope. The Nebraska Youth Health Equity Project (YHEP) aimed to:

- engage and empower youth via youth-adult action research partnerships,
- to build health equity skills and capacity across the state
- give Nebraska youth a voice to investigate health equity problems and identify solutions

Project Team: Nebraska Extension (Dr. Michelle Krehbiel, Dr. Lisa Franzen-Castle, Jean Ann Fischer, Dr. Joseph Gardella, Liz Hamm, Courtney Eitzmann), Nebraska Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (Chelsey Greene) and Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Office of Health Disparities and Health Equity (Echohawk Lefthand)

Participants: The project engaged teams of Nebraska youth ages 12 to 18. Teams consisted of three to eight youth and one adult coach. 24 youth-adult teams (with approximately 200 youth and 24 adult coaches. The youth-adult teams met for over 400 hours over the course of the project (October 2023 to April 2024).

Youth Research Topics: Food insecurity, vaping, sleep habits, mental health, driving safety, & technology use.

Project Outcomes: Podcast link; <https://mediahub.unl.edu/channels/44935>

National Recognition: Three teams shared their project at national FCCLA (2024) and one team will share their project at national FFA (2024). Twin Rivers High School was one of 12 national winners of FCCLA's Rural Teen Road Safety Assessment.

Community Change: The Chamber of Commerce and businesses will partner with us more intentionally for our 2024-2025 community service project. *Milford Public Schools*

Youth gained communication with local city officials. One youth stated that they became best friends with the mayor while another one shared they talked with the mayor and city council.

Quotes:

- “I learned that some things are a community problem not an individual problem.” *Youth participant*
- “Resiliency is VERY important when advocating for an issue.” *Youth participant*
- “They [the youth] have learned a lot about research, the process to go through it, and developed their own creativity/critical thinking to a much deeper level.” *Adult coach*
- “I truly appreciate the time and effort from all people at the state level to make this opportunity possible for our FCCLA students. The resources and funding provided to us were so supportive and encouraging, and also the communication methods in place were so helpful.” *Adult coach*

For more information contact: Michelle Krehbiel, mkrehbiel2@unl.edu