Making a Difference

Grand Challenge: Health
Title: Food Preservation Education Helps Keep Patrons Healthy

Why is this issue important?

Recommendations to preserve food at home are based on science that is continually being researched and updated. There is a large amount of un-researched, un-tested information available to the public regarding food preservation particularly online. Many are unaware of proper food preservation practices and the importance of following such practices. Improper techniques can cause foodborne illness and even death.

How did Extension address this issue?

Susan Fangman, FCS Agent and Lisa Martin, EFNEP/SNAP-Ed Agent presented Myth Busters: Getting the Facts and Not the Fiction on Canning Food at the Topeka Garden Show. Susan hosted a Planning on Canning Week at the extension office showcasing the wealth of free information available to patrons regarding food preservation and was available to visit with patrons about their food preservation questions. The Shawnee County extension office is also available to test dial gauge pressure canners year round.

What was the impact?

- The extension office has tested 5 dial gauge pressure canners so far this year. Inaccurate gauges can cause under-processing of the product resulting in unsafe food.

Success Story:

After the Myth Busters presentation a participant hung around to talk with us. After listening to the information presented in the program she was very concerned that the vegetable relish that she preserved in a hot-water bath was not safe. In listening to her concerns we found the relish that she made contained many low-acid vegetables and she had developed her own recipe. We advised her the relish could potentially be contaminated with Botulism, which can be deadly. After attending our training, she was more aware of safe-canning practices and where to go for tested recipes ultimately helping keep her family healthy.