

As a ranch kid at heart and life-long Kansan, my roots in cooperative extension run deep. Our local extension office back home in Barber County was more than just the place to pick up and drop off important items related to our 4-H involvement, but a hub of information, knowledge, and connector back to the latest information, resources, and research the university had to offer. It was also the place where many long-time friendships, relationships, and partnerships formed that transcended generations, economic barriers, and social differences.

The culture and expectation of cooperative extension, I've come to learn now as an adult, are truly set by the local people we see proudly wearing the K-State Research & Extension logo, serving in our communities, providing programming, answering questions, and doing their best to bring the university to the people of Kansas. When I look around the Twin Creeks District and see the faces of the people I just described, I get really excited as a director. Not only do I feel like I am right at home, but I know our communities are better places because of the efforts of agents Keith, Karen, Jenilee, and Karlie and office professionals Crystal, Pam, Donna, and Dee who show up everyday and serve the stakeholders of our district with excellence in all that they do.

Stepping back in time for a little history lesson on Land Grant Universities to 1862 when Abraham Lincoln was our President and our country was torn by Civil War, Lincoln had an innovative new idea and formed a partnership with a Senator from Vermont named Justin Morrill that would forever change public higher education. Prior to the Morrill Act of 1862, only the affluent and connected were allowed to attend universities. For the first time in our nation's history, people from lower classes were able to access education through the Land Grant University system and the middle class was formed. Subsequent acts in 1890 and 1994 adding our African and Native American friends to the Land Grant mission provided further opportunities and today people from all sectors of society have access to a land grant university. The Land Grant University mission was to provide access, opportunity, and affordability for all to not only achieve their dreams but to go beyond their dreams. This still holds true today.

I didn't grow up in a family of well-educated parents and grandparents or come from a long line of K-State graduates, but we still had access to the university as a result of cooperative extension services. I am a firm believer that this access is what encouraged and inspired me to pursue higher education that ultimately led to not only a bachelor's degree but a couple of masters as well. And this, my friends, this was the original intent of the Land Grant Acts and why I am so incredibly passionate about the K-State 105 and a Next Generation Land Grant University. Access for all.

K-State was the first Land Grant University in the country. It is a university built on engagement that has always been in every Kansas county. As a next-generation land-grant university, we're now embracing innovative ways to serve and connect with the people who call the Sunflower State home. This is where I get so incredibly excited as an extension director because we get to play a bigger role in the Land Grant Mission of providing access, opportunity, and affordability locally by leveraging not some but now ALL of the resources that K-State has to offer back home here in our communities. As K-State faculty, we get to start connecting the dots. We get to do what we do best and that is bringing people and partners together. We call it K-State 105. I call it doing good things for the Twin Creeks District and the great state of Kansas so we can in turn do good things in our world.

We have an incredible opportunity next month on November 8th and 9th in the Twin Creeks District to host a Community Visit from President Linton, the K-State 105 team, and some of our partners on this project. I would like to take this opportunity to formally invite each and every one of you to join us for the Open Community Forum on November 8th at the Bullseye Event Center in Norton from 5:30-7:00 and again November 9th at 9:00 am in the Heaton building. This will be a great opportunity to learn more about K-State 105 and the innovative ways extension services and other local partners are being elevated to better serve and meet the needs of our communities. Please RSVP to your local Twin Creeks K-State Research & Extension Office by November 6th.