

Rural Papers

Reporting with commentary on
agricultural and rural issues

Fall/Winter 2020

KRC

KANSAS RURAL CENTER



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Fall/Winter 2020

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KANSAS RURAL CENTER



WHAT WE DO

The Kansas Rural Center (KRC) is a non-profit organization founded in 1979. We promote the long-term health of the land and its people through research, education, and advocacy. KRC cultivates grassroots support for public policies that encourage family farming and stewardship of soil and water. KRC is committed to economically viable, ecologically sound, and socially just agriculture.

OUR MISSION

To promote the long-term health of the land and its people through research, education and advocacy that advance an economically viable, ecologically sound, and socially just food and farming system.

OUR VISION

KRC believes that diversified farming systems hold the key to preserving, developing and maintaining a food and farming future that provides healthy food, a healthy environment and social structure, and meaningful livelihoods.

RURAL PAPERS

Rural Papers is the voice of the Kansas Rural Center. It is published 3 - 6 times a year, in print and digitally. Rural Papers is jointly edited by KRC staff. Reprints of articles are encouraged with acknowledgement of Rural Papers and the author.

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NEW ADDRESS!!!



The key to growth for any organization is creating a diverse and forward-moving vision. KRC has such a vision and it has been my honor to dive deep into it during what has to be one of the most challenging years ever. Within this year, we have seen more and more people turned towards local sustainable foods. It's understandable at the most common-sense level when our enemy is invisible that we search for certainty where it can be found. We at least should

know where our food is coming from. Right?

As supporters of KRC, you have long known the value of healthy, sustainable locally sourced food and during this crisis, you have been there for Kansans. I am sure of one thing, as we begin to find a new normal in 2021, we will continue to see reliance on Kansas grown foods. There is no turning back now.



KRC Board Member and organic farmer, Jackie Keller, recently added 50 acres of pollinator habitat and 12 bee hives to her organic Mo-Tse-Qua farm near Topeka. We are so grateful to Jackie for her work for KRC and for sustainable agriculture and pollinators.

Local + Cooperative = Resilience²

Last March, when the coronavirus pandemic hit us head on, the ten farmers of Rolling Prairie Farmers Alliance scrambled to figure out how we were going to operate our CSA with many of our usual delivery sites shut down along with just about everything else. Through email and something called Zoom, we discussed adding a bulk order and delivery function to our website, offering home delivery of shares for an extra fee, finding new drop off sites, and developing additional sanitation and PPE protocols. We had no idea then that it would not, in fact, be a challenge to get enough subscribers because of the new restrictions, but membership would grow by leaps and bounds. It seems people were looking for local, reliable sources for their food as it became clear that long commodity chains in the corporate dominated food systems were extremely vulnerable, with shortages of not only toilet paper but food staples like meats on supermarket shelves within weeks.

At the same time, the farmer-owners of the Kansas City Food Hub—like Rolling Prairie, a cooperative of growers—were suddenly confronted by the metro-wide shut down and loss of the institutional sales (restaurants, corporate cafeterias, schools, grocery stores) their model was built on. Like Rolling Prairie, the core group of farmers rapidly and creatively adjusted their strategy and adopted a modified CSA system, a “neighborhood food share” using their logisti-

cal knowledge and experience to organize deliveries in the metro area to a whole new set of customers. Not only did they add new customers in the neighborhoods, they brought in other growers who faced the same challenge when market and restaurant sales evaporated. The coop grew to a total of 30 farms, including small and medium-size family farms and non-profit community organizations.

Rolling Prairie is the oldest vegetable cooperative, multi-farm CSA in the Midwest. Founded in 1994 by then Executive Director of the Kansas Rural Center Dan Nagen-gast and five other family farmers in Douglas, Jefferson, and Leavenworth counties, the “Alliance” moniker and cooperative structure

were both inspired by the Populist Movement a century earlier, when farmers rose up against the railroad and banking monopolies to “raise less corn and more hell” in the famous words of Kansan Mary Elizabeth Lease. They formed Farmers Alliances, Wheels, and ultimately a Peoples Party to work toward building a Cooperative Commonwealth.

Rolling Prairie grew out of the same social movement that gave rise to the Kanas Rural Center. The farm crisis of the 1980s and the resulting popular movement to protect and adapt a sustainable, family farming system understood that rural communities also depended on a vibrant, family-based agriculture. Both organizations have always rooted themselves in



Shafer on his Sand Heron Farm in Jefferson County. Photo by Nick Krug, reprinted with permission from the Lawrence Journal-World.



Shafer serves as the President of the KRC Board. Photo by Nick Krug, reprinted with permission from the Lawrence Journal-World.

Kansas and local conditions, while pursuing the broader and deeper social mission of building an ecologically sound, socially just farm and food system. (Bethany Spicher, 1999). Knowing and responding to local communities proved to be a successful strategy, as the basic “subscription” model the original growers developed is still being used. The cooperative is now into its second generation of grower members, the majority of them young and beginning farmers, many of whom have been mentored by the original group.

COVID-19 has shaken everything in our world, and caused us all to think deeply and creatively about our present and future. Many of us can see this moment as a necessary, terribly tragic reminder of the uncertainties and crises to come with climate change running full steam ahead. Although more rural parts of the state did not feel the effects as immediately and directly

as those in and closer to the cities, it is everywhere now, and as I write this the health care system across the state is stretched to its limits. Although as a society — with all of our rampant divisions and conflicts — we have managed to keep commerce flowing enough to avoid major, lasting shortages on the shelves, we now know that could happen again any time.

Words like “resilient” and “regenerative” are embraced by increasing numbers of growers and eaters alike. Growers concerned with soil health know the microbiome of the soil is key to its health. Eaters concerned with their own health are learning their gut microbiome is key. As David Montgomery and Anne Biklé pointed out at the 2018 KRC Farm and Food Conference (and in their book, *The Hidden Half of Nature*), these symbiotic, mutually beneficial systems are not only parallel, they are interconnected.

So what about our social system, and in particular our food and farming system? Maybe one of the lessons we can learn from 2020 is that in spite of all our differences and seemingly intractable disagreements, we still need each other. People need farmers to grow their food, and farmers need doctors and nurses to take care of them when they fall ill, teachers to educate their children, electrical workers to repair the grid when it goes down.

And maybe another lesson is that cooperation is really the way of the world, from the soil to our guts to our communities. As the ironic slogan on an old Community Mercantile Cooperative Grocery t-shirt said — right out of the old Westerns many of us used to enjoy — “Cooperate and nobody gets hurt.” Maybe we can put our minds together and come up with that Cooperative Commonwealth after all.

Please note our...

**NEW MAILING
ADDRESS**

Kansas Rural Center
PO Box 781057
Wichita, KS 67278

KRC Town Halls Inspire Hope and a Path Forward

This summer and fall, KRC hosted four virtual town halls that offered opportunities to share information and community dialogue on the unique challenges or opportunities communities face within the context of an election year and the new realities of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. The virtual space also allowed for the conversations to have statewide perspective. Over 200 Kansans as well as many out of state supporters tuned in.

These came at a time when Kansans are thinking about resiliency and what the future will look like for food, agriculture, and rural communities. This year's Town Halls built on the visions and ideas outlined in previous years by focusing the first three town halls on regional food systems resilience, rural revitalization, and climate and renewable energy. Natalie Fullerton, KRC Assistant Director said, "We wanted people to come away from the conversations with a better understanding of common concerns, goals and reasons for hope now and in the future."

The fourth focused on farm to school programs around the state as KRC launched their two year farm to school project. The project will help train producers and help build relationships with schools but perhaps most importantly, will provide platforms like this for Kansas to learn more about it and how to support farm to school.

Regional Food Systems Resilience

The first in the series was, "Regional Food Systems Resilience." This town hall examined the three major components of a food system: production, processing and distribution.

During the early part of the pandemic, empty grocery store shelves illuminated a failure in each of these three parts of our once-reliable food system. For many Americans, empty shelves at a grocery store was a new phenomenon. However, the agricultural community brought a sense of calm and hope to a fearful public.

Consumers in cities found hope in producers in rural areas. The gap between rural and urban suddenly collapsed as thousands of urban dwellers began purchasing directly from farms and ranches. For those who adapted, this direct-to-consumer market prospered people in rural areas. In addition, consumers began to know the farmers who grew their food.

The first KRC Town Hall introduced us to four such producers; Donna Pearson McClish, Common Ground Producers and Growers in Wichita, Donn Teske, Farmer and President of the National Farmers Union, Mark Gawron, Cultivate Kansas City, and Chris Sramek with High Plains Food Coop in

Rawlins, County. Gabe Spurgeon, owner of South Baldwin Farms near Ottawa and President of the Kansas Specialty Crop Growers Association led the conversation.

The pandemic highlighted the gaps in the food system related to providing health care and fresh produce and farmers were called up on to step in and fill that gap. But along with that comes the challenge of providing equitable wages to farmers.

McClish said, "I tell people, 'You have no idea how much work it takes to get this food to your table.'" However, the end customer has to be able to afford the product. "It's important to adapt our food systems of the future, not just the present. We will never go back to the way we were. We are in a new phase of history and we must adapt our foods systems to what it's going to look like."

"Covid has shown the vulnerability of the system not only when it comes to livestock, but the industrial opportunity to abuse the system," Teske said. "There is opportunity now with direct sales, but the weak spot is the local locker plants and the waiting list."

With the disruption in the supply chain with regards to meat products and empty store shelves,

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many producers like Teske found a ready market in direct-to-consumer sales.

According to Gawron, a lot of the work for Cultivate KC is done by small, specialty crop farmers in urban and peri-urban areas. For many of these farmers, the best market has been restaurants in the cities. However, with those closing, that market vanished overnight.

As Gawron states, "Those producers that were able to quickly adapt to technology, getting online sales, beefing up their direct-to-market footprint and their online footprint were able to increase sales." Panelists' agreed farmers who sell direct-to-consumers have a new opportunity to ensure the economic sustainability of their farms. Farms that adapt to this shift will provide sustainability for their farms and blaze new trails for local and regional food systems that, as McClish says, "Farmers, families and food can create unity."

Rural Revitalization

At one time in our nation's past, more than 98 percent of the population were connected to agriculture and were considered rural. However, those numbers are now reversed as only two percent of the population run the family farms in America. Surprisingly, 97 percent of farms in America are still family owned.

This divide between rural and urban is further illuminated in the population shift as now more than 80 percent of our citizens live in urban areas and less than 20 per cent live in rural areas.

Sarah Green, Rural Kansas Advocate led the panel featuring; Lt. Gov. Lynn Rogers, Wichita, KS, Andi Dale, of Dale Family Farms, Protection, Kendall Carswell, Fort Hays State University, Matt O'Malley, Livewell of Crawford County, and Ben Whiteside, Butler Rural Electric, El Dorado.

Matt O'Malley knows that it is important that food stays in the small communities. As grocery stores close and are being replaced by gas stations and dollar stores, it is important to experiment with new things. "We might try ten new things and fail at nine, but we've been successful at one thing, so we build on that," he said.

For many in rural areas and the small cities which once served as a thriving hub for a community, window shopping on Main Street is replaced with impersonal plywood coverings and No Trespassing signs. Food deserts are created as grocery store owner's close up shop, restaurants replace billboards of daily specials with

For Sale signs by the local realtor. When those two businesses leave a small town, it's like the last box car full of community life trundles slowly down the track into the sunset taking hope along with it.

However, as Lt. Rogers pointed out, "When rural Kansas succeeds, urban succeeds," Rogers said. "A one percent increase in income for rural Kansas helps urban income increase by a half of one percent. It's important to remind urban neighbors that their success is dependent on their rural neighbors."

Ben Whiteside believes there is not only a question of, "how do we keep people in rural areas, but how do we attract them there?" There are several people who would love to build in rural areas, but they have internet-based businesses so they can't move their for lack of broadband. Broadband is the rural electrification of our

***When rural Kansas succeeds,
urban succeeds.***

Lt. Governor Lynn Rogers

generations.

Although that urban/rural divide has slowly increased, there is a shift now of a younger generation wanting to either return to, or start afresh, living in rural America. Weary of urban dwelling, this

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younger population brings along their tech savvy skills plus a new way of looking at agriculture. Even the younger generations of farm families have an entrepreneurial attitude of approaching economic sustainability.

Lt. Gov. Rogers shared there are three big things for any community to survive; good paying jobs, the ability to raise a family and quality of life issues. Focusing on these three bring people together for the common good. One of the challenges in community is that those who have been working on the issues have been working on them a long time and they're tired. Often, they don't want to let go so we need to know how to transition that. We have to make sure the younger generation understands that we are appreciating them and help them.

Climate & Renewable Energy

Prior to this town hall, KRC asked participants, "How is climate change affecting your life or what you do right now?" Woven throughout the answers was a concern that people don't take the issue seriously, yet an awareness that true change happens if the issue becomes practical rather than theoretical or political. Kansans, by nature, are practical people who want to understand the practical impact so they can come up with practical solutions. While the messaging of climate change has focused on east and west coastal

areas, or polar regions, there is a need to make it practical in the everyday life of Kansans.

Zack Pistora, an environmental champion, KRC board member and the Legislative Director for the Kansas Chapter Sierra Club, led the panel discussion that tackled these issues. Joining him were; Rachel Myslivy, Climate and Energy Project, Perry, Brian Grimmet, journalist for KMUW, Wichita and Sister Jane Belanger, Heartland Farm in Pawnee Rock.

For Rachel Myslivy, She couldn't talk about climate change 20 years ago without derision, but now there is more open-mindedness and curiosity. "For a long time, it was about ice caps and coastal areas, but no one in Kansas made the connection in a practical sense," she stated. For CEP, they decided to make a connection between climate change and public health.

Sister Jane shared that when the sisters bought the farm, there were some raised eyebrows about doing farming practices differently, but her experience has been there is a sense of solidarity. They raise alpacas, vegetables and other specialty crops in an area known for growing commodities like corn, soy and wheat. While they don't all do it the same way, they deal with the same issues together. They find a connection with local farmers through shared values of taking care of the land and taking care of animals which are the bed-rock issues. Cover-cropping and other practices can be used to find the solution is in the soil and the

plants we grow on it.

Panelists agreed that although there is much work left to do, the nature of Kansans to find practical solutions to practical problems in the context of community ensures that the change already taking place will create a better Kansas for our children and their children.

Farm to School

According to Lindsay Morgan, Farm to School coordinator from USD 497 in Lawrence, students prefer eating the fresh vegetables and fruit over the industrially supplied food products, especially as they learn more about how it's grown both in their schools and on field trips to local farms.

Joining Lindsay on the Farm to School town hall panel was Mark Jirak, Jirak Family Produce in Atchison, David Kirkendall principle at USD 326, a small, rural school district in Logan, and Sondra Davis food service director at USD 350 in St. John. Alicia Ellingsworth of the KC Food Hub led the panel discussions.

The Farm to School initiative is an effort to connect K-12 schools with regional or local farms in order to serve healthy meals using local foods. The 2008 Farm Bill amended the Richard B. Russell School Lunch act to direct that the Secretary of Agriculture encourage institutions operating Child Nutrition Programs to purchase unprocessed locally grown and locally

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raised agricultural products.

However, town hall panelists shared one size does not fit all so it's important that schools who want to do this find champions within their schools to help it succeed. They can help build the relationships between farmers and communities and schools together. It's also important that the school's administration sees the real value.

David Kirkendall, Principal for USDA 326 shared that in addition to receiving beef donations from local ranchers 80 percent of the student body is tied to agriculture. They often end up taking a sports team down to a local farm to help out on a Saturday covering exposed grain crops with tarps. Their FFA has a raised bed gardening program that engages everyone down to the preschool level. This has not only engaged all the students, but effectively cut down on destruction and vandalism since there is ownership for everyone.

From a production standpoint, Mark Jirak shared that the virtue of this model is that sales of produce to schools happens at the same time of the year that sales at farmer's markets draw to a close. To adjust to that, Mark has to be careful to plant in such a manner that his produce is ready for that short window of time - 30 to 40 days - from August through September.

In working with schools, he's found that the biggest challenge is logistics, but one that is easily remedied with good communication. This collaboration has

helped both he and the school experiment on best practices. One real value to the schools is a reduction in waste since they can order specifically the quantities they want rather than having to order it to the nearest case size, then throw the unused part away.

While there is great success with a few Farm to School programs, the opportunities for more schools to engage with local farmers is exciting. Those schools, communities and farmers that have navigated this relationship have found that much more than nutritious food is being introduced. In addition, there is a whole new framework for them to benefit their community both with connections and commerce.

Full summaries of each town hall and pre-town hall farm tours can be found online at: <https://kansasrural-center.org/community-food-solutions-civic-agriculture-for-civic-health/>.

The town halls are part of KRC's Integrated Voter Engagement project, funded by the Kansas Health Foundation and Farm to School project, funded by USDA. The projects aim to improve economic, community, environmental, and human health in Kansas by strengthening civic engagement and public policy support that better incorporates Kansas farms and communities into the state's healthy food supply chain.

Rick McNary is the founder of [Shop Kansas Farms](#).

It's Policy Watch Time! (Almost)



The Kansas Legislative Session will soon be upon us! Don't miss a minute! Follow KRC's Legislative and Policy Watch Weekly E-Update, written by Paul Johnson and edited by former KRC Executive Director, Mary Fund. [To support our work in bringing Kansans the latest legislative news and analysis, please contribute to KRC today.](#) If you do not already receive e-mails from KRC and would like to receive Policy Watch in your Inbox, please contact info@kansasrural-center.org.

Building Farm to School Connections and Capacity with Farmers and Communities Through Education and Outreach

This past summer, KRC was one of 159 schools and organizations across the country awarded a USDA farm to school grant to plan, implement, or provide training on farm to school activities. Along with KRC, two other grants were awarded in Kansas including the Kansas City Food Hub and the KS Department of Education.

The increasing desire to source local food in school meals has created a need for increased education and training opportunities for producers interested in supplying schools with fresh produce and meat. Natalie Fullerton, Assistant Director at KRC states, "A full systems approach is needed for farm to school to succeed therefore educating not only farmers and school personnel but the community at large is critical."

USDA provided a universal objective for all grantees to meet for grant funding; improve access to local foods in eligible schools by implementing or expanding a comprehensive farm or school program that includes local procurement and agricultural education efforts.

The Kansas Rural Center and its farm to school partners, through workshops, community gatherings, and storytelling, will meet this objective by providing educational programs and training that strengthens: 1.) Farmers knowledge of how to produce food safely for schools and the market opportunities, and how to work with

school food programs through trainings; 2.) Community involvement and understanding of farm to school programs and specific needs or opportunities through town halls and success stories; and 3.) Youth understanding of where and how food is grown through farm visits and increased access to local food in school meal programs.

This past October, Farm to School month, KRC hosted a statewide virtual Farm to school Town hall to kick off the project. The town hall invited community leaders and schools to tune in and learn from successful farm to school programs around the state. Fellow farm to school partner and grantee, Alicia Ellingsworth with the KC Food Hub lead a panel that included Mark Jirak, Jirak Family produce, David Kirkendall, USD 326, Lindsay Morgan, USD 497, and Sondra Davis, USD 350.

Panelists shared that while there is great success with a few Farm to School programs, the opportunities for more schools to engage with local farmers is exciting. However, the challenge is that there is no one-size-fits-all and merging the public and private sectors requires navigation since both groups function quite differently. Those schools, communities and farmers that have navigated this relationship have found that much more than nutritious food is being introduced. In addition, there is a whole new framework for them to benefit

their community both with connections and commerce. A Full summary of the town hall can be found online at: https://kansasruralcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Kansas-Rural-Center-Town-Hall-Farm-to-School-Final_KRC.pdf.

Over the next year, KRC will focus on providing training from producers and education for communities. This fall, KRC staff participated in a pilot program evaluating curriculum called Brining the Farm to School. Developed by the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) and National Farm to School Network (NFSN), the curriculum is designed to train farmers on important aspects of growing and working with schools. The program will bring together a state and regional team of leaders in the spring and summer of 2021 to be trained on using the curriculum. KRC will participate and use the curriculum in future farm to school producer training.

Throughout the year KRC will highlight successful farm to school programs and feature farms working with schools to elevate what can be done in Kansas. Fullerton says, "It's important to not only focus on the practical hands on aspects of this project but to also acknowledge and celebrate the successes being built and working along the way."

Kaitlin Stanley will lead this project.

FOR KRC'S FARM & FOOD CONFERENCE SERIES 2021



FEEDING NEIGHBORS
FORGING COMMUNITY
GROWING TOGETHER

February 2021 – Pollinator Summit

**May 2021 – Local Foods and Food
Systems Resilience; Farm to School**

**July/August 2021 – Soil Health to
Human Health**

**November 2021 - We are hoping that
perhaps we will be able to meet in person
again next November. Stay tuned!!**

As with so many things in life recently, our annual in-person farm and food conference could not go on as planned. We have been working hard to figure out how best to bring you the information and education and connection that our conference traditionally offers in this new reality we find ourselves living in.

We have landed on the notion of hosting **a series of mini-conferences online throughout the year**. We feel this will allow us to provide high-quality content on a wide range of topics while limiting health risks and screen-time burnout.

This format will allow us to delve deeper into a number of topics and to spread our connection to you over more occasions. We are hopeful that an in-person get together could become an option during the year and are leaving space open for that eventuality.

We will be focusing in on pollinators in February, local food systems resilience and farm to school in May, the connection between soil health and human health in August (including a focus on mycorrhizal fungi), and are leaving November open to see how the year unfolds.

Our conference series will include a SARE track, along with inspiring keynote presentations and breakout sessions to further your knowledge of and enthusiasm for sustainable agriculture and robust local and regional food systems.

KRC to Participate in UAIP Implementation Grant Project

This past summer the Kansas Rural Center assisted Common Ground Producers and Growers (Wichita) with their application for the Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (UAIP) grant from the USDA, which was selected for funding!

Common Ground was chosen as one of only seven organizations across the United States to be awarded money for Implementation Projects under this grant, and KRC is very proud to be involved!

The grant will work towards facilitating the develop-

ment of entrepreneurial projects such as job training, use of farm equipment and land, mentoring, and other business development assistance to new and beginning farmers. Other objectives include increasing food production and access as well as expanding community gardens and/or non-profit farms in the Wichita area.

KRC staff will be assisting Common Ground Producers and Growers in documenting and evaluating their program and its successes.

KRC Receives Soil Health Grant

This fall, the Kansas Rural Center received a grant focused on state soil health policy from the National Healthy Soils Policy Network (NHSPN), of which KRC was a founding member. This \$5000 grant will provide for staff time to create a survey of Kansas farmers regarding their attitudes on soil health practices and how possible government intervention could help/hinder their adoption of new practices.

Farmers will receive and fill out the survey soon, and the results will be provided to Kansas lawmakers to help inform their knowledge of what is most helpful to farmers for future policy decisions.

Up to ten farmers who participate in the survey will meet with lawmakers in several video meetings before and during this legislative session to discuss incentives and programs directly with legislators.

We look forward to seeing what new information and connections this grant can help us develop!

For more information, contact Ryan Goertzen-Regier at ryangr@kansasruralcenter.org.



Joanna Will, back row fourth from the right, represented KRC in Seattle in 2019 at the initial gathering of soil health partners which led to the formation of the NSHPN.

CHANGES TO RURAL PAPERS

We hope you like our new look this issue!

2020 has sure been an unusual and challenging year for everyone, full of adapting to new circumstances, and it has been no different at KRC. From the way we work, to what we are working on, to new staff and direction, it has been an extraordinarily busy year at KRC. We have been slow to get this issue of Rural Papers out, but are hoping it is worth the wait.

With the aim of being better able to communicate more quickly and efficiently in 2021, we are shifting a slightly new paradigm for Rural Papers. We will be transitioning to shorter, more frequent, digital issues of Rural Papers.

In order to help conserve precious resources, we will be scaling back the length of the paper version of Rural Papers and will be updating our mailing list. Paper copies will be mailed only to our donors, unless we receive a request otherwise.

Thank you for your continued support of KRC! Here's to 2021!!

Grazing Calls Have New Call-In Number

KRC and the Kansas Grazing Lands Coalition (KGLC) has finalized the transfer of the monthly grazing call to KGLC. The calls are still on the second Monday of each month, from 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm, but the newcall in number is:

1-712-775-7031

Code : 770024

For more information, please contact Barry Barber, facilitator, at turkeyfootbeef@turkeyfoot-ranch.com or Barth Crouch at 785-452-0780 or barth.crouch@gmail.com.

DONATE TODAY

I hope you might give me a moment of your time to talk about fundraising. As you may know, KRC has a fund drive two times a year. We have many generous donors and I cannot say thank you enough. This year, for our spring drive we created a new donor classification system based on cover crops, a healthy sustainable solution to protecting vital topsoil. Donors were very generous, especially for the fact that we're living in a year of such uncertainty.

This fall we have continued to request your support using the same cover crop theme for gift size classification. I love the idea of someone being really proud to be a "Sunflower Donor" at KRC. That level of commitment to an organization is incredible and valuable beyond its dollar amount. We will build upon that theme with a reminder of yearend giving for those who wish to save their donations for the end of the calendar year.

But we can't all give at the sunflower level. So, we would like to remind you of a couple of other helpful ways to consider giving to KRC. The first makes annual giving easy, and you may be practicing this type of giving elsewhere as I do. I'm talking about monthly donations. Just think about the idea of giving \$20 a month to KRC. Over the year that amounts to \$240 and maybe more than you've given previously or are able to give in one lump sum. If you donate to public radio, for example, monthly giving is something they have been successful with for years. I've seen other donors who want to be part of a thousand-dollar gift society at a particular organization and round that out to a gift each month of \$84. So think about it in terms of what might be easiest for you and if you think that monthly donating might be a little bit easier on your pocketbook, we would love to build a group of monthly donors.

My second question for your consideration is, have you made plans for donating in your will? Estate planning is something most of us think about at one time or another. I love the idea of bequest because it's a way for me to keep on giving after my need for estate income is gone.

If you have a will or a trust or plans to make one soon, why not ask your attorney about the possibility of donating in a bequest? There are also other ways to create money for the future gift that you may want to consider — such as purchasing a life insurance package that benefits KRC.

None of this is to pressure any of you, but rather to open the conversation about the variety of ways we can give to support the work we believe in. With new work next year in policy, soil health, pollinator support, farm to school producer education, beginning farmers and rancher training, and continued integrated voter engagement activities, we have all this and soon even more for you to support and invest in for the health of our land, farmers, and food systems.

~Connie

Please donate today - <https://kansasruralcenter.org/donate/>.



Fullerton Says Farewell

As I reflect on the past ten years, I couldn't be more thankful for the vast opportunities KRC has provided me to help make a difference on our farm and food system in Kansas. From spending weekends at farmers markets to presenting KRC's work at conferences, I've been able to meet and build relationships with incredible people and organizations that have made a lasting impact on my life and career. At the end of December, I will resign from KRC as a much stronger leader and advocate for the values we fight for within this organization and network.



Fresh out of college and a new resident in Kansas, I joined KRC in 2011 with ambitions and ideas to help shape local food systems. I took on a role coordinating the "Our Local Food – South Central" and a high tunnel project. Soon I would be pushing myself outside of my comfort zone taking on KRC's Feeding Kansas and Integrated Voter Engagement projects. There will always be hard work to do, but looking back now, I can easily see the needle Kansans have moved to help strengthen support for local farms and food.

We are in the midst of a really significant moment in history and it will no doubt continue to present challenges and curve balls for the organization and those it serves. However, I have great confidence in the importance of KRC's mission to help Kansans get through these trying times. I look forward to supporting all of the existing and new leadership that take KRC into the future.

As I turn the page to the next chapter of my career, I thank you for the ways you have helped educate and inspire me. But most importantly, a colossal thank you for the work that you do to support KRC, your community, and Kansas.

~Natalie

Will Named State Coordinator for Midwest Healthy Ag Project

Joanna Will has been hired as the Kansas State Coordinator for the Midwest Healthy Ag Project.

The project, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, aims to help coalesce on-going independent efforts in regenerative agriculture across 12 states in the Midwest into a regional program that will help address the interlocking issues of

climate, human health and health equity.

Joanna's role will be to help coordinate research in two Kansas counties to determine the extent and capacity of regenerative agriculture practices. She will be working through and with KRC on the project. For more information, visit [-https://midwesthealthyag.org/](https://midwesthealthyag.org/).



KRC Welcomes New Staff

Ryan Goertzen-Regier



Ryan Goertzen-Regier joined the Kansas Rural Center staff in July as our new Program and Administrative Manager. Ryan grew up on a row crop and animal farm in Marion County and continues to work with his family there part time. He gained a B.S. in Social Work and a certificate in Conflict Management from Bethel College, then spent several years working with refugee resettlement in South Dakota before returning to Kansas. Ryan is a beekeeper and owns Sugargrove Apiaries, LLC with a friend and hopes to produce additional agricultural products in the future. Currently serving as the Vice President of the Kansas Farmers Union, Ryan is also the Treasurer of the Central Kansas Young Farmers Coalition and holds a seat on the Harvey County Food and Farm council. Ryan and his wife Miriam recently completed the National Farmers Union's Beginning Farmer Institute, and they reside in the Newton area where Miriam is a farmer and cheesemaker. His work at KRC involves many administrative functions, grant research and writing, and program management in KRC's Integrated Voter Engagement program as well as a grant KRC received for promoting soil health policy in Kansas.

Kaitlin Stanley



Kaitlin was raised in the mountains and plains of Colorado where she developed a deep love of her natural surroundings. She attended Colorado State University and studied natural resources and anthropology. After completing her undergraduate studies, Kaitlin helped operate Highchair Farms, a small farm that prioritized making nutritious baby food accessible and economically viable. She worked with local producers to launch a small meat collective that offered workshops and connected farmers to their community. Kaitlin moved to Kansas in 2016 to attend graduate school at the University of Kansas where she continued her studies in anthropology and focused on using an archaeological lens to view how changes in climate impact human food systems. She is passionate about working with youth to find creative solutions for communicating science-based information and has had the opportunity to do so from the Great Plains to the Arctic Tundra. In East Lawrence, Kaitlin built and coordinates an interactive native plant learning garden that also provides community members with access to free produce from vegetable beds. She will be bringing all of these experiences to KRC to help coordinate our Farm to School programs and our Integrated Voter Engagement project.



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