

FOCUS

ON

Disaster Education

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service • Oklahoma State University
Spring 2012



Dear Friends of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service:

Our Focus in this issue is on Disaster Education and we feature the work lead by our Housing & Consumer Extension Specialist, Dr. Gina Peek.

We invest in programs like the one described, because as a member of the national Extension Disaster Education Network, we seek to educate Oklahomans on the best practices they can adopt to prevent and reduce the risks that could harm their health, well-being and safety in their homes and communities. This is a goal that we are actively pursuing to save lives, assets and economic activity.

Extension is in every county in the state, thanks to our cooperative funding agreement with Federal, State and County governments. As such we are a resource people can trust given our research-based educational programming. When it comes to emergency preparedness and times of disaster, our offices are flooded (no pun intended) with request for information and assistance on what to do.

Extension thus offers a variety of ways for people to learn how to be prepared and we use research to teach evidence-based practices people can trust. Therefore, Dr. Peek relates how her research has informed Extension on how to help families on a limited budget be ready for disaster. We are proud of these efforts and are following the results to ensure our programs are the most effective in the state and the nation.

On behalf of the Family and Consumer Sciences Extension faculty and educators around the state, we thank you for your continued support of our educational efforts to helps Oklahomans take an active role in ensuring a better quality of life for their families and the state.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Jorge Atilas'.

Jorge Atilas
Associate Dean
Extension and Engagement, Human Sciences

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• **Disaster Education**

PROBLEM:

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Oklahoma currently ranks third in the nation for the number of disaster declarations. As of May 2012, Oklahoma has experienced 70 federal major disaster declarations. Oklahoma has faced disasters including but not limited to, tornadoes, severe thunder, ice storms, straight-line winds, flooding, and wildfires. It is imperative that Oklahomans are prepared for weather emergencies including winter weather and tornadic storms. Preparing oneself for emergencies can alleviate fear, improve comfort, and reduce risk of injury.

RESPONSE:

Disaster education is important to Oklahomans. Oklahoma Cooperative Extension is helping families before, during, and after disasters. As part of an ongoing process, program advisory committees were asked to rank issues important to them locally. Of five possible outcomes related to safety, respondents ranked “increasing the number of Oklahomans prepared for emergencies” as most important.

OCES is in the process of piloting the new Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) Family Preparedness curriculum in eight counties across the state. Family and Consumer Sciences educators were encouraged to partner with the Agriculture counterpart to conduct focus groups. The educators work together to deliver quality programming in their counties. The focus groups have greatly helped educators make connections with other local information and service providers.



District	County	2010 population	Persons below poverty level, percent, 2006-2010	OCES educators	Contact info
NW	Noble	11,561	13.5%	Lindsey Miner Chad Webb	lindsey.miner@okstate.edu chad.webb@okstate.edu
NW	Logan	41,848	15.0%	Cathy James	cathy.james@okstate.edu
NE	Ottawa	31,848	18.2%	Kathy Enyart Jeff Parmley	kathy.enyart@okstate.edu jeff.parmley@okstate.edu
NE	Lincoln	34,273	14.8%	Jessica Riggin Cody Linker	jessica.riggin@okstate.edu cody.linker@okstate.edu
SW	Cleveland	255,755	12.1%	Brenda Hill Heath Herje	brenda.hill@okstate.edu heath.herje@okstate.edu
SW	Caddo	29,600	20.9%	Ranel Lasley David Nowlin	r.lasley@okstate.edu david.nowlin@okstate.edu
SE	Choctaw	15,205	24.6%	Tracey Watts Marty Montague	tracey.watts@okstate.edu marty.montague@okstate.edu
SE	Atoka	14,182	22.5%	Lynne Beam Harold Stephens	lynne.beam@okstate.edu harold.stephens@okstate.edu

*Population and poverty statistics taken from 2010 Census Data

EMERGING IMPACTS:

Specifically, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (OCES) will be measuring increases in the number of Oklahomans prepared for emergencies. As of May 2012, three focus groups have been conducted. Attendees have included local law enforcement and fire protection, social services providers, and commissioners, to name a few. The themes that have emerged as to family preparedness include:

- Families are not adequately prepared in their counties. Some of the barriers include:

- **Money:** Families are already facing financial uncertainty. Spending money on disaster supplies is just not a priority
- **Motivation:** the idea that “this won’t happen to me” prevents families from getting ready for disaster. They might consider disaster readiness only for tornadoes
- **Time:** families are already burdened with so many activities; disaster preparedness is an additional task to add to an already full list

As a result ...

OCES county educators will implement novel techniques, beginning with no-cost actions.

1. Shop in your own home

For example, nearly a quarter of Choctaw county’s population lives below the poverty line. This population would be unlikely to divert funds towards disaster preparedness. Instead of purchasing new supplies dedicated to disaster, we will encourage consumers to shop in their own homes for supplies. It is likely that consumers already have the bulk of recommended items on hand. We have also discussed a shop in your own home drive, where community groups search their homes for materials to donate. These materials would be organized into disaster kits.

2. Identify your safe place

Consumers are told to identify a safe place in or near their homes. But do they understand why? Having a face to face conversation with consumers will help them understand why certain places in or near the home are better for sheltering in place. Additionally, the current trend among emergency professionals is to encourage consumers to find their safe place, get to it before emergency conditions arrive, and stay until the danger has passed. Professionals have noted during focus groups that consumers vacating their safe place to go to another are likely to suffer injury or death. Many communities are discouraging the use of public shelters, and are instead encouraging sheltering in place.

Oklahomans are independent. Instead of instructing consumers, we will focus on the concept of self-reliance, a concept that Oklahomans value. Hopefully, appealing to them in this context will warrant behavior change that reduces risk due to disaster.



Photo 1: Lincoln County Family and Consumer Sciences educator Jessica Riggins. Jessica “shopped in her own home” to begin building her personal disaster kit.



Photo 2: Marty Montague (OCES Ag Educator Choctaw County) with purchased EDEN supplies.



Photo 3: Chad Webb and Lindsey Miner (OCES Ag and FCS Educators Noble County) with purchased EDEN supplies.



Photo 4: Ranel Lasley (OCES FCS Educator Caddo County) with purchased EDEN supplies.



Photo 5: Lynne Beam and Harold Stephens (OCES FCS and Ag Educators Atoka County) with purchased EDEN supplies.

FOCUS is a publication designed to direct attention to innovative Cooperative Extension Family and Consumer Sciences programs and to share program philosophy and updates of new and changing program directions. Your comments and suggestions for future issues are welcomed and appreciated. Please send all correspondence to FOCUS, Family and Consumer Sciences Cooperative Extension, 135 Human Sciences, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078. FOCUS is published three times yearly by the Family and Consumer Sciences Cooperative Extension program.

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For more information about this and other Family and Consumer Sciences programs, visit our website at: <http://fcs.okstate.edu>

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