

## **Twin Creeks District Extension Council 2020 Appreciation Award**

The Extension Council Appreciation Award is presented to an individual, couple or organization that has given a considerable amount of extra effort in support of the Extension Council education programs. In many cases, their hard work and dedication have lightened the load for the Extension Service personnel, in addition to making the Extension Council's efforts more effective. The success of Extension programs depends on the unselfish energy of such people who have spent considerable time supporting our endeavors for no monetary rewards. Their service and support are greatly appreciated.

The 2020 Twin Creeks District Extension Council Appreciation Award was presented to Bev Stafford of Hill City at the monthly Extension Council meeting held on January 20th.

Bev Stafford says that she can date her tenure in extension clear back to being a 4-H member in Lincoln County, Colorado for ten years. "I have roots in extension that go back to me as a seven-year-old 4-Her," says Bev. As an active participant in the sewing and foods project areas, she recognizes her membership in 4-H as being an integral part of her growing-up years and finding her passions, which she would later put to work in future careers and in raising her family.

Upon graduating high school, Bev attended Colorado State University to pursue a degree in Home Economics Education. Once obtaining her degree, she secured her first job in Hill City, KS as a teacher. After a period of time staying home with her children, Bev later began working as the Food Service Director for the USD 281 School District. Eventually, she went on to work for the Kansas State Department of Education to serve as the Child Nutrition Consultant for the Northwest Region, covering 43 school districts.

Through her time serving as Child Nutrition Consultant, Bev had the opportunity to experience several community gardens across the northwestern part of our state. She recognized that although each of these gardens worked and looked differently, they served a great purpose in the community. It was at this time that Bev recognized the need for such a project in the Graham County community.

Bev began working with the Graham County Extension Agent at the time, Tressie Mitzner. Together they went to researching possible locations, methods that would fit best in Hill City and even went to tour one of the community gardens that stood out to Bev the most, Larned, KS. The Graham County Community Garden would later be mirrored after the Pawnee County project.

After retiring from her position with KSDE, Bev was looking for a way to provide something that would leave a lasting impression on the community. She mentioned always finding herself reflecting on a saying her father used to say... "Always leave things better than you found it."

Bev has been an integral part in the success of the Graham County Community Garden. On just about any summer day, she can be found either weeding, watering or harvesting at the garden located directly east of the Graham County Elementary School. Bev is also a key part of incorporating local youth into the vital parts of the garden.

"It is a priority of ours to get the kids to the garden as much as possible, we've seen the benefit of the hands-on learning opportunity that the garden offers," says Jenilee Godsey, Twin Creeks District Youth Agriculture Agent. Bev added, "A project like the Community Garden teaches you much! Taking the Master Gardener class was only a starting point. I've learned to rely heavily on advice from many great gardeners in our area who, through their own experiences have been able to give good advice and good volunteer help. Many have benefitted! That's a community!"

Together she and her husband, Warren, have three grown children and two grandchildren. Warren is also retired, after 37 years of teaching music. Throughout her adult life, Bev has served many roles in both Graham County and Twin Creeks District Extension. Becoming a Graham County Extension Executive Board member in 1980, she served as a member for five years. Additionally, she served as a member of the Family and Consumer Sciences Program Development Committee (PDC) for approximately 12 years – guiding our extension agents in programming decisions appropriate for the needs of Graham County. She also educated local 4-Her's while serving as a project leader in the foods, cake decorating and sewing projects.

Bev is a true champion for Extension and 4-H and has been one of our biggest promoters for a long time. She was an original member of the Graham County Girls EHU (Extension Homemakers Unit). She says she can recall several extension programs that she attended throughout the years. "I can remember a program I attended at the Hill City park where I learned how to use a gas grill! It wasn't long after that that we went out and purchased our first grill," says Bev.

"You just cannot underestimate the power of extension," says Bev. "I can attribute many of the life lessons my children and I learned to extension, specifically 4-H."

The Twin Creeks District Extension Council is honored to recognize Bev Stafford for her support of and contribution to extension. We appreciate and value her dedication and support of the work we do in here in the Twin Creeks District.

