

## **For Immediate Release:**

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The mission of K-State Research and Extension Family and Consumer Sciences is to link education with life experiences to help people improve their lives, their families and their communities. Family and Consumer Sciences professionals support essential life skills including Community Development, Healthy Lifestyle Choices, Leadership & Volunteer Development, Relationship Development and Resource Management.

Kylie Ludwig  
Wildcat District Extension Agent  
Labette County office



## **Back To School Shopping**

With fall just around the corner, school supply lists are starting to appear in stores among the rows of bright colored folders, notebooks, pens and pencils.

According to the National Retail Federation, the average family plans to spend around \$630 this fall. School supplies account for about \$100 of this budget, with additional purchases including clothing, shoes and small electronics.

Before you head out to the stores or get online, a little time spent planning can help to stretch the budget.

–First, go through school supplies and clothes from last year and list all of the items and clothes that you already have on hand. Does your child really need a new backpack, or a new lunchbox? Do the jeans from last year still fit?

–Also consider fees paid directly to the school, such as book rentals, band instrument rental or athletic fees, and required immunizations, and list these fixed costs in the “must have” category. Paying for lunch can also be surprisingly costly. Free and reduced-price school lunch programs through your school district can ease the pressure on the budget for eligible families.

–Next, figure out which items your child needs at the start of school and which items can wait a month or two. Maybe one or two pairs of new pants will make do for the start of school, especially if your child is going through a growth spurt. Waiting to buy some

items until later fall and pre-season sales allows time for the child to grow and a chance to spread out spending.

–Then use your child’s school supply list, your school fees must-have list, and your list of needed clothes to come up with a total budget amount for each child in school.

–Finally, compare your budgeted amount with your monthly expenses. Are there places you can cut back on other bills to find back-to-school funds? What resources does your community have to help stretch your dollar? School districts frequently have information on school supply donations and clothing exchanges sponsored by local service organizations.

For additional information, contact the Wildcat Extension District, Crawford County, 620-724-8233, Labette County, 620-784-5337, Montgomery County, 620-331-2690, Pittsburg Office, Expanded Food and Nutrition Education (EFNEP), 620-232-1930.

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