

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Lessons Learned From Leadership During Uncertain Times**

The Covid-19 pandemic has been testing everyone, from all levels of government, private business and public service, in unexpected and ever-changing ways. The one constant is that we're all in this together – learning to be flexible, finding better ways to communicate and coming to terms with new ways of working and living in an uncertain world.

During the past month, I've participated in discussions with health care providers, fair board leaders, business owners, university officials, county commissioners, teachers, parents and volunteers. Everyone is searching for a clear path to “normal” and for consistent guidelines for making the right decisions to keep our families safe and supported.

The first lesson learned from these conversations is the importance of humility. The Kansas Leadership Center reminded me this month that leadership is an activity, not a position. During a state-wide call, I heard several people discuss not knowing the correct path forward during this pandemic and feeling an instinct to disengage during uncertainty. Traditionally, changing your mind or admitting that you don't know the answer can be translated as a weakness. But these are unprecedented times. Rather than stay silent until we can be confident, we have a responsibility to create a process that informs everyone on how decisions are made, what information is being considered, and why we may need to change our course if new facts emerge.

The second lesson learned is to embrace the traditional and the new. When Kansas was first placed into quarantine, many of us increased our use of technology to continue work and connection. This presented some terrific opportunities that I hope continue such as telemedicine, online sales and webinar education opportunities. But, this emphasis on technology also left out segments of our population that cannot or do not participate in these channels. When the Wildcat District engaged citizens from Labette and Montgomery counties in a community conversation, we learned of the need to continue printed materials, phone calls, and explore options like a call-in hotline to share important information.

The third lesson I'll share is the importance of positive engagement. We've learned to adapt as things change from week to week and sometimes day to day. Just as we may struggle to plan a family vacation during this pandemic, our civic and business leaders are struggling to determine the best path for staying open and safely offering community celebrations like the county fair. The best way forward is to keep the communication channels open, check the most recent information before making any decisions, and attempt to remain positive and flexible as plans and decisions may change.

The K-State Research and Extension program prides itself in offering trusted information and personal training to help your family, farm and community thrive. If you have any questions about our services, engaging leaders in your community or determining how to best communicate your message to stakeholders, please give me a call at 785-331-5378 or email francesgraves@ksu.edu

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