Battle shutdown boredom with Extension activities

It is an uncertain time with many of us staying at home during the coronavirus pandemic. We cannot even watch our favorite spring sport with all the events postponed or canceled. I was disappointed that the opening day for baseball did not occur on March 26.

Ohio State University Extension is disappointed that we are unable to have in-person agricultural meetings and visits with producers and gardeners. We know that the planting season will not wait for offices to open again and for the end of the coronavirus pandemic.

We also know that many were disappointed that NCAA March Madness was canceled this year. To fill this void, Ohio State University Extension will be offering Agriculture and Natural Resources Madness: A Tournament of Education — a virtual program for farmers, consumers and anyone interested in agriculture and natural resources.

Agriculture and Natural Resources Madness: A Tournament of Education will include 64 educational events broken into daily brackets. Each day, three different virtual educational sessions will be held at 9 a.m., noon, and 3 p.m. The education tournament is free of charge and will likely continue until mid-May.

Ohio State University Extension is offering these useful and timely sessions across the state during Gov. Mike DeWine’s stay-at-home order. Even though the programs are loosely tied to March Madness, it’s not a competition, and people can join in at any time for as many or as few sessions as they desire.

The Tournament of Education started last week, but nothing is missed since all programs will be recorded. So, if an individual is unable to watch a topic that day, they can watch it at another day or time at their convenience.

Tournament “ brackets” will change daily. Topics will cover a variety of subjects and be presented in virtual platforms. When possible, question-and-answer opportunities will be included.

Topics to be covered this week include hemp production, plasticulture, selling local foods, farm income tax, forage production and farm safety. To find complete details on the tournament’s educational opportunities and other event and webinar links, visit go.osu.edu/agmadness.

The Agriculture and Natural Resources online tournament is just one example of how Ohio State University Extension is employing its resources during this challenging time to remain engaged with Ohioans.

Ohio State University Extension also wants to make sure information gets to individuals feeling stressed during the stay-at-home order. The Ag Crisis website was created last year for those dealing with the tough growing season, but it has been updated to include a toolbox of resources related to COVID-19. These can be reached at go.osu.edu/AgCrisis.

Ohio State University Extension has implemented a teleworking plan for county Extension staff to be available to the community while Extension offices are closed during the coronavirus pandemic. The plan mirrors Ohio State University’s decision to require all employees who can do so to work from home.

Clients, stakeholders and other community members can continue to connect with any Ohio State University Extension staff member via phone or email as usual. To contact your local Extension office, visit extension.osu.edu/lao for office phone numbers and a direct link to each office’s website and staff directory. You may have to leave a voicemail, but a staff member will respond as soon as possible.

Ohio State University Extension is the outreach arm of Ohio State’s College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (CFAES), and works to share knowledge with every county in Ohio. Its four major program areas are agriculture and natural resources, family and consumer sciences, 4-H youth development and community development.

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