

NewsWatch

# A sample of Kansas

By P.J. GRIEKSPoor

**M**ORE than 5,000 people converged in Concordia on May 2 and 3 for the Kansas Sampler Festival, an annual event that allows communities across Kansas to show what they have to offer.

This year's event focused on agritourism. More than 135 communities brought exhibits that promoted Kansas day trips, entertainment, food, products and historical performances.

The festival celebrated its 20th anniversary this year.

Kansas Sampler Foundation director Marci Penner says one of the most rewarding aspects of the festival is the chance to interact with community exhibitors, especially first-timers.

"There is a vitality to the event, a bond among those that participate," Penner says. "We'd love every city in Kansas to be part of the showcase."

Concordia was the smallest city so far to host the event and was the first community located north of I-70 to be a host city. Every motel room in the city was full for festival weekend, and area attractions including the National Orphan Train museum, Brown Grand Theatre and Nazareth Motherhouse saw excellent traffic as shuttles brought visitors from the festival to their locations.

The Kansas Sampler Festival will move to Leavenworth County for the 2010 and 2011 events.



**COWBOY FARE:** Jeff Sheets, director of the Heritage Center Museum in Abilene, cooks a batch of chili over an open fire.



**TOUGH QUIZ:** Kansas Sampler Foundation director Marci Penner tries to stump her audience with Kansas trivia questions. Winners got tickets for a prize drawing.



**NATURALLY GOOD:** Nancy Volgelsberg-Busch's organic beef hot dogs were a hit. She sells the Bossie's Best hot dogs from her farm near Home.



**TRAIL RIDER:** Retired rancher Bob Larson of Medicine Lodge was at the festival to promote trail riding in the Gypsum Hills.

## Schulz shares K-State vision

By RHONDA MCCURRY

**K**IRK Schulz has a special place in his heart for land-grant universities, and a belief in the role they play in providing top-notch education while supporting agriculture and America's farmers.

He is stepping into history at Kansas State University, the first land-grant university created under the 1862 Morrill Act. He will officially become K-State's 13th president on July 1, succeeding Jon Wefald, who has retired after 23 years.

Schulz says his belief in the land-grant system and the K-State philosophy made it an easy decision to move his family to Manhattan from Mississippi, where he has most recently been vice president for research and economic development at Mississippi State University.

"My wife, Noel, and I have lived in multiple states and came to appreciate the South and the Midwest," he says.

Schulz was born in Virginia and has a bachelor's degree and a doctorate in chemical engineering from Virginia Tech in that state.

Schulz says he realizes K-State has played a big role in agriculture development across Kansas and wants to see this tradition of excellence continue.

"K-State Research and Extension agents are interacting with the farming community on a daily basis. As I look toward the future, I want to make sure we maintain that excellence in agriculture despite challenging budget times. That's the role K-State plays in keeping the ag industry competitive."

Even during the current economic downturn, it is key to remind Kansans how important their own Extension agent is to the economy.

"One of the good things about land grants is that we attract humble students who want to work hard," he says. "On the flip side, we often take on the characteristic of not bragging enough about what we do."

"K-State Research and Extension has been around for 80 years, and people don't realize the program provides assistance you can't get any other way. We have to communicate this to the Legislature, the governor and [Washington] D.C. decision-makers, so they remember how important Research and Extension funding is to the future of Kansas."

## Rolling up sleeves with new K-State head Kirk Schulz

**W**HEN Kirk Schulz becomes K-State's new president, his wife, Noel, will join K-State's faculty as a Paslay professor. Their sons are Timothy, 18, who will be a freshman in computer science at Mississippi State University this fall; and Andrew, 14, a Manhattan High School freshman.

*Your predecessor has had nearly a quarter-century with K-State. How do you fill those shoes yet pave your own path?*

"Every leader has got to respect the people who came

before him or her, and I have the greatest respect for Jon [Wefald]. I count on him as someone who can be a mentor and visit with me when I'm not sure what to do. On the flip side, a leader has to be himself. Different styles or personalities are not always better or worse — just different.

*What is the significance of K-State becoming home to the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility, and how will it benefit the state's agricultural heritage and research infrastructure?*

"Kansas State University

is already known for our expertise in animal health and related issues on a regional and national level. NBAF will allow us to take programs with animal health aspects from a national level to an international level, with the end result that Kansas State University will be the premier research university in this area throughout the world. NBAF will also certainly enhance our status as one of the nation's leading land-grant universities and will be a 'net attractor' for Kansas, where high-technology businesses, research laboratories and other entities who want to

use the expertise will locate in Manhattan and the surrounding area."

*What is the biggest challenge you face as incoming K-State president?*

"After such a long tenure from a president, people will be used to doing things a certain way. There might be a lot of uncertainty; for example, 'Is Kirk going to do things the same?' 'What are his priorities?' etc. For the first year, it'll be important to get to know the KSU community of alumni, donors, students, faculty, staff and people of Kansas."