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Value-Added farm tours to be held for Military Veterans on June 20

With the help of the Farmer-Veteran Coalition, AgrAbility and a grant from USDA Risk Management, Kansas Farmers Union and the Center for Rural Affairs is hosting tours of three farms and the Emporia Farmers Market for Veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts and also active-duty service members who have an interest in value-added agriculture.

"I am glad to see so much interest in this program, and thankful that producers are willing to host us on their farm for the Farmer-Veteran tours," Nick Levendofsky, Kansas Farmers Union Special Projects Coordinator, said.

The tour will begin at the four-generation farm of Harold Brenzikofer, near Emporia, at 9 a.m. on June 20. The Brenzikofers have been selling produce, flowers and eggs to the Emporia Farmers Market for 30 years.

The tour will then move to Shepherd's Valley Farm near Americus. There John Crisp grows fruits, vegetables, herbs, poultry and sheep, and sells his products through a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture).

The next stop will be Gary Jansen's farm, where he makes jams and jellies in addition to growing his own produce.

The tour will end at the Emporia Farmers Market, which starts at 5 p.m. There, Tracy Simmons, manager of the Emporia Farmers Market, will talk about the market and give some tips for selling at a farmer's market. Also, Tracey Graham of "Our Local Food" will discuss direct marketing options for local food.

The tours are free of charge to veterans, and lunch will be provided at no cost. Lunch will be at The New Breck Cafe in Americus. RSVPs are greatly appreciated by June 18. Contact Nick Levendofsky at 785-527-0941 or kfu.nick@gmail.com. Or visit kansasfarmersunion.org for more information.