

The Power of Extension

Robeson County Center

January 30, 2015

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An Inside Glance into Cooperative Extension

The Power of Extension is a summary of the educational programs conducted by North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center, which impact the lives of Robeson County citizens. As an educational leader, the organization works with citizens to determine the most important and urgent issues to the community. When the issues have been identified, the staff utilizes university resources to help address these needs. The Robeson County Center works with clients in four main areas: Agriculture, Community Resource Development (CRD), Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS), and 4-H Youth Development. We hope this newsletter provides more information about the opportunities offered by Cooperative Extension. As Interim Director, it is my goal to make sure that we continue to focus our programs on meeting your needs.

With the arrival of a new Extension Director soon, a new chapter begins in the legacy of the Robeson County Center. I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their support during my tenure as your Interim Extension Director. I consider it an honor to have served in this capacity and look forward to working with Robeson County again should our paths cross.



Dalton B. Dockery
Interim County Extension Director

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Robeson County Cooperative Extension

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Community Resource Development



Summer Extravaganza Promotes Farmers and Educates Public About Local Foods --

Recently, farmers markets across the nation have been gaining popularity. The Robeson County Farmers Market has existed for 35 years and has since experienced a decline in customers. More promotional activities needed to be held at the Farmers Market to increase the amount of customers visiting the market and, in

turn, increase farmers' sales. Cooperative Extension, including the Local Foods Program, Family and Consumer Sciences Program, 4-H Youth Development Program, and Horticultural Program partnered with the Robeson County Farmers Market Association and Robeson County Master Gardeners to host the

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Summer Extravaganza, an event held at the Farmers Market. Local farmers donated 144 pounds of produce, and volunteers and staff helped prepare healthy dishes featuring the local produce. Over 125 patrons visited the Farmers Market and were invited to sample healthy dishes, take home recipe cards, and encouraged to support their local farmers. Evaluation and Results - Seven farmers who sell at the Farmers Market were verbally surveyed one week following the Summer Extravaganza. They were asked to describe the effect of the Summer Extravaganza on their sales in comparison to previous weeks. Overall, 100 percent of the farmers commented that the market was much busier, and everyone agreed that it was mostly due to the Summer Extravaganza. Furthermore, 95 percent of farmers reported an increase in sales in comparison to previous weeks, ranging from 30 to 60 percent. One farmer noted the importance of hosting promotional events, such as this, at the Farmers Market in order to educate customers and commended Cooperative Extension for hosting the event. Cooperative Extension will continue to provide such events at the Farmers Market.

Casey Hancock, Extension Local Foods / Tourism Agent

Agriculture

Beef Cattle Reproduction Series -- In the cattle industry, the number of calves you have directly impacts the potential profit of your operation. Less than 10 percent of the nation's beef cows are bred via artificial insemination (AI) and less than 20 percent of United States beef producers check their animals for pregnancy status (BEEF magazine, August 2011). By becoming more knowledgeable about reproductive processes and practices, producers can learn and decide what works best for them to increase profit on their farm. In an effort to help area cattlemen increase the profitability of their operations, several North Carolina Cooperative Extension livestock agents joined forces to offer a Beef Cattle Reproduction Series. Producers attended classroom sessions as well as a hands-on field day focusing on beef cattle reproduction. There were 63 participants who attended the series. Evaluation and Results - An evaluation was given at the field day and 32 participants completed them. Pretests and posttests were also given during the classroom sessions. The evaluation showed that 100 percent of participants were very satisfied with the relevance of information to their needs and the overall quality of the series; 100 percent of participants learned new ideas on calving and breeding seasons, heifer development, and artificial insemination; 94 percent learned new ideas on the calving process, bull fertility, pregnancy checking, and timed breeding; 17 producers who own 343 cows reported they would shorten their breeding season, which will increase their profit by \$51,450; 3 herders with 31 cows said they would implement AI to improve genetics, which will result in \$2,170 increase in profit; and 19 producers who own 524 cows said they would pregnancy check cows, which will increase profit by \$10,400.



Taylor Chavis, Extension Livestock Agent



Raised Bed Gardening -- In Robeson County, the median household income is \$35,806. Approximately 32 percent of the population lives below the poverty level. Robeson County is considered a Tier 1 county based on economic indicators. According to the North Carolina Health Report, Robeson County ranks 97th out of 100 counties in terms of overall health. Forty-one percent of adult county residents are classified as obese with 39 percent not engaging in moderate physical activity 30 minutes a day five or more days a week. Almost 40 percent

of youth ages 2-4 are either obese or overweight. Robeson's top three leading causes of death are heart disease, cancer, and diabetes, all of which are directly related to low physical activity and poor nutrition. The negative health concerns and a strong national and state local foods movement means there is great

interest and opportunity for county residents to purchase and consume locally produced foods. To address this need, Cooperative Extension partnered with Robeson Community College to present an interactive raised bed gardening workshop to 34 participants. Evaluation and Results - Pre and post survey information was completed by 27 of the 34 participants. Respondent evaluations revealed 96 percent increased knowledge in plant selection and spacing and 93 percent increased knowledge in selecting media soils, season extension, and pest control. Of the respondents, 26 percent already garden in raised beds with 67 percent planning to garden in raised beds in the future.

Mack Johnson, Extension Horticultural Agent



Increased Membership in the Robeson County Area Beekeepers Association -- Many people in the general public are not aware of the importance of honeybees to our nation's food supply. Also, the membership of the Robeson County Area Beekeepers Association has not had a large increase in the past few years due to a lack of visibility. Cooperative Extension conducted a Beekeeping Awareness Seminar. The purpose of the seminar was to make the general public aware of bees and their contributions to agriculture and provide information for persons

interested in becoming beekeepers. Evaluation and Results - Pre and posttest surveys were conducted with members of the general public in attendance. Also, the number of new association members was used to evaluate the success of the seminar. A total of 23 persons attended the seminar. At the end of the seminar, each of the 10 members of the general public in attendance had increased knowledge of bees and the association. Eight of the 10 persons have become new members of the association and five have become new beekeepers. Since January, the Robeson County Area Beekeepers Association has added 11 new members, which is a 34 percent increase. With the increased visibility and the increase in membership, the Robeson County Area Beekeepers Association will continue to be a viable association.

Nelson Brownlee, Extension Area Farm Management Agent

Pesticide Container Recycling Pays Off -- Robeson County boasts over 196,000 acres of harvested cropland across its rural landscape, giving it the top rank in the state. Although farmers are continuing to learn how to reduce the number of pesticide applications in a growing season, producers accumulate numerous amounts of empty pesticide containers each year. Proper disposal of empty pesticide containers became an important issue when the Robeson County Solid Waste Department no longer allowed recyclable plastics to enter the county landfill. Based on this need, Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Solid Waste, and the Ag Container Recycling Council partnered to provide pesticide applicators multiple container recycling collection sites across the county.



Cooperative Extension led the role of educating applicators and Solid Waste employees on how to properly prepare containers for recycling. In the summer of 2013, a certified contractor working with the Ag Container Recycling Council processed empty pesticide containers at five collection sites for a reported total of 4,350 pounds of containers. As a result of this unique partnership, properly rinsed high-density polyethylene (HDPE) pesticide containers are now recycled and used in products such as agricultural drainage tile and fence post. In 2013, Robeson County collected over 4,000 pounds of pesticide containers with no rejections, earning itself the 2013 John L. Smith Pesticide Container Recycling Award, which came with a \$2,000 financial contribution for the Solid Waste Department. This program benefited applicators, the solid waste department, and all the citizens of Robeson County by extending the life expectancy of the landfill while protecting the environment.

Mac Malloy, Extension Field Crops Agent

4-H Youth Development



Future Local Foods Entrepreneurs -- Robeson County ranks first in poverty in North Carolina and third in the nation. In the past, textile plants provided a majority of jobs for county residents. With plants closing, residents are looking for new job opportunities. Agriculture is the number one economic indicator for Robeson County. The Robeson County 4-H Youth Development Program, Family and Consumer Sciences Program, and Local Foods Program worked together to implement a 4-H Junior Chef Day Camp. As part of the camp, 15 youth

between the ages of 9 and 13 had the opportunity to create their own local foods business. The youth wrote business plans, researched local foods, and learned about value-added products. Evaluation and Results - Data was collected through written camper evaluations at the end of the week. Both qualitative and quantitative data was collected about the entire experience. Out of the 15 participants, 13 were present to complete the evaluations. Almost all the youth, 91 percent, reported increasing their knowledge about local foods businesses. While, 100 percent of the youth said they felt they had skills it would take to start planning to open their own agriculture-based business. Only half the youth said they would like to pursue a career in the culinary or local foods arena. By exposing youth at a young age to career opportunities, we are able to give them the information they need to pursue a career and education they are passionate about. By teaching them about small businesses and local resources, we can expand their future career opportunities as entrepreneurs. By creating jobs at home, these future adults will have the opportunity to employ others and change the economic conditions within the county.

Shea Ann DeJarnette, Extension 4-H Youth Development Agent

Youth Volunteer Leaders -- Youth in Robeson County have limited opportunities to develop positive leadership and responsibility skills. Robeson County 4-H offered two teen 4-H members an opportunity to volunteer in leadership roles as part of the Summer Fun Day Camp Program. Evaluation and Results - Data was collected through face-to-face interaction, observation, and volunteer and parent feedback. One teen has been part of the summer volunteer program for four years. She spontaneously gave a speech to all the day campers regarding the personal growth she has observed in herself and how she is more independent because of it. This was the first year in the volunteer program for the other teen. He was observed progressively taking on more responsibility and initiative daily. He also noted how his behavior as a camper needed to change in his new role as a teen volunteer role model. Due to the impact of this program, the Robeson County 4-H Program will continue to offer youth volunteer leadership opportunities.



Wendy Maynor, Extension 4-H Program Assistant

Family and Consumer Sciences



Cooking for Crowds -- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates 48 million people get sick from foodborne illnesses each year, resulting in 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths. The National Restaurant Association estimates each foodborne illness outbreak could cost up to \$75,000 in legal fees, medical claims, wasted food, and/or bad publicity. Nonprofit groups who serve food as a funding source face unique food safety challenges due to the lack of professional training in cooking large volumes of food. In order to prevent foodborne illness, Cooperative Extension collaborated with local

nonprofit organizations to provide “Cooking for Crowds” food safety training to 20 participants from three local churches. Evaluation and Results - A written evaluation was conducted with all participants collecting quantitative and qualitative data concerning knowledge before and after the class. Written evaluations revealed 89 percent of participants would cook foods to correct internal temperatures by checking with a thermometer. Also, 94 percent of respondents stated they would limit the amount of time food spends in unsafe temperatures. One hundred percent of respondents either wash their hands correctly or gained enough knowledge to do so in the future. Over 83 percent of respondents stated they would cool foods quickly by the recommended guidelines. This potential increase in food safety practices/knowledge directly impacts their ability to provide safe food to their customers. This training has potentially saved Robeson County \$225,000 in costs associated with foodborne illnesses. Based on these results, the Cooking for Crowds training will continue to be provided in Robeson County.

Janice Fields, Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Agent



Etiquette and the Teenage Girl -- Being a successful adult requires basic skills such as carrying on conversations, shaking hands, and eating with proper utensils. In today’s fast-paced society, many youth are gaining technology skills but missing out on some of the traditional skills they will need later in life. Cooperative Extension partnered with the Robeson County Health Department to create a mini summer camp opportunity highlighting etiquette skills for eight at-risk teenage girls.

Evaluation and Results - Following the camp, each participant completed a survey to determine knowledge gained and anticipated behavior change. The completed surveys indicated 91 percent of the youth gained knowledge in using proper introduction skills, 75 percent gained knowledge in communications skills, and 92 percent gained knowledge related to basic etiquette skills. When asked about proper table setting techniques, 100 percent demonstrated increased skills related to table setting and proper etiquette skills. In addition, 42 percent indicated increased knowledge related to social media etiquette with 100 percent indicating they would be more careful with their personal information as it relates to social media. With these skills, youth are more likely to be confident and successful and contributing members of society later in life. Due to the success of this program, future etiquette programs will be planned for youth in the future.

Christy Strickland, Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Agent

Fighting Childhood Obesity -- Research in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found in the past 20 years, the obesity rate has doubled among children ages 6 - 11 and tripled among adolescents’ ages 12 - 19. The Robeson County 4-H Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) partnered with several elementary schools in the Public Schools of Robeson County to help youth understand the benefits of eating more fruits and vegetables. The 4-H EFNEP assistant delivered six nutrition educational classes to 1,235 students around the county demonstrating how to make fun and tasty recipes with fruits and vegetables. Students were able to do hands-on activities with each lesson, which made learning about nutrition exciting. Evaluation and Results - Out of 1,235 students, 96 percent improved their consumption of fruits and vegetables and 60 percent improved physical activity practices. By making these two changes, students will decrease the chances of obesity, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, and even some cancers. Research also shows that good nutrition and a healthy diet are related to students having a positive academic and behavioral performance in the classroom. EFNEP will continue to partner with Robeson County Schools to promote the idea of “Learning by Doing” to increase positive dietary changes.



Tamika McLean, Extension 4-H EFNEP Assistant

Upcoming Events

WHEN	WHAT	WHERE	CALL TO REGISTER
February 2, 5, 9, 12, and 19 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.	NC REAL Business Seminars	Powell Melvin Service Center 450 Smith Circle Road, Elizabethtown	Nelson Brownlee 671-3276
February 2 5:30 - 8:00 p.m.	Tri-County Cotton Production Meeting	Hoke-Robeson Gin 7480 Old Maxton Road, Red Springs	Mac Malloy 671-3276
February 2 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.	4-H County Council and Leaders' Association Meeting	O. P. Owens Agriculture Center 455 Caton Road, Lumberton	Wendy Maynor 671-3276
February 4 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Agricultural Specialized Advisory Committee Meeting	O. P. Owens Agriculture Center	671-3276
February 6 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Feast Down East Regional Conference Visit www.feastdowneast.org for payment information.	UNCW Burney Center 601 South College Road, Wilmington	Casey Hancock 671-3276 Call to ride on van
February 7 - 8	4-H Volunteer Leaders' State Conference	NCSU, Raleigh	Shea Ann DeJarnette 671-3276
February 10 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.	N.C. Pesticide Applicator Exam	O. P. Owens Agriculture Center	NCDA&CS 919-733-3556
February 12 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.	Regional Peanut Production Meeting DEADLINE - February 6	Powell Melvin Service Center 450 Smith Circle Road, Elizabethtown	Mac Malloy 671-3276
February 12 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.	Robeson Local Food Alliance Monthly Meeting (monthly on the second Thursday)	O. P. Owens Agriculture Center	Casey Hancock 671-3276
February 19 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.	Fruit Tree Pruning Demonstration Fee: \$5 (check or money order only) Fruit Tree Workshop	Geraldine's Peaches and Produce 10728 Highway 41 North, Lumberton O. P. Owens Agriculture Center	Mack Johnson 671-3276
February 21 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.	4-H District Winter Fling DEADLINE - February 13 Fee: Officers - \$3, Other Members - \$5 (check or money order only)	Duplin County	Shea Ann DeJarnette 671-3276 Come by to pay and register
February 23 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.	Blueberry Plant Pruning Workshop Fee: \$5 (check or money order only) Small Fruits Seminar	McKellar Farms 2173 Highway 130 West, Rowland O. P. Owens Agriculture Center	Mack Johnson 671-3276
February 24 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.	Tri-County Corn and Soybean Meeting DEADLINE - February 20	O. P. Owens Agriculture Center	Mac Malloy 671-3276
February 25 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Bryce Lane presents Gardening in Modern Times: The Good, The Bad, The Ugly	O. P. Owens Agriculture Center	Mack Johnson 671-3276
February 26 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.	Annual Awards and Recognition Banquet DEADLINE - February 20	O. P. Owens Agriculture Center	Mac Malloy 671-3276
March 3, 10, 24, and 31 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.	Beginner Beekeeper School Fee - \$25	O. P. Owens Agriculture Center	Denny Clark 736-8051 Call to register
March 5 10:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.	Soil Health and Cover Crop Workshop DEADLINE: February 27	O. P. Owens Agriculture Center	Mac Malloy 671-3276
March 18 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.	Alternative Livestock Tour	O. P. Owens Agriculture Center	Taylor Chavis or Casey Hancock 671-3276
March 21 1:30 - 4:30 p.m.	Raised Bed Gardening Workshop	Food for Thought Community Garden 505 North Pine Street, Lumberton	Mack Johnson or Casey Hancock 671-3276
April 13 - 15 1:00 - 5:00 p.m. April 20 (review/exam) 1:00 - 5:00 p.m.	ServSafe Food Safety Certification Training Fee - \$125 (check or money order only) DEADLINE - March 16 (\$140 after)	O. P. Owens Agriculture Center	Janice Fields 671-3276 Come by to pay and register

For more information about additional upcoming educational opportunities, please check out our calendar at:
<http://robeson.ces.ncsu.edu>