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# The Power of Extension



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## An Inside Glance into Cooperative Extension

The Power of Extension Newsletter provides a snapshot 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.

N.C. Cooperative Extension focuses on three main areas: Agriculture, Food, and Youth. Locally, that means we have three main departments: Agriculture, Family and Consumer Sciences, and 4-H Youth Development. Providing research-based and relevant educational opportunities for citizens in Robeson County is our highest priority.

The previous Power of Extension Newsletter was just a few months after Hurricane Matthew. As we began to prepare this newsletter, it seemed that once again, we would be in the path of yet another hurricane. Thankfully, our county was spared! The thought of preparing for another disaster made us all pause and, yes, many of us even panicked. Being prepared is empowering. I encourage you to take the opportunity, while the storms are calm, to visit our website and use the information to empower your family to be safe during any disaster. Cooperative Extension's disaster website is: <https://ncdisaster.ces.ncsu.edu/>



Christy Strickland  
 County Extension Director

## AGRICULTURE

**Risk Management Workshops Help Farmers Develop New Marketing Strategies** -- Small farmers are faced with many challenges as they attempt to manage risks associated with farming, which include high input and energy costs, fewer off-farm employment opportunities, increased financial and marketing risks, and weather. Cooperative Extension hosted a series of Risk Management Workshops to address the





challenges associated with marketing risks. The workshops were held in partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) – Risk Management Agency and National Crop Insurance Services. A team of Extension agents assisted in recruiting potential participants and making follow-up contacts with participants. The objective of the program was to teach farmers the skills to understand their own operation sufficiently to develop marketing plans and strategies to make

their farm more profitable. Evaluation and Results - After the final workshop, project evaluations were completed, which included a pre and posttest. In December, follow-up interviews will be conducted. A total of 22 farmers attended and learned new marketing risk management tools and services along with those already established. By the end of the last workshop, participants completed a personal marketing plan. Evaluations showed that 100 percent of the participants increased knowledge in risk assessment, the 5 Ps of marketing, marketing strategies, setting goals, and marketing plans. With these tools, local farmers can build the confidence they need to deal with both future risks and opportunities.

**Nelson Brownlee, Extension Area Farm Management Agent**

**2017 Regional Chicken Project** -- There is a growing interest in youth to participate in small animal projects. Chicken projects create a more affordable livestock showing option in comparison to the larger species. Cooperative Extension knows the value of livestock projects and the life skills they provide for children. As a collaborative effort between Extension’s 4-H Program and school ag education classes (FFA), livestock and 4-H agents from seven counties offered the chicken project - raising laying hens or broilers. The goal was to provide lessons in raising chickens, showing chickens, recordkeeping, and money management. One hundred participants signed up and 57 participated in the show. Youth raised laying hen chicks from three days of age to four months of age and broiler chicks from three days of age to seven weeks of age. There



was an organized showmanship contest, breed show, and record book contest. Youth attended two mandatory training sessions. Cape Fear Farm Credit provided financial support for this project, including prize money. Prize money in the amount of \$420 was given out to those participants who placed in the top three in each category. Evaluation and Results - Data was collected through an online evaluation prior to the show, with 75 people completing it. An evaluation was also completed by 22 people after the project was finished. Evaluations showed: 97 percent of participants were very satisfied or satisfied with the overall experience; 97 percent improved on responsibility and work ethic; and 95 percent improved on communication skills. Some quotes from participants were: “I have really enjoyed being a part of the project. I enjoyed the hands-on things such as feeding the chickens and watering them. I also enjoyed getting to know new people.” A youth said, “This project helped me focus more in class and participate more.” A parent said, “I've seen my child take responsibility and pride in raising these chickens.”

**Taylor Chavis, Extension Livestock Agent**



**Tomatoes, Tomahtoes, and ‘Maters** -- USDA reported that 38.2 million Americans live in households that suffer from hunger and food insecurity, including nearly 14 million children. Approximately 32 percent of Robeson's population live below the poverty level. Limited-resource, socially disadvantaged, and food-insecure individuals, families, and communities need to be provided with information and opportunities to enhance household food, diet, and nutritional security. Fresh vegetables improve everyone's diet, and growing your own can be less expensive. Many Robeson residents try to grow tomato plants, then culture and disease issues soon

appear negatively impacting their crop. Cooperative Extension receives numerous calls on the culture and disease diagnosis of tomatoes. In response, Cooperative Extension presented an interactive workshop based on the culture, care, and harvest of tomatoes. Evaluation and Results - An evaluation was given following the workshop; 28 of the 35 participants completed the evaluation, which showed: 89 percent improved their knowledge of the many physiological disorders that can affect tomatoes, such as leaf roll, cat facing, and sun scald; 86 percent improved their confidence in selecting appropriate cultivars that perform well in Robeson and also detecting pest and disease issues; 86 percent revealed their intention to plan the proper planting time to optimize better health and production for the plant; and 100 percent of the participants surveyed would recommend the program to others. Due to the high interest in this program, more tomato workshops will be offered in the future.

**Mack Johnson, Extension Horticultural Agent**



**Improving Grain Yields** -- Changes in grain prices and production costs are frequently occurring. Farmers are always looking for ways to increase yield and improve profitability. In order to provide farmers and consultants with the most up-to-date information, Cooperative Extension in Robeson, Hoke, and Scotland Counties worked together to provide a Tri-County Corn and Soybean Meeting. Information regarding new varieties, production practices, and pest management issues were discussed. Evaluation and Results - Attendees completed an evaluation to determine knowledge gained

and overall financial impact. Of the 75 farmers who attended, 46 provided overwhelmingly positive feedback. As a result of the program, 58 percent planned to prioritize their inputs differently to increase yield and profitability; 47 percent planned to use field scouting for disease to determine when fungicide applications are economically needed; and 48 percent planned to manage escaped weeds to reduce resistant weed populations. Farmers in attendance reported growing a total of 31,125 acres of corn and 44,185 acres of soybeans. Participants also reported the information gained at the meeting had an average economic benefit of \$9.84 per acre, with a total financial benefit of \$741,706. Because of the success of the meeting and its overall economic impact, production meetings will be held on an annual basis.

**Mac Malloy, Extension Field Crops Agent**

## **4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**

**Bouncing Back After Hurricane Matthew** -- Robeson County was hit hard by Hurricane Matthew. Entire communities where 4-H clubs existed for decades were wiped out. Buildings and club meeting spaces were flooded, families were evacuated out of the county, and in many cases, did not come back. This left many 4-H community clubs and volunteers scrambling to figure out what to do next. The Cooperative Extension 4-H staff worked with county officials to provide meeting space for 4-H clubs devastated by the hurricane. The adult volunteers worked with staff and other officials to locate missing 4-H families, restructure clubs, recruit new members, pick up the pieces, and keep going. Evaluation and Results - Data was collected from club paperwork and through observation of the club meetings. All clubs affected by the hurricane are still in existence. Some 4-H members moved to new locations, and new 4-H members have been recruited. As of August, many of the clubs are meeting in their original community spaces. However, they are currently restructuring and determining the needs of new members and their communities.



**Wendy Maynor, Extension 4-H Program Associate**



**Crafty Business** -- Youth are inundated with technology and often miss developing hand-eye coordination, critical thinking, and decision-making skills as a result of their immersion in technology. Cooperative Extension's 4-H staff organized a weeklong Arts and Crafts Day Camp where youth created items by hand and learned new skills they had not been exposed to before. Youth learned embroidering techniques with chicken scratch, latch hooking skills to make a rug, woodworking, painting, beading, and many more skills. They were also exposed to businesses that are niche businesses created to serve arts and crafts audiences.



**Evaluation and Results** - A written evaluation was completed collecting both qualitative and quantitative data. Oral feedback and observation techniques were also utilized to determine success of the program. Almost 100 percent of the youth stated they learned a new skill that they would like to turn into a hobby. More than half asked parents to purchase the items they would need to continue to practice their new skills at home. More than a third said they would like to enter their items into a competition at school, community, or even the fair. Almost 60 percent said they would be interested in selling the items they make or even opening a business one day to teach others what they learned. As a result of this camp, we will continue to look for more opportunities to expose youth to learning with their hands to enhance their technology skills in the future.

**Shea Ann DeJarnette, Extension 4-H Youth Development Agent**

## FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES



**Poverty and How It Affects Eating Habits** -- Relative to other counties in North Carolina, Robeson County has a high child poverty rate. New studies have found that children who grow up impoverished may have higher chances of developing bad eating habits that last a lifetime. Understanding the environment that one teaches in can help determine participants' eating habits. Many of the students at W.H. Knuckles Elementary School come from areas suffering from poverty as well as crime and are the participants who qualify for the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) classes and benefit the most.

Robeson County partnered with W.H. Knuckles kindergarten to deliver six 4-H EFNEP nutrition classes, using the Adventures in Nutrition curriculum. Each lesson had interactive activities for students to complete that reinforced what was taught in class. Participants helped make child-friendly recipes and try new foods. Before each class, students told about the recipes they tried at home and foods they asked their parents to buy. One student tried the almost five food group parfait at home and explained how much everyone enjoyed it and how they wanted to make it again. Students were eager to hear what story we were going to read and what new food they would try. **Evaluation and Results** - All children were given pre and post evaluations that revealed 90 percent improved their responses to physical activities and 86 percent improved in their responses to choosing health foods. This partnership was a success, students learned a lot, and they shared the information with their parents.

**Tamika McLean, Extension 4-H EFNEP Associate**

**Expanded Food and Nutrition Education - a Healthier Lifestyle** -- The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) encourages limited-resource families and youth to explore and learn how to "Eat Smart and Move More." The classes include food safety, portion control, increasing physical activity, and food resource management. There are a series of 21 lessons, with core lessons that must be taught in order for participants to receive their Certificate of Completion. EFNEP partners



with community stake holders and agencies to offer classes to help families get the most value from their food dollars and improve their knowledge and understanding to obtain and maintain good health. In Robeson County, we have a diverse population with many of them pursuing a higher level of education through the College and Career Readiness Program at Robeson Community College (RCC). EFNEP partnered with RCC and taught sessions in some of the English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. The participants are eager to expand their vocabulary by learning the new words from the various lessons. The participants really liked the Making Smart Drink Choices lesson, from the Eating Smart on the Run Series, which focuses on helping participants visualize the sugar content in beverages. When they measured out the sugar with a measuring spoon, they were amazed at the quantity of sugar in many soft drinks as well as the empty calories they contain. After learning that two cans of regular soda (24 ounces) a day could add up to a weight gain of more than 30 pounds a year, their jaws dropped. This lesson included tasting a healthy recipe, the Fruit Smoothie. One participant in class instantly stated, "I will no longer drink that "sugar water," and she has slowly incorporated more water into her diet. She started with small steps, like adding fruit or mint leaves to give more flavor but now drinks it plain. "It's a lifestyle change that will benefit me," she stated. Before starting EFNEP, she exercised less than 30 minutes a day but now uses "Walk Indoors," Leslie Sansone CD acquired through EFNEP, another take-home skill builder, to move more. By drinking more water and increasing physical activity to four or five times a week, she has lowered her blood pressure and feels great about the changes she made.

**Teresa Bethea, Extension Adult EFNEP Assistant**



**Food Preservation Classes** -- Food-borne botulism is a rare disease with potentially deadly and paralytic consequences and is associated with improperly canned low-acid foods. According to a report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 30 percent of reported botulism cases (1996-2014) from home-prepared foods were from home-canned vegetables. These outbreaks usually occur due to lack of knowledge. In an effort to address this need, Cooperative Extension provided eight Food Preservation Workshops to 17 participants. All participants attended the introduction classes and 12 participants attended the five hands-on classes.

Evaluation and Results - Written evaluations were administered at the end of each workshop and revealed 100 percent improved skills in preserving pickles and relishes, jams and jellies, tomatoes, and low-acid foods. The evaluations also revealed 100 percent plan to begin using research-based recipes and safe food preservation techniques to increase the safety of their food. By canning at home, participants are able to preserve fresh local foods and feel a sense of pride in preserving their own tasty food. Due to the success of these workshops, future food preservation classes will be offered. Consumers benefit with improved health from eating safe, healthy home-preserved food. Local growers who sell the produce also benefit with increased sales to canning consumers.

**Janice Fields, Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Agent**

## Upcoming Events

| WHEN                                   | WHAT  | WHERE  | CALL TO REGISTER                |
|--|---|--|---------------------------------|
| September 21<br>5:30 - 8:30 p.m.       | Cooking and Baking with Whole Grains<br>\$10 Fee - Deadline September 15  | O. P. Owens Agriculture Center   | Janice Fields<br>671-3276       |
| September 26<br>10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. | Pesticide Recertification Training<br>10 - 12, Private Applicator V<br>1 - 3, Private Applicator X and Commercial<br>A, B, D, G, H, I, K, L, M, N, O, and T | O. P. Owens Agriculture Center   | Mac Malloy<br>671-3276          |
| September 29-October 7                 | Robeson Regional Agricultural Fair  | Robeson County Fairgrounds<br>3750 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive<br>Lumberton |                                 |
| October 5<br>7:00 – 9:00 p.m.          | Goat Club Meeting   | Hoke County Center<br>116 West Prospect Avenue, Raeford                      | Taylor Chavis<br>671-3276       |
| October 9<br>10:00 - 11:00 a.m.        | Robeson County Master Gardeners<br>Association Meeting  | O. P. Owens Agriculture Center   | Mack Johnson<br>671-3276        |
| October 17<br>6:30 - 8:30 p.m.         | Robeson County Area Beekeepers<br>Association Meeting   | O. P. Owens Agriculture Center   | Nelson Brownlee<br>671-3276     |
| October 19<br>1:30 - 4:30 p.m.         | Cooking and Baking with Whole Grains<br>\$10 Fee - Deadline October 13  | O. P. Owens Agriculture Center   | Janice Fields<br>671-3276       |
| October 27<br>6:30 - 9:00 p.m.         | 4-H Volunteer Appreciation Banquet  | O. P. Owens Agriculture Center   | Wendy Maynor<br>671-3276        |
| October 30<br>6:30 - 8:30 p.m.         | 4-H Volunteer Revolution Training   | Hoke County Center<br>116 West Prospect Avenue, Raeford                      | Shea Ann DeJarnette<br>671-3276 |
| November 2<br>7:00 – 9:00 p.m.         | Goat Club Meeting   | Hoke County Center<br>116 West Prospect Avenue, Raeford                      | Taylor Chavis<br>671-3276       |
| November 6<br>6:00 - 8:00 p.m.         | Joint Extension Advisory Leadership System<br>Meeting   | O. P. Owens Agriculture Center   | Mac Malloy<br>671-3276          |
| November 13<br>10:00 - 11:00 a.m.      | Robeson County Master Gardeners<br>Association Meeting  | O. P. Owens Agriculture Center   | Mack Johnson<br>671-3276        |
| November 21<br>6:30 - 8:30 p.m.        | Robeson County Area Beekeepers<br>Association Meeting   | O. P. Owens Agriculture Center   | Nelson Brownlee<br>671-3276     |
| December 1<br>6:00 - 8:00 p.m.         | 4-H County Council and Volunteer Leaders'<br>Association Officer Orientation  | O. P. Owens Agriculture Center   | Wendy Maynor<br>671-3276        |
| December 7<br>7:00 – 9:00 p.m.         | Goat Club Meeting   | Hoke County Center<br>116 West Prospect Avenue, Raeford                      | Taylor Chavis<br>671-3276       |
| December 8<br>6:30 - 8:30 p.m.         | 4-H Youth Achievement Night   | O. P. Owens Agriculture Center   | Wendy Maynor<br>671-3276        |
| December 11<br>10:00 - 11:00 a.m.      | Robeson County Master Gardeners<br>Association Meeting  | O. P. Owens Agriculture Center   | Mack Johnson<br>671-3276        |
| December 19<br>6:30 - 8:30 p.m.        | Robeson County Area Beekeepers<br>Association Meeting   | O. P. Owens Agriculture Center   | Nelson Brownlee<br>671-3276     |
| January 4, 2018<br>7:00 – 9:00 p.m.    | Goat Club Meeting   | Hoke County Center<br>116 West Prospect Avenue, Raeford                      | Taylor Chavis<br>671-3276       |
| January 8<br>10:00 - 11:00 a.m.        | Robeson County Master Gardeners<br>Association Meeting  | O. P. Owens Agriculture Center   | Mack Johnson<br>671-3276        |
| January 16<br>6:30 - 8:30 p.m.         | Robeson County Area Beekeepers<br>Association Meeting   | O. P. Owens Agriculture Center   | Nelson Brownlee<br>671-3276     |

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

