

The Power of Extension

March 19, 2021

AN INSIDE GLANCE INTO COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

North Carolina 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 Power of Extension** Newsletter provides a snapshot of the educational programs conducted by N.C. Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center, which impact the lives of Robeson County citizens. In this edition, you will find highlights and impacts from traditional Extension programs as well as new and updated programs and activities.

Christy Strickland

Christy Strickland
County Extension Director



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FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES



"Cooking with Ms. JoJo" -- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that approximately 56 million school-aged children (aged 5–17 years) resumed education in the United States in fall 2020. Analysis of 277,285 lab confirmed cases in school-aged children that included demographics

underlying continued clinical outcomes and weekly COVID-19 trends may inform decisions about in-person learning and the timing and scaling of community mitigation measures. North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center, 4-H and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) partnered together to bring youth in our county a cook-with-me series. Students were given a food list to purchase food so they could cook along with us. Students learned about food safety, how to properly measure ingredients, and how to make everyday foods healthier.

Robeson County Center
O. P. Owens Agriculture Center
P. O. Box 2280
455 Caton Road
Lumberton, NC 28359

Phone - 910-671-3276
Fax - 910-671-6278
Website - robeson.ces.ncsu.edu

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At the end of the series, participants were asked several questions about the series. We asked each participant what they liked about the series, would they be interested in another series, and what would like to see or cook in the next “Cooking with Ms. Jojo” series. Participants gained skills and confidence in the kitchen. One participant talked about how much fun she had making new recipes that not only taste good but were easy for her to make on her own.

Joanna Rogers, Extension Youth EFNEP Assistant

Hands-On Food Security -- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the coronavirus pandemic may increase food insecurity for some people due to loss of employment. The CDC further states that food insecurity is directly associated with poor health. Before the coronavirus surfaced, the Adult Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) taught in-person nutrition classes to limited-resource and limited-income families throughout the county; each class included hands-on food demonstrations. At times, food donation boxes would be distributed after the class. A major component of Adult EFNEP is sharing healthy recipes and providing the resources to create those recipes learned. Once food distribution restrictions were lifted, EFNEP was able to purchase the non-perishable recipe ingredients for the program participants at Our House, an entity of Robeson Health Care Corporation. In addition to the ingredients, safety gloves and face masks were provided to reinforce the CDC’s safety and sanitation recommendations. Recipients of the ingredients were all enrolled in the Adult EFNEP ten-week virtual nutrition series. Participants were able to gain hands-on experience preparing a recipe from start to finish. By providing the ingredients needed, participants were able to stretch their food dollars.



Ashley McRae, Extension Adult EFNEP Assistant



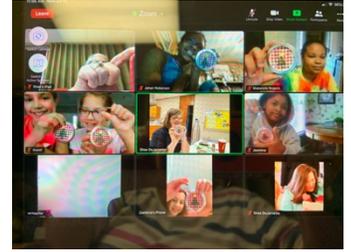
Preventing Foodborne Illness -- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an estimated one in six Americans will get sick as a result of contaminated food or beverages. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates that foodborne illnesses cost more than \$15.6 billion each year. This common, costly public health problem is preventable through food safety training. To help local food service establishments gain the knowledge needed to prevent foodborne illness, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Center, Robeson County Center, provided two ServSafe Food Safety Managers trainings to a total of 12 participants. During each 21-hour training, managers from local food service establishments gained knowledge on a variety of food-safety topics including management of food safety practices, hygiene and health, correct receipt and storage of food, and cleanliness and sanitation. Based on a potential savings of \$3,630 for each foodborne illness, these trainings have collectively saved \$1,237,830 in costs associated with foodborne illnesses in Robeson County. Also, seven ServSafe certified participants will help their establishments avoid a two-point deduction from their health inspection score for five years. One participant is now a certified ServSafe instructor. Based on needs and interest, food safety trainings will continue to be provided in Robeson County.

Jessie Jones, Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Agent

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



Virtual Summer Day Camps -- Due to COVID-19 restrictions, in-person Summer Fun Day Camps were cancelled. The isolation and disappointment of cancelled in-person programs can be difficult for youth during this time. The Robeson County 4-H staff offered four virtual 4-H Summer Fun Camps over Zoom. Junior Chef, Arts and Crafts, Biotech, and Cloverbud kept the youth engaged and continued learning with hands-on activities. The 4-H staff worked with the families to make sure youth had the necessary supplies needed for each camp. The virtual format encouraged a virtual face-to-face interaction and allowed the youth to do projects at home with each other. As a result of the new interactive format, there was an increase of more than 28 percent new members that attended the virtual Summer Fun Day Camps. Those youth then began participating in other virtual county activities, such as Artastic and other cooking opportunities. We hope to engage these youth in more traditional formatted programs when we can meet in person, face-to-face again.



Wendy Maynor, Extension 4-H Program Associate



S.T.E.A.M. Ahead -- Robeson County 4-H was having a difficult time communicating with families and volunteers through the 4-H Online registration system. There were technology glitches which caused families and volunteers to become frustrated from the lack of communication. With decreasing support staff creating and maintaining mail list serves, the program was too large, too time consuming, and unrealistic for the 4-H staff. The North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center, 4-H Agent researched and developed an app she felt would bridge the communication gap. With the help of the 4-H Program Associate and members of the specialized committee, she designed the app to make it exceedingly user friendly. The County Extension Director helped with funding and support as the app was vetted through the state 4-H office and North Carolina State University. With help from the state 4-H office, the app was approved for implementation after a few months. The app was launched live on the N.C. Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center Facebook page. Within an hour of the launch, 5 percent of Robeson County 4-H members and volunteers had downloaded the app. Within ten minutes, the 4-H Agent received her first email from a volunteer through the app. At the end of the first 24 hours, 90 percent of those who downloaded the app took a survey on the platform, and 100 percent of the respondents said they loved the app. Within nine months, we had more than 100 downloads and families saying they didn't know why they waited; this put 4-H in the palm of their hands, allowed them to be more interactive with the program, and get up-to-date information in an easy format. Thanks to the app we have been able to keep families engaged during COVID and will continue to use it in the future.

Shea Ann DeJarnette, Extension 4-H Youth Development Agent

Register Today for a Summer of Fun!

The Robeson County 4-H Program is happy to announce our summer programs and activities for 2021. We invite you to join us for a fun and exciting summer of learning. The summer program has activities for all youth between the ages of 5 and 19. Membership in 4-H is not required. Find more information about the following camps by visiting the 4-H Youth Development page from our county website. Day camps will be virtual. Registration available on the 4-H Now app through EventBrite.

Animal Science
Junior Chef Day Camp

Millstone Day Camp
Cloverbud Day Camp

Biotech Day Camp
BJP Overnight Camp

AGRICULTURE



Teaching Proper Pruning -- Homeowners and consumers enjoy home gardening and maintaining their landscape, often with more demand than necessary. North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center, receives phone calls all year long seeking advice on pruning. Many of these gardeners will put forth the effort but know very little about when to prune different plant species, how to make the proper cut, or how to train a young tree or shrub to reduce maintenance later on. Many times, the wrong plant in the wrong place imposes greater maintenance demands than necessary. N.C. Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center, presented an

interactive pruning workshop entitled "To Prune or Not to Prune" to 42 participants. Proper pruning tools for appropriate cuts were demonstrated. A discussion of different pruning methods and cuts were reviewed. The various recommended pruning times dependent on the plant species was also presented. Finally, training young trees was explained and many participants were very surprised they could "train" a tree. Program evaluations show that 95 percent of the respondents will implement these recommendations in their home landscapes. Eighty-nine percent improved their knowledge on training a young tree's form and when to prune specific plant species, and they plan to incorporate these new skills. One hundred percent stated the presentation was easy to understand and would recommend it to others. More pruning workshops will be planned due to this success.

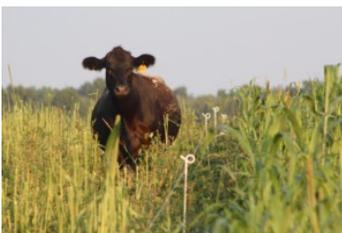
Mack Johnson, Extension Horticultural Agent

Cornavirus Food Assistance Program for Farmers -- Due to the lack of formal education, many small and limited-resource farm families do not know what federal agricultural programs are available or do not understand some of the eligibility requirements. They also are constantly searching for farm programs to keep their land valuable, sustainable, and profitable. This year, many small farmers have been directly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, financial support was provided to farmers through the USDA-FSA Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP). The purpose of the CFAP is to provide American producers with emergency

financial support to assist in mitigating sales losses and increased marketing costs during the COVID-19 pandemic. In April 2020, information on applying for the CFAP was received by the small farms agent. Realizing that many clientele may not be aware of this program and the narrow application window may prevent eligible producers from benefiting, the agent identified and directed outreach and technical assistance through emails and phone calls to limited resource farmers in Robeson County. As a result of educational outreach, seven small and limited resource producers applied for and received CFAP payments for livestock and/or nonspecialty commodities totaling \$27,109.48. With the producers applying for and receiving these payments, they were able to recover some of their losses.



Nelson Brownlee, Extension Area Farm Management Agent



2021 Virtual Cape Fear Cattle Conference -- The cattle industry is widely recognized as a profit sector in eastern North Carolina. In an effort to help area cattlemen increase the profitability of their operations, livestock agents from Bladen, Columbus, Cumberland, Hoke, Robeson, and Scotland Counties, along with the North Carolina Cattlemen's Association, usually put together a regional beef conference and industry trade show. This year, due to COVID-19, we planned and implemented a virtual cattle conference. There were 35 participants who attended

the conference. An evaluation was given during the conference.

The evaluation showed that 98 percent of participants learned new ideas on beef processing, 100 percent of participants learned new ideas on the location of beef cuts, and 100 percent of participants learned new ideas on high-value beef cuts. The producers collectively own 375 cows and over 1000+ acres.

Taylor Chavis, Extension Livestock Agent

Accommodating Pesticide Applicators During a Pandemic -- Private and commercial pesticide applicators are required to earn pesticide continuing education credits to maintain their applicators licenses. Normal delivery of training is held via in-person, classroom style instruction. The COVID-19 pandemic restrictions created a unique challenge for the 424 pesticide licensees in Robeson County. To assist pesticide applicators, North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center, led the effort conducting 18 training opportunities in cooperation with North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Science and Extension Specialists at no cost, totaling 35 hours of continuing education. Several of these training opportunities were held virtually using Zoom. A total of 592 pesticide applicators in the region received training. Based on other pesticide fee-based training opportunities, it is estimated these participants saved over \$8,800 by North Carolina Cooperative Extension Center accommodating their needs.



Mac Malloy, Extension Field Crops Agent

Take Advantage of Free Soil Testing

As we begin this year's planting season, it is important to consider good management practices. One of these practices is collecting soil samples. Soil testing is a service provided by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services at their Agronomic Division in Raleigh.

Collect samples three to six months before planting time. Taking good samples, filling out paperwork properly, and packaging samples for delivery in a well-organized manner are important. A soil test will assess the present levels of major plant nutrients, soil pH, and micronutrients. Recommendations will include the amounts of lime and fertilizer, if necessary, to meet the requirements of the specific plant or crop being grown.

Soil sample boxes and forms can be picked up at the Extension Center. There is no fee for soil samples taken from April through November. Samples can be mailed to the lab in Raleigh or dropped off at the Extension Center where they will be delivered when Extension employees travel to Raleigh. Extension agents can also assist you in interpreting the soil test results or developing a soil treatment plan. Remember, having your soil tested before planting gives you the opportunity to increase your yields on the farm or improve your landscape around the house.

2021 Upcoming Events

For more information, please check the Events Section on our website at <http://robeson.ces.ncsu.edu> and our Facebook page **NC Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center** at <https://www.facebook.com/RobesonCooperativeExtension/> for added new events.



ABOUT N.C. COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

N.C. Cooperative Extension is a strategic partnership of NC State Extension, The Cooperative Extension Program at N.C. A&T State University, USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA), and local governments statewide. Extension professionals in all 100 counties and with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians connect millions of North Carolinians with research-based information and technology from NC State and N.C. A&T. Educational programs specialize in agriculture, food and nutrition, 4-H youth development, community development and the environment.