

The Power of Extension

March 17, 2022

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.

Mac Malloy

Mac Malloy
Interim County Extension Director



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FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES



Local Holiday Festival Introduces New Foods -- Consumption of a variety of vegetables and fruits is low for the residents of Robeson County. In the 2020 Community Health Assessment, only 20 percent of Robesonians were eating a variety of vegetables and fruits. Poor diet

lacking in variety in conjunction with limited availability of reasonably priced, high-quality foods has led to increased rates of premature deaths and other diseases linked to obesity (cardio-vascular, some cancers, diabetes, and some disabilities). In an effort to bring awareness to the Robeson County Farmers Market as a venue for residents to purchase reasonably priced, high-quality produce, North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center, hosted the annual Very Local Holiday Festival. This joint effort between the Horticultural and Family and Consumer Sciences agents also provided those visiting the farmers market and the festival an opportunity to try healthy recipes prepared with produce they may not try on their own. Recipes featured at this year's festival included Roasted Butternut Squash Soup and Roasted Kale Chips; the kale was provided by a local farmer.

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A total of 76 participants tried both recipes. Of the 76 participants, 16 had never eaten kale before, and 29 had never eaten butternut squash soup before. Almost 96 percent of the participants indicated they would eat both the kale chips and butternut squash soup again. Many of the participants were seen purchasing kale after taste testing the kale chips. Because of this success, the festival will take place again in 2022 with different recipes being featured.

Jessie Jones, Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Agent

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



Specialty Interest (SPIN) clubs -- Due to COVID-19, face-to-face youth clubs, meetings, and social events have been limited. Youth and parents expressed a desire to have in-person, hands-on, life-skill activities offered on a short-term basis. North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center 4-H staff and several 4-H volunteers offered five Specialty Interest (SPIN) clubs to accommodate the life skills. Parents were so excited about the different opportunities being offered to the 4-H members, they asked if they could participate in several activities. As a result, youth and adults gained knowledge and learned new skills in several areas such as cooking, sewing, knitting, crocheting, gardening, and animal science. They had the opportunity to make items for themselves, gifts, and also help with items that were donated as part of a community service project. Youth and parents both stated SPIN clubs better accommodate their schedules and offered increased skills in a short time frame. Due to the success of this program model, we will continue to coordinate with volunteers to offer a larger variety of SPIN Club opportunities in the future.



Wendy Maynor, Extension 4-H Program Associate



There's an App for That -- When the pandemic first started, reaching 4-H families and volunteers was difficult because they were being bombarded by emails, phone calls, and adjusting to life. We were losing touch with our 4-H families and volunteers because they just didn't have the time or focus to read our communications. The Robeson County 4-H Agent developed a free app called "4-H Now!" for Robeson County 4-H families to use. It is a free download and makes it easier for them to read communications, register for programs, and interact with the 4-H program on their own schedule. Working with Dr. Mike Yoder at the state 4-H Office, we were able to get approval for this app and it went online in July of 2020. In the last year and a half we have had more than 200 downloads of the app. Families in 4-H have said it was a game changer, making it easier for them to register for programs, see what is available, and the electronic calendar has allowed them to make schedule planning even easier. We hosted a National 4-H Week Scavenger Hunt on the app and have had a 200 percent increase from last year to this year in that activity alone. Due to the success of this app, several other counties are now exploring and creating an app for their county 4-H programs in hopes of better communicating with their 4-H families and volunteers. We have secured funding for our app from United Way and will be able to continue utilizing it for years to come.

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 2022. 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.

NC Citizenship Focus

Jr Master Gardener Day Camp

Biotech Day Camp

Etiquette Day Camp

Congress

Cloverbud Day Camp

Junior Chef Day Camp

BJP Overnight Camp

AGRICULTURE



Saving Seeds Saves Gardening -- Due to the pandemic, empty store shelves are just a new trend. Home gardening is on the rise but unfortunately, so is the cost of seed. Seeds are also unavailable due to all the breakdowns in our national supply chains. No seeds mean no gardening for many. Responding to the need for folks to learn how to save their own seed, North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center, presented a two-hour presentation on seed saving. The horticulture agent brought in numerous plant samples for the participants to collect their own seed to save for spring planting. All 13 participants completed an evaluation

of the program, and 100 percent gained knowledge in seed saving techniques, seed storing, seed stratification, and selecting the proper seeds for their garden. Eighty-five percent say they will save their vegetable seed in the future and almost 60 percent plan to look for open pollinated plant varieties so they can save those seeds. One hundred percent of the participants would recommend this program to others. Due to these outcomes, more of these workshops will be planned in the future.

Mack Johnson, Extension Horticultural Agent

Virtual Outreach Workshop Links Small Farmers with Government Programs --

Many small farmers face challenges in searching for alternative enterprises and opportunities to help diversify their farm operations. They are also constantly searching for farm programs to keep their land valuable, sustainable, and profitable.

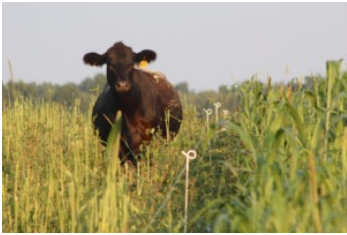
In 2016 and 2019, North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Robeson Center, in partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) - Office of Advocacy and Outreach, sponsored a workshop on linking small farmers with USDA Agencies such as Farm Service Agency, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Rural Development Agency, along with the North Carolina Forest Service. The workshops were designed to assist farmers and landowners with information on programs that can provide financial assistance to their farms. In September 2021, a Small Farm Outreach Virtual Meeting was conducted via Zoom. The meeting was designed to inform farmers and landowners of programs that can provide financial assistance to their farms and information on resources available in rural communities.



A total of 54 persons registered for the workshop. Based on evaluations conducted after the workshop, 100 percent said they improved their knowledge on USDA programs and 85 percent of participants said they were going to apply for at least one USDA program. Since the completion of the workshop, two farm families have applied for and been approved to receive \$6,900 grants through the Natural Resource Conservation Service (EQIP) cost share program to install high tunnels on their farms. The new high tunnels will allow them to expand their produce operations and extend their growing seasons. Due to the success of this workshop, another

outreach workshop is scheduled for next fall. In the future, small/part-time farmers can continue to benefit from educational opportunities provided by Cooperative Extension.

Nelson Brownlee, Extension Area Farm Management Agent



2022 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, Richmond, Sampson, and Scotland Counties, along with the North Carolina Cattlemen's Association, put together a regional beef conference. There were 50 participants who attended the conference. An evaluation was given, and 34 participants completed the evaluations.

The evaluation showed 100 percent of participants were satisfied or very satisfied with the relevance of information to their needs, subject matter knowledge of instructors, and overall quality of the series. The evaluation showed 88 percent of participants learned new ideas on deworming practices, and 94 percent learned new ideas on managing hoof issues. The 52 producers collectively own 2500 cows. The survey showed 94 percent reported if they implemented practices on the farm, it would make their operation more profitable, with the potential to save \$5000.

Taylor Chavis, Extension Livestock Agent

Generating Profitability with High Yields -- Profit margins have remained extremely tight for corn producers in recent years with input and price volatility. Increasing yield by implementing sound production practices is key to business sustainability with current market fluctuations. In order to provide farmers and consultants with the most up-to-date information, North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center, provided a corn production meeting, on-farm variety trials, and other online educational resources. Information regarding new varieties, production practices, and pest management issues were discussed.



Seven corn entries were submitted into the 2021 N.C. Yield Contest for growers in Robeson County who implemented recommended production practices, which included four irrigated entries and three non-irrigated entries. The average irrigated contest yield in Robeson County was 268.4 bushels per acre. The average non-irrigated contest yield in Robeson County was 214.4 bushels per acre. One Robeson County grower was recognized as second runner-up in the Irrigated State Division. Based on these successes, growers in Robeson County are proving they can achieve high yields, helping them remain profitable while supporting our state's feed grain 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.

2022 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.

WHEN	WHAT	WHERE	CALL TO REGISTER
March 29 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.	Growing Great Tomatoes	455 Caton Road, Lumberton	Mack Johnson 910-671-3276 or use the link: https://go.ncsu.edu/growgreattomatoes
April 11 -13 8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Class and review April 14 - Exam	ServSafe Managers Food Safety Certification Training	455 Caton Road, Lumberton	Jessie Jones 910-671-3276



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.