

Extension Highlights

Columbus County Center

April 2015

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From the Director

Greetings from North Carolina Cooperative Extension, we continue to bring the best research and resources from NC State and NC A&T State Universities to every county and the Cherokee Reservation. We strive to: Strengthen the economy through profitable, sustainable and safe food forest and green industry systems; protect the environment and natural resources; and empower youth and families to lead healthier lives and become community leaders. We provide informal community-based learning opportunities and technical assistance to people, businesses and governments. Our research-based solutions can improve the way you live, work and play.

In the year 2014, NC Cooperative Extension celebrated its 100th birthday. We want to thank those individuals who helped in any way to make this celebration a success and we look forward to serving you for another 100 years. There are only a few organizations that continue to have the longevity that Extension has experienced. This was only made possible by your support of the many programs that we offer, and again we say thank you.

Extension has and will continue to address many issues facing our county. We take pride in making sure we have a positive impact within the county. We remain committed to working in areas true to Extension's mission that are important to our clients. This year has been full of transition as we have begun to implement a new strategic plan for Extension. With this plan comes a positive "Vision" for change in which Extension will continue to address the needs of clientele while at the same time maintaining an efficient and relevant organization. We continue to solicit your input, support and feedback, as we strive to improve our programming efforts, and make a difference in the lives of Columbus County citizens.

The Columbus County Extension team has worked extremely hard on meeting the needs of citizens. Our dynamic staff is keenly aware of the task that continues before us as it relates to providing high quality researched based information to our clientele. This is information that will change lives and empower individuals to become better citizens and to improve their quality of life. As we learn from the past and prepare for the future I am sure that Cooperative Extension will continue to be successful in Columbus County.

We are delighted to share with you a few of our accomplishments from the 2014 year. Please accept our thanks for your time, interest and support throughout the year. As always, we thank you for your continued support.

Dalton Dockery



County Extension Director

NC State University
A&T State University
**COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION**
Empowering People • Providing Solutions



Take the Lake

Take the Lake is an event featuring Lake Waccamaw, North Carolina. This is an individual endurance event(s) (not a race) to create some excitement about an individual's physical health. With Columbus County being in last place among NC counties in the category of fitness an event like this is needed to encourage individuals. The Take the Lake event is 4 individual challenges of, 1. walking around the lake (15 miles), 2. biking around the lake, 3. canoeing/kayaking around the lake (14 miles), and 4. swimming across the lake (3 miles). An individual can participate in any event(s). In addition an Extreme Take the Lake Event is conducted where one does all 4 events on the same day. Cooperative Extension was asked to play a big role in this year's event. The theme for this year was agriculture, and Cooperative Extension was the first organization that the organizers thought of.

Since agriculture was the theme for this event, the Cooperative Extension Agents served on the planning committee. This committee planned and conducted the event. In addition to the above, Cooperative Extension had a tent set up on site. Bananas and oranges were provided to the participants. Cooperative Extension used this event and tent site as a part of public relations and outreach. Many members of the staff participated by manning the tent during one or more of the events.

513 people entered one or more activities. Cooperative Extension contacted many of the participants and supporters of the event. Columbus County citizens benefited from this event.

Cook Smart Eat Smart

Columbus County ranks 100, worst in the state for its health status, over 60% of Adults are overweight or obese.

North Carolina Cooperative Extension through a partnership with the Health Department received a grant to conduct the

Cook Smart Eat Smart Program out in the county with an African American Church at no cost to participants. Cook Smart Eat Smart is a four-week course that meets for two hours, where participants are introduced to healthy cooking techniques and then have hands on training to practice preparing foods using the healthy cooking techniques, and the best part, to have the opportunity to taste the delicious and healthy foods that they prepared.

The class participants are provided with an evaluation form that they completed and returned in the last class.

11 out of 15 participants completed the class, members reported using their new cooking skills and techniques that they learned in the class to plan and prepare healthier meals at home for their families that they liked and enjoyed preparing.

4-H Youth

Preparing to be Prepared!

Research shows programs which are community based, provide for personal growth and development, implement best practices, build effective partnerships and resources, and provide adult support. These programs are essential in helping youth to develop into competent, caring, coping young adults. This is the core of 4-H Youth Development.

Partnering with Men and Women United for Youth and Families and ACE (Alliance for Climate Education); six 4-Hers prepared to do a presentation at the NC Climate Justice Summit.

Over several months, the 4-Hers gathered data about their communities. They talked to community members, elected officials and their peers as they mapped each rural community and prepared for disasters (natural and man-made). Their presentation is available to elected officials, community leaders, and others, who are interested.

The 4-Hers did a presentation of their findings at the NC Climate Justice Summit. About 150 youth and adults, from around North Carolina attended this Summit. As a result of their work, each community has a map of what their community has, and has not, as it related to disasters. In addition, each youth joined DOT (Do One Thing) a program of over one million youth pledging to be committed to doing one thing to decrease their footprint on the environment. Several youth are now working to do a DOT drive at their high schools.



Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, & Farming

Whiteville City schools expanded the agriculture program for the school year 2014-2015 placing emphasis on teaching students in vegetable production. Whiteville City Schools are seeking to demonstrate alternative growing techniques with; raised beds, indoor hydroponic system, and small greenhouse production.

A meeting of WCS Ag teachers, school principals, board superintendent, grounds maintenance manager and NC A&T Ag technician planned to expand their present systems. NC A&T Ag technician offered assistance to locate and obtain grant money if possible to assist their changes. A \$3,000 grant was secured through "Nourishing NC Communities". The elementary school increased raised bed garden space. The high school added raised beds, an indoor hydroponic system, greenhouse benches, and an 8X8 compost bin. The middle school added an indoor hydroponic system and planned for raised beds to be installed.

Students and teachers are actively planting fall crops and spring strawberries, while receiving instruction from a NC A&T instructor on hydroponic growing. Teachers and students were evaluated for prior knowledge of gardening, soils and nutrients before and after to determine their understanding of alternative systems for vegetable production.

Students gained knowledge of vegetable production; soil and nutrient needs of vegetables; and water conservation techniques. Teachers plan to grow varieties of leafy greens, cucumbers and squash. The high school plans a competition, in the spring, by assigning students a raised bed with directions to try to produce the highest yield possible. Students are learning how they can grow their own fresh vegetables for home consumption and learning the economic values associated with producing vegetables.

We're on the Road Again...

Consumers in the nearest urban market to Columbus County (New Hanover County) have an increased interest and desire to eat more locally sourced foods. Down East

Connect, a local foods program started at the Columbus County Cooperative Extension office, was developed as a means to sell locally grown foods grown in Columbus and surrounding counties, to consumers in Wilmington. Since 2010, Down East Connect has delivered over 5,000 orders of locally sourced foods to New Hanover County consumers. In order to continue to do this, however, funding has to be procured on a regular basis to employ a project manager and executive director for the Down East Connect program. The delivery van that Down East Connect has been using since 2011, has high mileage and is in need of replacement.

The local foods agent in Columbus County worked with representatives of funding agencies, specifically the North Carolina Department of Agriculture Marketing Division and the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development, to apply for grants, to meet the financial needs.

Evaluation was based on the total amount of monetary grant funding awarded as well as the number of successful grant applications funded.

\$90,000 in grant funds were awarded to the Down East Connect local foods program by the two granting agencies, with \$40,000 awarded to pay employee salaries and \$50,000 awarded for the purchase of a new delivery van. All totaled, Down East Connect has been awarded \$183,000 in grant funds since 2010.

Statistical Information January – December 2014	
Total # of Contacts	44,881
# Face to Face	28,702
# Non Face to Face	16,179
# Newsletters	6
# People Newsletters distributed to	394
# Web Visits	794
# News Articles	19
# Radio Programs	4
# TV Cable Shows	21
# Credit Courses Taught	17
# Participants in Credit Courses Taught	455
# Participant hours in Credit Courses	2,192
# Non-Credit Courses Taught	462
# Participants in Non-Credit Courses	10,603
#Participant hours in Non-Credit Courses	597
# Volunteers	541
# Volunteer hours	16,862
In Kind Contribution Amount	383,245
Cash/Sponsorships Amount	7,215
Grants	54,500
Total Contributions	\$444,960



Showing Off and Showing Out

There are many horse owners in and around Columbus County that are looking for open horse shows to attend. They use these shows to school their horses and develop their riding skills before moving onto more advanced shows. These shows are generally more affordable and welcoming for novice riders.

To insure the continuation of open horse shows at the Boys and Girls Home Arena at Lake Waccamaw a group of concerned horse owners have worked together to organize and run a series of open horse shows. The Waccamaw Equestrian Show Series (WESS) completed its second year of shows in 2014 with an increase in participation. There were 126 members that averaged 74 horse/rider pairs in the series of five shows, with addition non-members competing as well. Three-fourths of the riders at the shows competed as members and collected points for end-of-the-year awards.

People that attend the WESS shows often tell the show staff how much fun they have and how much they enjoy attending the shows. A survey was given at the last show of the year and 100% of responses given rated the shows as good or excellent. When asked what they would like to change about the shows they tell them "nothing". The Hunter Show is the strongest of the three divisions, the Gaming show also has strong numbers but the Western show has poor participation.

Due to the strong attendance and supporting interest, the WESS is planning another show series in 2015, with an expanded and updated class list.

Farmers Needed: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow, & Forever

With the aging farming population and the lack of new young farmers, preparation and training for future farmers through agricultural literacy and awareness has become a major issue in Columbus County. Based on surveys and need assessments from our stake holders such as our advisory council this is a top priority. Extension and other agricultural organizations are concerned about this issue as it directly affects the sustainability of all agricultural organizations. Extension, along with the Farm Service Agency and Soil and Water Conservation partnered to conduct a 3 day agriculture literacy program. The program targeted local middle school students in Columbus County. Approximately 125 students participated in the program. Also, Columbus County Extension independently held an Agricultural Literacy Day in which 55 students participated. Data was collected from the two events and through direct observation, 50% of the students returned to their middle school and either started and/or participating in a Jr. FFA club. Teacher interviews were conducted after the program and they have observed a renewal in agricultural interest from youth. More youth are participating in Agricultural activities in their local schools. There have been greenhouses installed and youth are actively participating in production agriculture. Students have gained a better understanding of agriculture, which in turn has increased their knowledge base, while providing external income for local agricultural programs. This benefits not only the students and the school, but the agricultural field as well.

EXTENSION TEAM MEMBERS

Dalton Dockery, County Extension Director
 Meleah Collier Evers, Extension Agent, Family & Consumer Sciences
 Phyllis Creech Greene, Extension Agent, Livestock
 Carsha Hayes, Support Specialist
 Renee Kellihan, Support Specialist
 Carolyn McCain, Extension Agent, Family & Consumer Sciences
 Kori McPherson, Nutrition Program Assistant – Adult EFNEP
 Nannetta Rackley, Extension Administrative Assistant
 Michael Shaw, Extension Agent, Agriculture, Field Crops
 Michael Shuman, Agricultural Technician
 Nakoma Simmons, Extension Agent, 4-H Youth Development
 Evelyn Smith, 4-H Program Assistant
 Rebekah Thompson, Nutrition Program Associate – 4-H EFNEP
 Teresa Thompson, Nutrition Program Associate
 Howard Wallace, Agriculture Agent, Horticulture