

Extension Highlights

Columbus County Center

March 2016

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"Can You Hear Me Now?"

Extension Team Members

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 2015, Extension addressed many issues facing our county. We remain committed to working in areas true to Extension's mission, that are important to our clients. Extension, with your help in 2016, will continue to be a "beacon of light" in the area of meeting the needs of citizens. 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.

We remain committed, and take pride in having a positive impact in the county. This year has been full of transition, as we are in our second year of our New Strategic plan for Extension. We have a new Cooperative Extension State Director, Dr. Richard Bonanno. With this transition 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.

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 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 2015 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

Contact Us
NC Cooperative Extension
Columbus County Center
45 Government Complex Rd.
Suite A
Whiteville, NC 28472
(910) 640-6605 Phone
(910) 642-6315 Fax

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**COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION**

Empowering People • Providing Solutions



Willing and Ready to Work

According to Stephen Gandal, "Across the country, only 17 out of every 100 high school students have jobs. For African-American high school students, it is a mere 9 out of 100. For students who are both African American and from a low-income family, the number drops to 4 out of 100." (TIME – 2010 The Teen Job Chop) North Carolina Cooperative Extension was asked to collaborate with Men and Women United for Youth and Families to address the issue of unemployment among low-income African-American youth.

Men and Women United for Youth and Families received a grant from Resourceful Communities to fund a pilot program for young entrepreneurs in limited resource communities, and asked the county 4-H to be a collaborator. 4-Hers were given the opportunity to participate in this program called Youth Ambassadors for a Community. Youth attended workshops and were interviewed for employment. Nine youth were employed for six weeks during the summer to market locally grown produce in Columbus, Bladen, Brunswick and New Hanover Counties.

Youth were required to keep journals detailing their daily activities. They all did a post evaluation of the program. And, 100% said the program was beneficial economically and personally.

The 4-H youth have given eight presentations around North Carolina about the experience. They have sold over \$1,200.00 in vegetables to help sustain the program, which is more than a 10% cash match. And, although, they are not employed they are still selling fresh winter vegetables to increase sustainable dollars for next year.

New Use for Old Greenhouse

Since the tobacco buyout and with the loss of tobacco income many farmers are still looking for ways to use their greenhouses in order to generate additional farm revenue. There are approximately 15 or more greenhouses that are still left in the county. Extension was requested to research ways in which these greenhouses could be used.

The Horticulture agent in Columbus County, along with the farmer, went on a tour through Farm Bureau and visited a farmer that was growing Tolipa. The Horticulture agent worked with the farmer to design a system in which a fish tank was built and water from the tank is used to fertilize vegetables in a greenhouse hydroponic system.

The horticulture agent went and observed the farmer's operation. Also, the farmer has been featured in several news articles and in business magazines. The farmer has been using this process for the last 2 years with great success. He continues to produce vegetables out of his greenhouse to sell. Now he is considering expanding and the possibility of selling the fish as well. He has seen an increase in his farming operation revenue and has effectively made use of his old greenhouse.

Statistical Information January – December 2015

Total # of Contacts	29,928
# Face to Face	21,359
# Non Face to Face	8,569
# Newsletters	2
# People Newsletters distributed to	351
# Web Visits	2,430
# News Articles	12
# Radio Programs	2
# TV Cable Shows	14
# Credit Courses Taught	8
# Participants in Credit Courses Taught	331
# Participant hours in Credit Courses	993
# Non-Credit Courses Taught	167
# Participants in Non-Credit Courses	8,304
# Participant hours in Non-Credit Courses	501
# Volunteers	714
# Volunteer hours	18,237
In Kind Contribution Amount	403,767
Cash/Sponsorships Amount	6,282
Grants	1,005
Total Contributions	411,054



Senior Hearts Making Better Choices

Good Health is a concern for citizens of Columbus County, due to our lowest ranking, 100 out of 100 in health status in the State. This is a major concern of Columbus County.

Cooperative Extension and Fair Bluff Senior Center partnered to deliver the program; Better Choices.

Based on the attendance records, there were 77 participants. At this site, 33.3% of participants reported they are receiving SNAP benefits.

Based on 9 matched pre-surveys and post-surveys:

- 83.3% reported they made positive behavior change.
- 55.6% eat more fruit. •77.8% eat more vegetables.
- 11.1% are more active. •62.5% get at least 30 minutes of moderate activity more often. •55.6% think about healthy food choices more often. •55.6% eat less high-fat foods. •55.6% practice proper food safety techniques more often. Based on 9 completed My Action Plans (MAPs):
- 25% started or plan to start eating and/or drinking more low-fat dairy each day.
- 33.3% started or plan to start eating more lean protein foods each day. •11.1% started or plan to start following the four steps to keeping foods safe. •88.9% started or plan to start including 15-30 minutes of physical activity daily. •77.8% started or plan to start to eating foods from the five food groups a day.



New Crop for Columbus County

Farmers are always looking for a new crop or a new practice that can increase farm income. The profit margin on traditional crops like corn or soybeans is small, making it hard for a smaller farm to generate sufficient income. One farmer is growing a new crop for this area that he hopes will help produce sufficient income to keep him on the farm.

In 2015 the farmer grew 1 acre of garlic. This was grown to "try out" a new crop and to learn how to grow garlic and also to see if garlic could be grown in Columbus County successfully.

Cooperative Extension was involved throughout the trial period. The beginning of our garlic project included discussions on growing garlic, finding out how to grow garlic, and if garlic would even grow in our climate. Extension was involved in the planning of this crop and the growing also. How to plant and grow a crop of garlic were all new experiences for the grower and the Extension agent. The 1 acre of garlic was a success. The farmer and the Extension agent both learned much about growing garlic. Garlic will grow in Columbus County.

After growing one acre of garlic successfully, the grower now has 165 acres of garlic growing now for the 2016 crop year. The Extension agent is still actively involved in growing the garlic crop, and the farmer and agent are both learning more about garlic.

Taking Care of Our Bees, That Take Care of Us



In previous years, beekeepers have incurred loss of colonies and income potential. Columbus County Beekeeper's committee met for discussions to try to alleviate bee loss. Decisions were made to invite all beekeepers to utilize the assistance of NCA&T Ag Technician to assist with bi-monthly and or weekly inspections during the spring brood build-up period and with continued monitoring during the nectar flow.

Cooperative Extension, being an active participant within the club, assisted with scheduled inspections during the active bee season. Beekeepers were given help in supplying adequate food and nutrition to hives, and monitoring the honey production and pests load. Some beekeepers needed to split hives to increase their production potential. Assistance was given with hive maintenance in areas of changing out comb, new foundation, and storage installation.

Beekeepers which participated were questioned about complications or losses during the previous year's production and overwintering periods. After the spring nectar flow, these beekeepers were asked to evaluate their current populations and honey production. Beekeepers believed that they had been successful at preserving their hives in early spring through ensuring continual supplemental food until the natural sources became available. They observed strong population growth and honey production in the majority of their hives.

Many Beekeepers reported that they felt more confident in protecting and preserving their colonies with the added attention to the health of the honeybees during brood build-up. Most beekeepers reported that honey production was sufficient and would generate added income to their bottom line.

"Can You Hear Me Now?"

One of the main concerns at the Boys and Girls Home Exhibition Center at Lake Waccamaw is the PA system used for events. The system is outdated and

does not have the capacity to meet the needs and demands of 21st century horse shows and other events. Prospective customers looking to rent the facility found the outdated PA system unacceptable. A good PA system is critical for events so that participants and officials, running the event, can communicate effectively.

The Waccamaw Equestrian Show Series (WESS) set a goal to provide the facility with a new PA system. They wanted the show series to generate enough income to help pay for a new up-to-date PA system. The WESS uses the facility during the year and wanted to contribute to the Exhibition Center. The system cost \$8,707.25 and WESS contributed \$6,825.50 toward the new system with the owners contributing the balance \$1,881.75.

After polling the WESS participants, it was evident that the old PA system was not adequate and they wanted a new system. The new system was installed in September 2015. 95% of the surveys rated the faculty as excellent.

The new PA system was used for the last two WESS shows for 2015. The show participants could hear the announcers all around the show grounds. The system didn't cut out during announcements and music could run during idle times for enjoyment of the participants. The BGH representatives are thrilled. The system was in place for their alumni weekend, and they really enjoyed it. WESS will continue to make improvements to the Exhibition Center.

EXTENSION TEAM MEMBERS

Rebekah Benton, Nutrition Program Associate – 4-H EFNEP
Dalton Dockery, County Extension Director
Meleah C. Evers, Extension Agent, Family & Consumer Sciences
Phyllis Creech Greene, Extension Agent, Livestock
Carsha Hayes, Support Specialist
Renee Kellihan, Support Specialist
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
Howard Wallace, Agriculture Agent, Horticulture