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Extension Highlights
Quarterly Report
April—June, 2006
July 10, 2006

Administration - Kent D. Wooten, County Extension Director

Administration

Dr. Danny Shaw, Cooperative Extension District Director for the South Central District visited the Bladen County Extension office and participated in a day of activities to further develop our educational programming efforts. The two major objectives for the day were to lay the groundwork for a stronger more representative Advisory System and to strengthen the diverse 4-H program.

A proposal on how to enhance our total advisory system which was developed by the agents was presented to Dr. Shaw and the entire staff for critique. The agents proposed that each program area have a specialized committee consisting of individuals that represent all their areas of responsibility and demographically. Each agent’s specialized committee would have two representatives on the overall Advisory Council to afford better representation on all issues. Also, in an effort to reach more individuals, it was proposed that we extend our advisory system to individuals that cannot participate in face-to-face meetings by creating “Extended Advisory Committees”. These committees would act in much the same way as traditional advisory members but their participation would be through the use of other forms of communication. These would include mail, e-mail, interactive web pages, chat rooms, and other means of communication conducive to the advisory members.

We have a very talented and diverse 4-H Staff. We are proud of the many ways that we serve the youth of Bladen County. Combine the staff and the many volunteers; we are able to reach a very diverse audience. Dr. Shaw met with the staff to explore additional ways to build teamwork so we can be more effective with all our programming efforts. We are committed to efficiently and effectively utilizing all our resources that has been entrusted with us.

Congratulations

Devona Beard, Administrative Secretary won the prestigious North Carolina State Grange Search for Excellence Award for 2005. The award was given in recognition for her outstanding accomplishments and service to North Carolina Cooperative Extension. Accompanying the state wide award was a plaque and cash award.

Family and Consumer Sciences - Sandra Kelly, Extension Agent, FCS

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that approximately 76 million people get sick and 5,000 people die annually from foodborne illnesses. N.C. Cooperative Extension in collaboration with the Bladen County Health Department offered an 18 hour ServSafe® food safety certification program. The program focuses on teaching safe food handling practices at all levels of operation. Ninety-two percent of the 13 participants enrolled in the program were able to pass a certification exam. Knowledge gained by participants will reduce the risk of foodborne illness for consumers. When conducting restaurant inspections, the County Environmental Health Specialist noticed that ServSafe graduates are doing a better job of monitoring time and temperature of foods.

Bladen County’s rate of overweight children ages 5-11 is 36.9% compared to the state rate of 24.5% (NC-NPASS 2005). Sixty percent of overweight children, 5-10 years-of-age, have at least one cardiovascular risk factor such as high cholesterol, elevated blood pressure or increased insulin level. In an effort to stress the importance of making healthy food choices, N.C. Cooperative Extension, in collaboration with Bladen County Schools, Bladen County Health Department and Bladen Health Watch, conducted “March Madness.” One hundred and one classrooms with 1,789 students participated in the “Gimme Five” challenge striving to eat at least five fruits and vegetables per day.
Livestock - Becky Spearman, Extension Agent, Livestock

The Extension Advisory Board recognized the need for agricultural literacy in Bladen County. 214 million dollars (over 50%) of the county income comes from agriculture, with the livestock industry providing 157 million dollars of the total. Bladen County Cooperative Extension, Bladen Soil and Water Conservation Service, Bladen County Farm Bureau, Cape Fear Farm Credit, and the Bladen County Board of Education are planning Ag'em Up Day – An Agricultural Field Day Adventure for 3rd Grade. The field day will be on September 20 and 21, 2006. There will be eight stations that focus on agriculture in Bladen County. Some of the stations include Nutrition of our Food, Swine, Beef and Poultry, Blueberries and Beekeeping, Field Crops and their products, Farm Technology, and Forestry and the Environment. There will be fun, hands-on activities to show the kids how important agriculture is to them and the county.

4-H and Youth Development - Angela Shaver, Extension Agent, 4-H

4-H is known for its community service work, but did you know that there is a day where youth across the nation work together to better their communities? National Youth Service Day took place on April 29th and 25 Bladen County 4-H Teen Court youth and adults helped to make this day a success. Many of the youth and adults serve as volunteers with the program while some of the youth were clients in the 4-H Restitution and Community Service program performing required hours. Bladen County 4-H Teen Court received a mini-grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency and Prevention to assist with community service efforts. This grant, in the amount of $250, was used to clean up the Bladen Youth Focus community center in Elizabethtown. Funds were used to purchase cleaning supplies, air fresheners, mulch and supplies that could be used in the future. Participants cleaned up the grounds as well as inside the building. Many citizens in the community commented on how good everything looked after the clean-up project.

Horticulture - Corey Crabtree, Extension Agent, Horticulture

In an effort to provide agriculture literacy among youth in Bladen County, the Horticulture Extension Agent teamed up with 4-H in Bladen County to start a 4-H Youth Horticulture Club. Four adult volunteers were recruited from the existing Bladen County Master Gardener program. Eight youth are currently enrolled and are learning about plant growth; benefits of plants; environmental conservation and protection; and pesticide safety. Curriculum is provided by the Junior Master Gardener Program. Bladen County Master Gardeners have compiled a resource book for the public. This book provides necessary gardening information for Bladen County and the southeastern coastal region of North Carolina. The guide is set up in a month-to-month format to assist in successfully creating and managing your landscape; growing a productive home vegetable garden; planting seasonal and colorful flower beds; pruning techniques; and lawn maintenance.

Field Crops - Ryan Harrelson, Extension Agent, Field Crops

Many peanut producers in our county are looking for ways to cut production cost due to the decrease in peanut acreage and contract prices. One of the best ways to achieve this is to cut down on pesticide applications. NCSU has made a disease advisory for peanuts available to agents the past couple of years to help aid us in advising our clients. The Bladen County Cooperative Extension has now made the advisory available to producers via the computer or as a recording updated everyday. The disease advisory can be a helpful aid in the decision of spraying or not spraying based on the disease pressure data collected at 13 locations along the eastern part of NC. We now have 37 growers with an estimated 2,600 total acres signed up to utilize the advisories in our area. If used correctly, the advisories may decrease the pesticide applications from six sprays to four sprays saving $30.00/acre or $78,000 for the total users and also decrease the producers operating expenses by eliminating field passes when unnecessary.