North Carolina Cooperative Extension
Bladen County Center

Administration - Dalton B. Dockery, County Extension Director

Administration
Dr. Donald Cobb, Cooperative Extension District Director for the South Central District visited the Bladen County Extension Office, and met with the County Extension Director. We discussed ways to continue the positive direction in which the Bladen County Extension Office is progressing. One of the objectives of the meeting was to make Dr. Cobb aware of how we are continuing to meet the needs of the citizens in Bladen County.

In a joint effort, between the NC Cooperative Extension Communications Department and the Extension Communication Departments of several other universities a conference was held in Atlanta Georgia entitled “Media Relations”. The purpose of this conference was to provide Extension and educational leaders an opportunity to learn how to build relationships with the media. Participants were chosen from each district and I was honored to be chosen from the South Central District. As County Extension Director this type of training is valuable to both the Director and the staff as we work with the media on a regular basis. The participants in this training are preparing to hold trainings in each Extension District focusing on ways to work with the media, to help market our programs effectively.

Staff Update
Fawn Cannon has joined our staff as the 4-H Summer Academy Assistant. She will be coordinating and helping with the facilitation of the 4-H Summer Academy. Fawn is from Bladenboro and attends The University of North Carolina Greensboro. She is majoring in History Education and minoring in English. She likes the variety of activities that are being offered to the youth through the Summer Academy, because it expands their horizon and enables them to have good experiences beyond their normal activities.

Since our last edition, Kathy Cooper resigned as the 4-H Program Associate. She served in this position for three years.

Staff Retreat
In an effort to build morale, we had a staff retreat held at the North Carolina State Park. The retreat focused on team building. Staff participated in several team building activities, and was given opportunities to demonstrate teamwork and how it will benefit not only our staff, but how we work with other staffs as well. Everyone enjoyed the retreat and our staff has become better team members. As a staff we continue to meet twice a month.

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

Each year Bladen County 4-H asks our 4-H’ers to focus on at least one curriculum project. These projects range from agriculture to zoo keeping; personal development and leadership to forestry and wildlife; health and nutrition to gardening. There is a project area for every 4-H’er!

As the 4-H’ers complete their projects, they are asked to present what they have learned to others. This can be in the form of a poster, speech, or group discussion on the community, club or county level. 4-H’ers have the opportunity to enter in the county presentations contest and many advance to district competition. On Thursday, June 26th fifteen Bladen County 4-H’ers took part in pork, chicken and beef char-grill demonstrations and presented on topics such as expressive arts and communication, fruit and vegetable use, soil, water and the environment, careers and entrepreneurship, and hospitality, etiquette and social graces. All 15 Bladen County 4-H’ers placed at district competition and 13 will advance to the state competition on July 22nd in Raleigh.

4-H presentations teach youth 21st century skills such as learning and thinking, problem solving, creativity, innovation, collaboration, critical thinking, and contextual learning. These core skills will help 4-H’ers now and in the future as they prepare to become part of the work force.
Horticulture - Dalton B. Dockery, CED and Home Horticulture

Bladen County Master Gardeners and new trainees planned a successful tour of the JC Raulston Arboretum and the NC Department of Agriculture Agronomic Lab. The purpose of this tour was to provide more educational training for the new Master Gardeners. Master Gardeners from across the state attend the Arboretum on a yearly basis to learn what new plants will be available in the gardening industry. It also helps to generate new ideas for planting beds and landscape designs.

Livestock - Becky Spearman, Extension Agent, Livestock

Bladen County Cooperative Extension and The Bladen County Animal Response Team (CART) were asked by several local businesses to plan and organize a Pet Wellness Event. The event included reduced cost rabies vaccines, reduced cost microchips, and educational booths on health care, emergency preparedness, grooming, skin care and more. Twelve CART volunteers helped with planning and running the event. Volunteers created a flier, a newspaper advertisement, and an article to promote the event. A local veterinarian donated his services. Over 50 rabies vaccines and 23 microchips were given at the event. Volunteers served in leadership roles before and during the event. Extension and the CART team volunteers are planning the third annual Hurricane Preparedness Expo to educate citizens about the importance of being prepared and having a plan before hurricane season gets here.

Family and Consumer Sciences - Sandra R. Cain, Extension Agent, FCS

The prevalence of obesity continues to be a major issue facing Americans, both young and old. Bladen County is no different. Sixty-three percent of all adults in Bladen County are overweight or obese. Another concern to consumers is the rising costs of everyday necessities. Food prices have risen 6.3 percent so far this year. Milk prices are 10.2 percent higher than they were a year ago.

To address these issues, the “Healthy Eating Across North Carolina” program was conducted in two Senior Citizens sites, Elizabethtown and East Arcadia. In the first half of the eighteen week program, the seventy-four participants learned the importance of eating a well-balanced diet and increasing physical activity to improve overall health and well-being. The second section stressed how to save money and eat well - that it is possible to eat healthy while staying on a budget. At the end of the program, evaluations showed that participants were able to make healthier choices while stretching their food dollars.

Field Crops - Ryan Harrelson, Extension Agent, Field Crops

With the changing technologies in equipment used by farmers today, the applications of the equipment become limited for use due to the lack training for the producer. A producer in Bladen County recently purchased equipment with GPS planting monitors on them. These monitors can aid the farmer in yield counts and plant population based on a program set by the planter. By helping the producer we opened a new door for planting practices that will be implemented next year and will be cost effective for them in the years to come. The total cost that the equipment will save the producer due to correct planting rates and row widths has been estimated at 27 dollars per acre when planting no till corn. We are in the process of organizing a short course for the producers for them to see all the benefits of using GPS systems on their equipment.