MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

We here at Cooperative Extension are very proud of our work in serving the citizens of Bladen County. Please take a few minutes and review our 1st quarter report of “Extension Highlights”. We are excited about the opportunities and challenges of the new year. We strive to bring two universities to the people of Bladen County through many partnerships and collaborative efforts. Our “Extension Highlights” covers only a few of our accomplishments and we welcome your inquiries into any area you want more information. I hope you find this report informative and as always, please let us know how we can better serve our clients.

Kent D. Wooten, CED

Administration - Kent D. Wooten, County Extension Director

One Mission – One Vision – One Extension

Cooperative Extension has embarked on an aggressive change initiative to ensure that we remain true to our mission and vision of the organization while positioning ourselves for success. Our mission is our reason for being and it has not changed. “North Carolina Cooperative Extension is an educational partnership helping put research-based knowledge to work for economic prosperity, environmental stewardship and an improved quality of life.”

We are a university-based catalyst for progress with educational centers in every county. Extension experts address local issues with research-based knowledge and resources, creating opportunities and empowering people to collaboratively solve problems.

We have identified three strategic priorities:

- To strengthen the economy through profitable, sustainable and safe food, forest and green industry systems
- To protect the environment and natural resources
- To empower youth and families to lead healthier lives and become community leaders

To keep our focus on strategic priorities and realize Extension’s potential, we have committed to a more integrated effort to achieve bigger impacts. We will focus on the following critical practices.

* To achieve targeted outcomes, we will link program prioritization, educational program development and marketing
* Each employee will be accountable to a unified mission and targeted outcomes
* Foster positive internal relationships that promote integrated multi-disciplinary educational programs to achieve greater impact
* Develop mutually beneficial and strategically aligned external partnerships to achieve North Carolina’s vision for progress

We here at Cooperative Extension are committed to this change initiative and look forward to better serving the citizens of Bladen County.

Field Crops - Ryan Harrelson, Extension Agent, Field Crops

This time of year in Bladen County the fields are full of equipment and ideas. The times are changing in farming and so are the production practices that the farmers are using. Utilizing new techniques that are involved can be the difference between prospering or just surviving in agriculture. The Bladen County Cooperative Extension has helped farmers recognize these production practices over the past months. There have been production meetings for the various commodities grown here in Bladen County.

The Annual Cotton meeting was held in Clinton and included surrounding counties. There were a total of 62 growers in attendance at this program.

In February a Tobacco Production meeting was held at the Bladen Extension Office. The meeting was held in conjunction with NCSU. Topics covered were production, disease, and insect management in flue-cured tobacco. There were 11 producers in attendance and the management strategies offered may improve economic gain by $198.00 an acre for each producer.

Also in February the annual Peanut Production meeting was held. There were 87 producers in attendance that heard about topics which included management techniques, disease, and insect updates from NCSU Specialist. With the knowledge gained from this meeting the producers may be able increase yields by 200 lbs per acre.

These programs were offered to aid the producer in their farming practices, so they may keep up with the changing times.
Family and Consumer Sciences - Sandra Kelly, Extension Agent, FCS

During the past 20 years, obesity among adults has risen significantly in the United States. The latest data from the National Center for Health Statistics show that 30 percent of adults 20 years of age and older (over 60 million people) are obese. This increase is not limited to adults. The percentage of young people who are overweight has more than tripled since 1980. Among children and teens aged 6–19 years, 16 percent (over 9 million young people) are considered overweight.

These increasing rates raise concern because of their implications for Americans’ health. Being overweight or obese increases the risk of many diseases and health conditions. The Family and Consumer Sciences Department addresses these issues with a number of programs designed to encourage healthy eating and physical activity. Currently, a weight management program is being held at Bladen Community College. In a twelve week period, the 17 participants have lost a total of 150 pounds while learning to make healthy choices, modify recipes and moderate quantities, while making positive lifestyle changes.

Livestock - Becky Spearman, Extension Agent, Livestock

Animal waste management is a large part of livestock production in Bladen County. Producers must comply with many rules and regulations to protect the environment. Animal waste operators must receive six hours of continuing education credit every three years to keep their license and stay in compliance with environmental laws.

Bladen County Cooperative Extension provides assistance to certified operators on sludge management, irrigation calibration, record-keeping, manure sampling, NPDES annual certification forms, non-discharge general permits and nutrient management plans. Livestock producers are informed of regulations through newsletters, farm visits, postcards, and meetings. Extension provided five hours of continuing education credits in 2005. Extension assisted nine producers to complete their sludge surveys on 14 lagoons and two producers on calibrating three equipment systems saving them over $3,500 by completing the tasks themselves. Producers are kept up-to-date with the laws, maintain their license, and protect the environment.

Farms with general permits are required to perform their sludge survey and equipment calibration for the first time by September 30, 2006.

To help provide training for these farms, a class is scheduled for April 25 that will walk them through the steps on what they need to do. Extension will be providing assistance to producers as needed to make sure all farms stay in compliance with the new regulations.

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

The 2005 Bladen County 4-H Achievement Program was held on Thursday, January 26th. The theme was Winter Wonderland and the 4-H'ers, volunteers and parents in attendance were met with snowflakes and winter scenery.

Fifty-seven 4-H'ers were recognized for their accomplishments. All 4-H'ers were given a 4-H gift bag. In addition to all the pins, ribbons and certificates that they received, the bag included a few things that will help them to be successful in 2006; a pocket calendar, a 4-H bookmark, a 4-H wristband, and a pedometer.

4-H'ers also received A.C.H.I.E.V.E Certificates. This award allows more recognition and scholarship opportunities; it emphasizes TRYING in addition to winning and gives 4-H’ers a sense of accomplishment each year. The A.C.H.I.E.V.E stands for Awarding County 4-H’ers Involved Enthusiastically in Various Endeavors.

The accomplishments of our 4-H'ers speak for themselves.

Horticulture - Corey Crabtree, Extension Agent, Horticulture

On March 16, 2006, Bladen County Cooperative Extension and Robeson County Cooperative Extension held the first Pasture and Turf Expo at the Robeson County Fairgrounds. Over 40 people attended the five hour expo. NCSU Specialists provided educational opportunities and answered questions in pasture and turf for citizens located in Bladen, Robeson, and surrounding counties. Attendees learned about establishment and maintenance of warm season turf and pesticide usage for homeowners. Attendees also learned how to manage pastures and rotation grazing to extend the life of the pastures. Continuing education credits were available for animal waste management as well as one hour recertification credits for pesticide license holders.

On February 23, 2006, the Bladen County Cooperative Extension office held the Third Annual Blueberry Production Meeting. Sixty people from Bladen and surrounding counties attended the two hour meeting. Paula Gupton Page, State Legislative Director, North Carolina Farm Bureau spoke on “Immigration and Labor Reform.” This year’s big issue for Bladen County blueberry producers is their concern of the continued use of immigrant farm workers and how possible changes in the laws dealing with immigration will affect their production and labor costs.