Extension Highlights
Quarterly Report
October—December, 2005
January 6, 2006

North Carolina Cooperative Extension
Bladen County Center

Administration - Kent D. Wooten, County Extension Director

Administration
To celebrate a successful year, we here at Extension in conjunction with our many partners host an “Agricultural Appreciation Day”. It is a day to just say thanks to the many individuals and businesses involved in agriculture directly or indirectly that mean so much to the welfare of Bladen County.

Agriculture is almost a 300 million dollar industry to the county. This is just the farm value of agricultural products produced here in the county and does not include any processing or value added to these commodities. Agriculture is very strong here in Bladen County and is recognized nationally as one of the most favorable places to farm in the nation. Bladen leads the State in blueberry production, is third in field crops, fourth in swine production, and is a leader in peanuts and evolving industries such as muscadine grapes. This is not by chance but due to the hard work and dedication of the many farmers, businesses and leaders that have fostered the continued growth and development of this vital part of our lives. Again, we salute all those that support this important industry in Bladen County and thank the over 300 that made our celebration a success.

We hosted our annual Farm-City Week Banquet in cooperation with the Elizabethtown Kiwanis Club to celebrate the important link between rural and urban families and businesses. The Honorable Tony Rand was our keynote speaker and addressed the development of China’s economy and its effects on the world economy. We had approximately 150 in attendance representing both our urban and rural partners.

Staff Recognition
Rebecca Spearman, Livestock Agent received the “Pride of the WolfPack Award” for her outstanding contributions to North Carolina State University from Dean Johnny Wynne of the School of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Becky has developed an outstanding livestock program here in the county and is very deserving of this honor.

Devona Beard, Administrative Assistant received the 2005 Search for Excellence Award, Special Leadership for the South Central District for her leadership in building an effective Extension team. Devona’s leadership during a time of transition has certainly been instrumental in developing our total Extension staff.

Congratulations to Becky and Devona for their outstanding accomplishments.

Horticulture - Corey Crabtree, Extension Agent, Horticulture

With the increase in muscadine grape acreage in Bladen County, educational training workshops are necessary for existing and new muscadine grape producers. On December 14, 2005, 20 existing and potential muscadine grape producers attended a “Pruning Muscadine Grapes” workshop at Bladen County Cooperative Extension. The workshop included a power point presentation on pruning muscadine grape vines.

After the presentation, the attendees visited a local vineyard where they received hands-on instructions from Dr. Barclay Poling, NCSU Specialist and Professor- Small Fruits and Bill Cline, NCSU Specialist- Blueberries and Muscadine Grapes. Proper pruning of muscadine grapes can results in increased grape production, profit, and decreased labor concerns.

The Master Gardener Program had not been in existence in over two years in Bladen County. In 2005, 12 volunteers graduated from an eight week educational training course and opened the Master Gardener Plant Clinic to the public on May 17, 2005. Over 70 contacts have been made through the Plant Clinic.

This year Master Gardeners manned an educational booth at the Arrnon Blueberry Festival, Christmas in July at the Powell-Melvin Agricultural Center, and the Dublin Peanut Festival. Master Gardener volunteers logged in over 400 hours of volunteer service through the Plant Clinic, business meetings, and various volunteer service projects.

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Kent D. Wooten, CED
Administration

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 4th quarter report of “Extension Highlights”. We have completed a very successful year in which all our educational program areas have excelled. Our Extension staff is truly working as a team in meeting the needs of our citizens. 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.

North Carolina State University
Helping People Put Knowledge to Work
Family and Consumer Sciences - Sandra Kelly, Extension Agent, FCS

Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) is a nutrition education program that helps limited resource families develop skills needed to improve their diets. Participants learn to prepare healthy meals and snacks while managing food dollars. In Bladen County, the EFNEP Program Assistant reached 59 families with a total of 303 family members. Sixty-two program graduates show that: 87% improved in at least one food resource management practice, 86% improved in at least one nutrition practice and 55% now read labels to select food with less fat and 39% more participants now use low fat milk. In addition, partnering with the Bladen County Health Department, the EFNEP program delivers nutrition education classes to prenatal clients during their monthly visits to the Health Department. New moms participating in the program state that they have learned to make affordable nutrition choices for themselves and their unborn children. As a result of the program, participants increased their consumption of fruits, vegetables and calcium with 92% having a positive change in at least one food group.

Field Crops - Ryan Harrelson, Extension Agent, Field Crops

With every day that passes the changing technologies in equipment used by farmers is getting more complicated. The applications of the equipment become somewhat limited for use by many farmers. The machinery companies are now offering new products that are helpful to producers and many of them are lacking farmer instruction before sending the equipment out to the field for use.

Livestock - Becky Spearman, Extension Agent, Livestock

Due to the tobacco buyout, many producers are seeking alternatives to tobacco production. A local producer was interested in raising pasture pork. Bladen County Cooperative Extension worked with the producer to help him obtain a grant for $7,000. He was able to purchase fencing, feeders, and waterers for the operation. Extension has worked with the producer to establish a herd health plan and marketing plan. Following recommendations from Extension, the producer has added $5,780 profit to his operation. The new venture into pastured pork has allowed the producer to diversify his operation which will reduce his risk in farming. The producer has plans to change his feed ration by using grains produced on the farm to decrease feed costs.

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

Bladen County 4-H has reached approximately 356 teens and adults this quarter through three collaborative programming efforts. In early October, in partnership with the Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Task Force and the Ministerial Association, we helped to reach 176 teens and adults at the Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Teen Summit. Numerous presenters, including a few teenage mothers, talked with the audience about abstinence, safe sex and sexually transmitted diseases. 100% of the youth that filled out an evaluation stated that the information they received at this Teen Summit would help them to make important decisions in the future.

Bladen County 4-H Friends of Youth once again hosted Octoberfest, a workshop for youth referred to the program and their parents. This program reached 40 youth and adults and included a presentation on Gear Up: Philosophies for Success. The Bladen County 4-H Diversity and Inclusion TRY-IT Team presented a session on Heroes and Sheroes and the East Bladen Step Team performed.

In collaboration with the Bladen County Juvenile Crime Prevention Council, Ministerial Association, Health Watch, Health Department, School System, DSS and Housing Authority, Bladen County 4-H reached 140 teens and adults at the Gang Awareness Teen Summit in December. The main objective of this session was to eliminate gang activity evolving through schools and in the community by allowing citizens and community leaders to work with law enforcement officers to deter gang activity. Detective Dodson of the Durham County Sheriffs Office Gang Intelligence Unit talked with the group about the dress, signs, and symbols of gangs. He also discussed common gang identifiers, gang graffiti, symbols and paraphernalia, and what communities, parents, and children can do. 98% of the participants that turned in an evaluation stated that the information that they received would help them to make important decisions in the future. 4-H will continue to bring quality collaborative programming to Bladen County youth in 2006!