/admincontent/3183/extension-highlights-first-page-exclusive.png
Livestock - Becky Spearman, Extension Agent, Livestock

Over 50% of Bladen County’s income comes from agriculture. The Extension Advisory Board recognizes the need for agricultural literacy in our schools. Bladen County Cooperative Extension partnered with ten other organizations to hold the Second Annual Ag’em Up Field Day for third graders. Over 40 volunteers helped lead fun, hands-on activities focusing on Swine, Beef, Poultry, Blueberries, Field Crops, Nutrition, Tractors, and Soils. Local FFA students were in charge of three stations - planning the topics, securing any materials, and teaching at the station. The FFA Poultry Station had the highest percent increase in knowledge (46%) on the pre and post tests. FFA students served as tour guides taking the classes from station to station and keeping the day running smoothly. Over 425 students, and 50 teachers and parents attended. Sponsors donated $1250 and over $1500 in goods and services. The committee is already planning for next year’s field day.

Horticulture - Dalton B. Dockery, County Extension Director and Home Horticulture

The Master Gardener Program has had a successful year. In 2005, 12 volunteers graduated from an eight-week educational training course. Since then they have had plants sales as fund raisers, made numerous homeowner visits and answered many horticulture calls. This year the Master Gardeners sponsored a Soil Borne Disease Workshop in December at the Powell-Melvin Agricultural Center. Over 15 participants learned about identifying soil borne diseases and management practices for controlling this disease. Master Gardener volunteers logged in over 400 hours of volunteer service through the plant clinic, business meetings and various volunteer service projects.

In an effort to recruit more volunteers, on February 5, 2008 we will begin a 10- week training session for new and aspiring Master Gardeners. Dalton Dockery will be the instructor for the class.

Field Crops - Ryan Harrelson, Extension Agent, Field Crops

Many peanut producers in our county were looking for ways to cut production cost due to the drought in the growing season effecting and lowering yields. One of the best ways to achieve this is to cut down on pesticide applications. Bladen County Cooperative Extension made the Disease Advisory available to producers via a list serve updated everyday in 2007. 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 had 28 growers with an estimated 2,100 total acres signed up to utilize the advisories in our area. If used correctly, the advisories may decrease the pesticide applications from 6 sprays to 4 sprays saving $30.00/acre or $78,000 for the total users. It also decreases the producers operating expenses by eliminating field passes when unnecessary.

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

According to the 2007 Bladen County Juvenile Crime Prevention Council Risk and Needs Assessment, there has been an elevation in the number of youth getting into trouble for drinking alcohol. The 4-H Life Skills Strengthening Families Program (SFP) was instituted in 2007 to address substance abuse and other youth needs within Bladen County. Of the youth enrolled in the SFP in 2007, 85% showed a positive behavior change toward the use of alcohol and drugs after completing the program. In addition, 90% reduced the number of times that they were sent to the school principal’s office for fighting; 80% showed a positive change in their behavior with friends and dating; and 98% increased their self-esteem. Based on these and other program successes, we will continue offering the Strengthening Families Program through the Bladen County 4-H Life Skills Program in 2008.