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 3rd quarter report of “Extension Highlights”. We strive to bring two universities to the people of Bladen County through many partnerships and collaborative efforts. I hope you find this report informative; and as always, please let us know how we can better serve our clients.

Dalton B. Dockery, CED

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North Carolina Cooperative Extension  Bladen County Center

Administration - Dalton B. Dockery, County Extension Director

New County Extension Director

As the new County Extension Director, I am very excited about our staff at Bladen County Cooperative Extension. This is a very dynamic staff that is dedicated to meeting the needs of Bladen County citizens. Having just started September 1, 2007, I continue to be amazed at the partnerships and collaborations that Extension is a part of in Bladen County. During the first month of my tenure I have had the chance to meet a lot of new people and make many new friends. I look forward to working with not only the staff but also the citizens of the county as well.

Award and Recognition Winners

Angela Shaver, Extension Agent, 4-H Youth Development, was awarded the prestigious Achievement in Service Award during the National 4-H Agents Association Meeting. This award is a recognition for NAE4-HA Members who are actively engaged in Extension 4-H youth programs and who have served more than three, but less than seven years in Extension youth programs.

Ms. Dorothy McKoy is currently serving as 1st Vice-President of the North Carolina Extension and Community Association. She was recently installed at the ECA State Leadership Conference at Camp Cara-way. Ms. McKoy has been an active ECA member for 39 years.

We salute all of our Bladen County winners.

Staff Changes

Since our last edition, we have added Dalton Dockery to our staff as the new County Extension Director. Also, as of August 31st, Sandra Cain will no longer be serving as Interim Director of the Bladen County Center. We want to take this opportunity to thank her for her dedication and continued support of all Extension Programs. She continues to be a valuable asset as the Family and Consumer Sciences Agent for Bladen County.

We are moving forward with the process to hire a new Extension Secretary. Several qualified candidates were interviewed on October 5th. We look forward to filling this position as soon as possible.

Livestock - Becky Spearman, Extension Agent, Livestock

Newsletter Ratings

Livestock farmers need reliable, up-to-date information to make decisions for their farms. Bladen and Richmond County Cooperative Extension Centers have teamed up to write a Livestock Newsletter five times a year. The newsletter discusses production management, upcoming events, producer profiles, and other important information. As a result of the newsletter, 85% of surveyed producers rated the newsletter as excellent or outstanding. 85% of the producers said they had adopted three or more best management practices from reading the newsletter. Some of the comments were “The newsletter lets us know what things are going on and we learn from others”, “We have gained a lot of knowledge about overall health issues of livestock and have found the calendar of events helpful for planning what we would like to attend”, and “It has really helped in management practices for our farm”.

Drought Affects

The drought has negatively affected livestock producers in Bladen County. Estimates project a 60-75% loss in hay and pasture production for the year. Bladen County Cooperative Extension has put together drought management newsletters and information packets to help cattle, goat, sheep and horse owners. Livestock owners need to be proactive and plan what they will do because of the loss in hay production to get them through the winter feeding period. Extension has helped producers investigate alternative feeding practices such as baling corn stalks and soybeans for hay. Extension has helped producers determine which cows to cull to decrease the need for hay in their herds. Extension will continue to help farmers plan to make it through the winter with a high quality herd.

Channing Gooden discussing corn stalk hay at a field day.
Family and Consumer Sciences - Sandra R. Cain, Extension Agent, FCS

**EFNEP**
The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) conducts series of classes focusing on helping participants develop food resource management skills, nutrition practices that lead to improved health, and food safety skills. Skills taught include meal planning, comparison shopping, label reading, portion sizes, food safety and healthy inexpensive dishes that save money. As a result, 99% of participants showed improvements in their resource management practices, 98% showed improvement in their nutrition practices and 89% showed improvement in their diets.

**Horticulture - Ryan Harrelson, Extension Agent, Commercial Horticulture**

**Strawberries**
With the high input costs of traditional farm crops some Bladen County producers are looking for new commodities to raise on their farms. With the help of NCSU crop specialists, Bladen County Cooperative Extension has been providing producers with new research based information to help the farmer make these visions a reality. One of the crops farmers are preparing to transition to is strawberries. Strawberries may return net revenue of more than $5,000 per acre planted. With this type of possible return, producers want to obtain the best yields with the lowest input costs. Cooperative Extension has assisted producers with production guides and helped with hands-on information to make the return on the farmer’s investment the most efficient it can be.

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

**4-H Friends of Youth**
Mr. Jerry Withrow and his mentee, Jaron, visit the local library to work on a school assignment. Mr. Withrow enjoys helping his young friend with school work, but they also allow time for fun.

Mentoring 4-H Friends of Youth Program is making a difference to young people in Bladen County. This Governor’s One-on-One Volunteer Program has been in existence in Bladen County since 1994.

Through 4-H Friends of Youth, adult volunteers encourage their young friends to stay in school, improve their grades, and socially interact with others in a positive manner. The ultimate goal of the program is to redirect a young life. Volunteers challenge and empower youth of diverse backgrounds to make their futures brighter, with the personal one-on-one effectiveness.

The 4-H Friends of Youth program successfully matched 19 youth with a caring adult last year. If just one of all the 4-H Friends of Youth participants who have benefited from being matched with a mentor over the past year, just one, improved their grades in school that allowed them to increase their earning potential by $1.00 per hour more in wages during a 40 year working career, then a minimum of $83,000 of earning power and additional tax revenues would be generated for the county’s tax base.

**Eat Smart Move More Grant Funding**
The Bladen County Health Department in collaboration with Cooperative Extension secured an Eat Smart Move More grant in the amount of $14,229 to support the Mission Possible: Get Fit For Life Day Camp in 2008. Grant writing team members Carol Strickland (Health Dept.), Sandra Cain and Angela Shaver (Cooperative Extension) submitted the grant in July and received confirmation of funding in September.

Mission Possible began the summer of 2006 with a grant from the Duke Endowment.

The week long day camp targets up to fifty youth, ages 5 – 12, that are at-risk for developing Type II Diabetes. Camp activities include nutrition classes and increasing physical activity through swimming and outdoor play. Thanks to the Eat Smart Move More funding, the summer of 2008 will see another group of campers have fun while learning about leading a healthy lifestyle.

**Field Crops - Ryan Harrelson, Extension Agent, Field Crops**

**Peanut Pod Blasting**
The extreme drought conditions this growing season has affected a lot of crops grown in Bladen County, peanuts not being an exception. The weather has delayed pod maturity and cut some yields in half. To obtain maximum yields, digging has to be done at the right time. To help aid the farmers in this decision, Bladen County Cooperative Extension held a “Pod Blasting” field day to measure peanut maturity. Forty-six farmers attended the pod blasting on a local farm and brought 78 samples for testing. Farmers were able to better estimate when to begin digging peanuts for harvesting, some as many as 10-15 days later than they expected. An estimated 63% of the peanut acreage in the county reached a higher maturity than if the pod blaster had not been used. This resulted in an increased gross income of $7,600 per farmer that participated.

**EFNEP Program Assistant, Earlene Blue, on left, assists program participants in healthy meal preparation. Participants are (left to right) Rene’ Smith, Takesha Davis, Juanita Hunt and Lenore Smith.**