

# The Power of Extension



Robeson County Center

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## An Inside Glance into Cooperative Extension

The Power of Extension is a summary of the educational programs conducted by North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center, which impact the lives of Robeson County citizens. The organization works with citizens to determine the most important and urgent issues to the community. When the issues have been identified, the staff utilizes university resources to help address these needs. The Robeson County Center works with clients in four main areas: Agriculture, Community Resource Development (CRD), Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS), and 4-H Youth Development. We hope this newsletter provides more information about the opportunities offered by Cooperative Extension.

*Cathy L. Graham*

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County Extension Director

## Community Resource Development



**Promoting Local Foods at UNC-P** -- The local foods movement in Robeson County is growing, resulting in more consumers interested in purchasing fresh produce grown in the community. Often, college students attending the University of North Carolina at Pembroke (UNC-P) are unaware of local food options. Cooperative Extension partnered with UNC-P student-

led Greener Coalition Club and 12 other nonprofit agencies/farmers to host Food Day. This is a nationwide event to promote farmers and educate the public on the benefits of eating locally produced food. As part of the local event, Cooperative Extension provided local food samples and educational resources, which included information about the North Carolina 10% Campaign and a local foods directory. Over 150 students attended the event, and an informal verbal survey revealed more than 50 percent of students were unaware of the Robeson County Farmers Market and various produce offerings around the county. Also, 100 percent of the students increased their knowledge of local foods, and 75 percent plan to purchase locally which will benefit the local economy. Based on the success of Food Day, Cooperative Extension will continue to offer educational programming to UNC-P students in order to promote purchasing local foods.

**Casey Hancock, Extension Local Foods / Tourism Agent**



**Robeson Leadership Academy** -- The Robeson County Manager and commissioners identified staff development as a critical need to increase productivity among employees. Therefore, county administration requested Cooperative Extension facilitate a six-day Robeson Leadership Academy. Thirty-nine employees attended from 25 different county departments. Educational topics included team building, effective communication, conflict resolution, and the Conscious Discipline Brain Model. Also, all



participants completed Human Patterns, which is a self-administered assessment indicating personal preferences to assist in problem solving, understanding interpersonal relationships, and identifying leadership styles. Surveys revealed 100 percent of the participants would use communication techniques and Human Patterns information learned in the academy to respond effectively to other people. The county manager stated, "The training holds each employee accountable for departmental morale. I have received a tremendous amount of feedback on the relevance of the training in the personal and professional development of county employees who attended. As a result of the training, employees talk directly to the people involved in conflict to solve problems instead of becoming involved in a drama triangle." Based on the success of the Robeson Leadership Academy, additional training will be held for other county employees.

**Cathy L. Graham, County Extension Director**

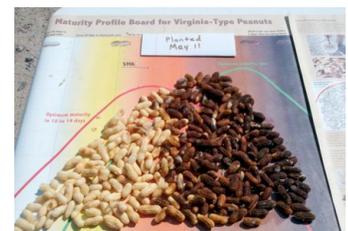
## Agriculture



**Pecan Management Seminar** -- An increase in calls related to pecan management revealed the need for educational classes in pest management, disease control, and proper fertilization. Based on this need, Cooperative Extension provided a two-hour Pecan Management Seminar. Twenty-eight participants attended the workshop, which was led by a North Carolina State University specialist. Surveys revealed knowledge was gained by 100 percent of the participants in disease control, pest management, and proper tree spacing; 94 percent in proper soil testing; and 87 percent in fertilizer requirements. Collectively, 10 of the participants plan to soil test and fertilize 416 pecan trees on their property to increase production. Incorporating these changes can optimize production up to 200 pounds per tree. Based on an economic value of \$400 per tree, participants could realize \$166,400 (416 trees times \$400) as potential income. Based on the success of the Pecan Seminar, additional workshops will be held.

**Mack Johnson, Extension Horticultural Agent**

**Peanut Pod Blasting Clinics** -- Determining optimal peanut maturity is one of the most crucial decisions a peanut farmer faces. Deciding when to dig a peanut crop will affect the yield, quality, and potential income for a producer. Based on this need, Cooperative Extension hosted two Peanut Pod Blasting Clinics to help growers determine peanut maturity. During these workshops, a pressure washer removed the outer layer of pods from random samples brought from each grower's fields. Removing the outer layer revealed pod coloration, which determines maturity when placed on a maturity profile board developed by North Carolina Cooperative Extension. As a result of the two Peanut Pod Blasting Clinics, optimum maturity was identified on samples processed for five growers representing 883 acres of peanuts. Post harvest surveys revealed a 10 percent average increase in yields by following Cooperative Extension recommendations. The estimated yield increase resulted in \$79,000 of extra income for the participating growers combined. Due to the success of the Peanut Pod Blasting, additional clinics will be held in the future.



**Mac Malloy, Extension Field Crops Agent**



**High-Tunnel Greenhouses** -- Small-scale produce farmers are constantly searching for new methods and varieties to extend the growing season and maximize profit. To assist these farmers, Cooperative Extension provided an educational workshop in March showcasing the benefits of high-tunnel greenhouses, which extend the growing season. High-tunnel greenhouses utilize plastic mulch and drip irrigation, which allows farmers to have earlier crops, higher yields,

increased profits, and better quality. A total of 21 people attended the workshop. Six months after completion of the workshop, follow-up evaluations were conducted by E-mail and telephone. Since the completion of the workshop, three participants have installed high-tunnel greenhouses and another four have signed up and qualified for purchasing high tunnels through the United States Department of Agriculture – Environmental Quality Incentives Irrigation Efficiency Program. The installed greenhouses have generated \$9,200 combined extra income for the three farmers in their first year of operation. The additional greenhouses will continue to help produce farmers expand their operations and marketing opportunities. Due to the success of the program, more updates and workshops on high-tunnel production will be held in the future.

**Nelson Brownlee, Extension Area Farm Management Agent**

## 4-H Youth Development

**Community Service Project** -- Robeson County is one of the most impoverished counties in the state of North Carolina. Based on this need, Cooperative Extension’s 4-H Program requires clubs, as part of their chartering process, to conduct at least one community service project annually. In 2013, 12 clubs conducted a total of 42 different community service projects, such as making scarves for underprivileged youth, food drives, and putting together hygiene kits for the homeless. More than 200 youth took part in the combined community service projects giving a total of 16,800 hours back to the community. The value of youth volunteer economic impact is \$19.09 per hour in North Carolina, giving these projects an estimated dollar value of \$320,017 combined. Due to the economic and social impacts of these projects, Robeson County 4-H will continue to encourage clubs and youth to find creative ways to give back to their communities.



**Shea Ann DeJarnette, Extension 4-H Youth Development Agent**



**Fair Booths** -- Learning can sometimes be a difficult and painful experience. Learning and having fun should be simultaneous. There are many educational experiences where we learn life skills and have fun at the same time. Several 4-H clubs reserved booth spaces at the Robeson County Fair. The 4-H club leaders, volunteers, and members decorated their individual club booths with educational themes. The 4-H youth had several fun-filled days of learning facts about recycling, entrepreneurship, shooting sports, arts and crafts, and other

educational materials. They learned the responsibility of commitment, leadership, and teamwork, which are all critical educational components. Being successful is learning and having fun along the way. Due to the impact of this program, the Cooperative Extension 4-H Program will continue to partner with the Robeson County Fair to offer learning opportunities to youth.

**Wendy Maynor, Extension 4-H Program Assistant**

## Family and Consumer Sciences

**“Steps to Health”** -- The obesity and overweight rate for children in Robeson County is over 40 percent. Obesity in children increases health problems later in life. In addition, Robeson County is the poorest county in the state with a poverty rate of 31.3 percent and 85 percent of school-aged children enrolled in free and reduced lunch. To address this need, Cooperative Extension partnered with the public schools to offer “Steps to Health” nutrition education to 263 Pre-K and Kindergarten students in three county schools. The nine-week series focused on healthier choices by eating more fruits and vegetables. Students were also able to participate in tasting sessions each week, which was an opportunity to try foods not experienced previously. Based on parent feedback, 86 percent thought their child was more willing to taste vegetables, 91 percent thought their child was more willing to taste fruits, and 92 percent noticed an increase in physical activity in their child. Parents also indicated information and healthy recipes sent home were helpful; some of the recipes already had been tried or there were plans to try them. Several parents expressed appreciation for the program, because their children are now more willing to try new foods. Based on the success of the 2013 “Steps to Health” Program, this program will be offered again in the future.



### Christy Strickland, Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Agent



**Latino ServSafe Training** -- In Robeson County, the restaurant workforce includes a growing number of Latinos. Food safety education opportunities for Latinos in their native language are very limited. To meet this need, Cooperative Extension recruited a bilingual volunteer to translate correspondence, make phone calls, and interpret communication in ServSafe training. Sixteen Latinos attended the ServSafe classes. Also, the volunteer led review sessions to tutor the seven participants who did not pass the exam and plan to retest. During this process, the volunteer took the instructor exam and passed with 98 percent accuracy. A minimum of 136 volunteer hours was given at a rate of \$22.14 per hour. This equates to \$3,011 in volunteer time. The volunteer had over 300 client contacts through E-mail, phone calls, office visits, and training sessions. Outcomes of the program include ServSafe certifications for nine participants from six food-service establishments with an average passing score of 84 percent. Participants who did not pass the exam still increased their knowledge/skills in providing safe food to customers. One participant stated, “I have no formal education but learned a great deal, which helped me keep a cleaner kitchen.” This training has potentially saved Robeson County \$450,000 in costs associated with foodborne illness. As a result of the course, these nine participants will help their establishments avoid a two-point deduction from their health inspection score. Those who did not pass the exam will attend review sessions and retest. ServSafe Food Safety Training will continue to be provided in Robeson County.

### Janice Fields, Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Agent



**Healthy Foods + Physical Activity** -- The American Dietary Guidelines recommend overweight and obese children change their eating and physical activity behaviors so their Body Mass Index (BMI) for age percentile does not increase over time. Families, schools, and communities can play an important role in supporting changes in eating and physical activity behaviors for children. Cooperative Extension's 4-H Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) partnered with the Public Schools of Robeson County, church summer camps, and the Boys and Girls Club to deliver a series of six food and nutrition classes to 1,133 youth from Pre-K to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Students in grades 3 through 12 were taught the importance of making healthy food choices using a virtual cafeteria from the SyberShop curriculum. Lessons for youth in Pre-K through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade focused on trying new foods. Using puppets and story time from the Adventures in Nutrition curriculum made learning fun and exciting. Results from written evaluations showed 92 percent of youth improved their abilities to choose foods according to Federal Dietary Recommendations and 64 percent of youth improved their ability to prepare simple, nutritious, affordable snacks for themselves. Based on these results, 4-H EFNEP will continue to partner with schools, churches, and other community organizations to bring nutrition awareness to youth in Robeson County.



**Tamika McLean, Extension 4-H EFNEP Assistant**



**Eat Smart, Move More** -- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports more than 80 percent of adults do not meet the recommended daily guidelines for aerobic and muscle-strengthening physical activity. Lack of physical activity can directly correlate to a higher risk of early death due to coronary heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, and other chronic health issues. Based on this problem, Cooperative Extension's Adult Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) partnered with several community organizations to teach Eat Smart, Move

More classes. A series of up to 12 lessons were offered to limited-resource residents. Participants were introduced to healthy eating and physical activity ideas. As a result of the program, 22 percent of participants increased their daily physical activity. Due to participant's success with EFNEP, more partnerships will be established to offer nutrition educational class to new audiences.

**Renee Diggs-Neal, Extension Adult EFNEP Assistant**

For more information about upcoming educational opportunities, please check out our programming calendar at:

<http://robeson.ces.ncsu.edu>

