Clay County: Making a Difference in the Lives of all Residents

The Clay County Cooperative Extension Service continues its mission to bring research-based information from both land grand institutions (University of Kentucky & Kentucky State University) to local individuals and families. As we reflect on the past year, it is apparent that Cooperative Extension continues to make strides in serving a diverse group of clientele. We continue to meet the needs of rural populations. Extension provides programs in the various areas of agriculture and natural resources, family and consumer sciences, 4-H youth development and community and economic development. We hope that you will take time to review the programs highlighted in this report and we look forward to seeing you at one of our programs soon!
A mong Clay County adults, 31 percent are obese, 11 percent have diabetes, and only 7 percent meet physical activity standards. To address a need for healthier food choices and increased physical activity, the Clay County Extension Service launched “Healthy Walking Healthy Life”. The program was designed to encourage healthy eating and exercising among participants who recently completed “Weight the Reality Series”. Of the 63 percent participating in an evaluation conducted one month after the program ended: 67 percent reported making healthier food choices and feeling better; 58 percent became more aware of their eating choices; 47 percent made nutritional goals for their families; 42 percent reported they could now walk for 30 to 90 minutes without problems; and 34 percent had lost weight.

PLATE IT UP COOKING SCHOOL

Due to the health rating for Clay County families and the high percentage of our adults (31%) that are considered overweight and 11% of our adults with diabetes, six Plate It Up Cooking Schools, using Plate It Up recipes that are nutritious and can be grown in Kentucky gardens, were presented. The first session had 12 participants. By word of mouth, attendance increased to 35 at one session. Many were repeat attendees. A formal evaluation at the end of six sessions (one year) showed:

…94% increased knowledge of food preparation skills and food safety
…88% will purchase or grow vegetables or fruit to sell at farmers’ market or for their own consumption
…88% said the taste test contributed to purchasing or growing fruits and vegetables
…88% said the recipe card helped in their decision to purchase and to try recipes at home
…71% said the recipe card helped evaluate their nutritional needs

Plate It Up recipes promote nutritional recipes, growing, and purchasing local foods and the increase consumption of fruits and vegetables.

GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN

Due to 62% of Clay County grandparents raising their grandchildren and 46% having been responsible for them for over five years, the one-day program was offered. Families are facing challenges of drug usage, death of a parent, abandonment and financial concerns. In order for families to address these issues, Grandparents Raising Grandchildren was presented.

…100% gained knowledge related to parenting
…57% have a better understanding of realistic expectation of children and themselves
…57% learned and practiced positive discipline techniques and skills to strengthen and sustain relationships
…57% reported they had used information received on helping grandchildren succeed in school and understanding the development of children

4-H FORESTRY FIELD DAY

Twelve million acres, 47 percent of Kentucky’s 25,425,904 acres, are covered in forest. Kentucky lost more than 700,000 acres of forest between 1988 and 2004, mostly due to the conversion of forest for development purposes. Of the 12 million acres of forest, 11.6 million acres are classified as timberland. Clay County has just over 300,000 acres of land with approximately 256,000 acres of forest land. To increase awareness of the surrounding
environment for young people, Clay County 4-H Youth Development implemented a Forestry Field Day at Double Creek Park in Redbird. With the help of the U.S. Forestry Service, KY Department of Fish and Wildlife, KY Furbearers, and UK Cooperative Extension, thirty three elementary students from Redbird Mission had a full day of events. Students managed through stations ranging from water quality, wildlife, tree measurement and identification, fire prevention, a cleanup scavenger hunt, and Kentucky Furbearers. Students learned how to better protect their environment, understand the value of renewable and non-renewable resources, and the importance of forests in an ecosystem.

75% of students understood the difference between a renewable and non-renewable resource. All of the teachers were very pleased to see that the information the students learned reinforced classroom lessons and gave them real, hands on experience. Through these efforts three 4-H clubs were established at Redbird Mission School. It was a win-win situation for volunteers, school, students, and Extension.

**4-H CAMP**

4-H Camp gives youth all across the nation an opportunity to experience what it is like when those parents are not around for a few days. Life skills are imperative for everyone. The sooner youth can be involved in activities and programs that help develop these skills, the more prepared they will be in the future. According to national research conducted by the American Camp Association 2004, campers show significant growth in self-esteem, peer relationships, independence, adventure and exploration, leadership, environmental awareness, friendship skills, values and decisions, and social comfort.

Communication with students from other counties is an opportunity to become more comfortable around people they have never met. Overcoming fears and gaining confidence is a big part of camp. The ropes courses for example are not there just because they are fun. I watched one of my youngest campers overcome her fear of heights and make it all the way to the top. It showed campers how to encourage each other and teamwork. It also displays how they can push far beyond what they thought capable. Teens also have an opportunity to become leaders and have a large responsibility that they are held accountable for.

Every camper wanted to be involved in more 4-H activities besides just camp when we returned home. New friends from other counties were made by all campers, and all youth were very physically active all week. If not for the partnerships formed with local organizations some children would miss this wonderful opportunity. Our attendance at camp has increased from the year prior and we hope to have even more next year!

**AGRICULTURE AWARENESS DAY**

The Clay County Agriculture Advisory Council identified a need for more agricultural education at the Clay County High School since there is not a vocational agricultural program there and most students have not had the benefit of growing up on a farm. Most students do not think much about where their food comes from in the world. Working with Clay County High School administrators and faculty, we were able to provide an agriculture awareness day in conjunction with their annual fall festival.
This year Clay County Farmers were asked to present displays on corn, tobacco, livestock, and wildlife for the students to visit and ask questions. Efforts from the Agriculture Awareness Day allowed the students to get a picture of the magnitude of agriculture, how agriculture affects them and the careers associated with agriculture.

**SHARED USE EQUIPMENT**

The Clay County Agriculture Development Council along with the Clay County Farm Bureau and the Clay County Conservation District are working together to provide equipment for all Clay Countians to use on their farms. Most of the farms in Clay County are owned and managed by part-time farmers. It is difficult to justify the purchase of a piece of equipment for $25,000 that may be used only one to two days a year on your farm, but if you can have access to quality equipment through rental than it still allows you to farm. In our shared use equipment arsenal there are two no-till drills, two manure spreaders, two pull type corn planters (one two row and one four row), a post driver, a vegetable transplanter, a bed shaper/mulch layer for vegetables, a lime spreader, a low profile sprayer, a weed wipe, a tobacco moisture tester, and a portable headgate/squeeze chute scales. We are in the process of purchasing two more pieces of equipment for the shared use equipment program that will be ready for the 2014 season. We are adding a hay and pasture aerator and an in-line bale wrapper to our inventory. Most of the shared use equipment is housed at Lunsford’s Farm Supply in Burning Springs. The charge is $20/day per piece of equipment. If you are looking to use a particular piece of equipment please call us at 598-2789.