As a storm of economic uncertainty looms, rural communities are experiencing an increased need to implement sustainable community development practices. To address this challenge, the Cooperative Extension Service in Cumberland County collaborated with multiple community partners including the Cumberland County Chamber of Commerce, Burkesville City Council, Cumberland County Fiscal Court, and the Burkesville/Cumberland County Industrial Authority to request grant funding for the development of a comprehensive strategic plan for Burkesville and Cumberland County.

In February of 2013, the group was awarded $5000 from the Application Regional Commission. As part of the project, an educational forum was held with over 50 community leaders and local, state, and federal elected officials and over 250 local participants who identified five priorities for strategies and sustainable community development:

- Jobs – Support business retention and expansion while creating an environment that fosters entrepreneurship
- Youth – Expand opportunities for young people that promote positive youth development while increasing awareness of existing youth programs
- Communication and Collaboration – Facilitate and promote communication and collaboration among community organizations, government agencies, and all citizens to maximize the impact of available resources
- Health - Enhance the physical, emotional, and spiritual health of all people in Cumberland County by increasing the availability of public places to recreate
- Beatification and Revitalization – Celebrate the history and natural beauty of all Cumberland County and reestablish Burkesville and Marrowbone as destinations to visit.

Members of the Cumberland County Extension Council served as volunteer hosts of the Cumberland County booth at the KY State Fair Pride of the Counties because of the actions of the members of the Strategic Plan Committee.

Priority Program Efforts

- A total of 150 people are now involved in addressing significant community issues
- 40 local residents implemented practices that promote sustainable agriculture
- 20 producers reported an economic impact (i.e., increase in agricultural productivity, increase in higher returns, decrease in expenses) in their agricultural operations
- 400 youth indicated an increase in leadership skills, knowledge or confidence through participation in Extension-related leadership programs
- 644 citizens (youth & adults) acknowledged utilizing the skills learned through Extension programming
- A total of 400 individuals reported making lifestyle changes (diet, exercise, managing stressors, healthy home practices, etc.) for the purpose of improving their health
- A total of 169 youth and adults demonstrated informed and effective decision-making skills
- 60 individuals incorporated new or additional conservation practices.
AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

MASTER GARDENER EXTENSION VOLUNTEERS

Becoming a Master Gardener required 24 hours of instruction on topics of ornamental and vegetable gardening including botany, entomology, soils and fertilizers, organic gardening and more. Since fulfilling their Master Gardener instruction, the Cumberland County volunteers have worked toward acquiring their 30 service hours by being engaged in several community activities. Master Garden volunteers have spent time with residents at Cumberland Valley Manor nursing facility discussing simple gardening and landscape topics as well as planting trees at the location.

The volunteers have maintained raised bed gardens at the Extension Office as well as presented instruction on raised bed gardening. Volunteers have also assisted with many Extension programs. In March 2013, members presented a curriculum called Gardener’s Toolbox at Family Adventures in Extension, the Extension Council’s spring meeting. Topics ranged from composting and organic gardening to soil testing and fertilizers.

Many of the volunteers have also been involved in multi-state Master Gardener programming. Several of the volunteers traveled to Scott County, Tennessee for additional training and collaboration with Tennessee Master Gardeners.

Specialists served as presenters on subjects involving the KY Farm Bureau Roadside Market Program, Kentucky Blueberry Growers Co-op, and diversification opportunities through the County Agriculture Improvement Program from the KY Agriculture Development Board.

MASTER CATTLEMEN AND MASTER GRAZERS

With a beef cattle population of approximately 6700 and recent strong cattle prices, Cumberland County beef producers were looking for ways to improve production efficiency. Forty-three beef producers in Cumberland County who completed the Master Cattlemen and Master Grazer classes have reported that their use of rotational grazing practices has decreased their reliance on hay and purchased feeds. High beef prices and high feed costs prompted producers to cull unproductive aged cows prior to winter. Furthermore, managed strip grazing allowed overwintering of the cowherds at reduced costs for feed. One producer adopting improved grazing management was able to graze his herd until late January and was able to sell hay produced on his farm for the first time ever.
FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

REACHING YOUTH AND IMPROVING HEALTH

According to data from the Child Policy Research Center, more than 37% of Kentucky youth (ages 10-17) are considered overweight or obese and, as a result, are at increased risk for developing heart disease, diabetes, and several different types of cancer. Physical activity and a healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains may reduce the risk of cancer and other chronic diseases and provide the body with essential vitamins and minerals that are important for good health.

To focus on the improvement of health in the youth of Cumberland County, collaboration has been established with the local school system and Head Start to provide nutrition classes. Once a month, during the school year, stories were read that introduce nutritious foods, concepts of staying healthy, and being physically active. During the lessons, the students would engage in physical activities and food tasting that focused on fruits and vegetables. Examples of foods sampled were starfruit, blueberries, pineapple, various types of apples, bananas, dried fruit, strawberries, tomatoes, cucumbers, etc.

Through these education classes, approximately 460 students were reached with research-based nutritional information. Ninety-five percent of the children tried a newly introduced fruit or vegetable, 100% of the children were able to demonstrate the physical activity introduced to them, as well as 100% demonstrated proper hand washing techniques.

GO GREEN AND SAVE GREEN

There is an increasing push to reduce, reuse and recycle in an effort to go GREEN. Going GREEN suggests environmental responsibility. Understanding how daily choices can affect our environment is key to conserving and preserving our natural resources, and ensuring a healthy environment for present and future generations.

Local residents were given some helpful hints on living lightly on Earth and saving money at the same time. Throughout the year, partakers were able to save money on numerous household items including cleaning supplies such as disinfecting wipes, detergent, fabric softener, and carpet deodorizers, holiday decorations and personalized home décor constructed from recycled supplies. The women who took part enjoyed making fragrant bath salts and lip scrubs as well which lead to a spa day of sorts. Each seemed pleased with the money saving techniques as well as the day of relaxation.

SHARING HERITAGE SKILLS

Certain skills like sewing, knitting, canning and more are quickly becoming a lost art. From generation to generation, fewer and fewer are taught these skills. To combat that disintegration, local Extension Homemakers have shared their knowledge with fellow homemakers as well as interested community members. Through Extension functions as well as cooperation with the local public library, community members at all skill levels were able to learn and even master some of these techniques.

Cumberland County Extension Homemakers also shared their creation with others. As a community service project, one local Homemaker club worked all year sewing and stuffing teddy bears and making blankets. Their handiworks were distributed to the Child Advocacy Center in Jamestown, KY for the youth who were served there. In addition, the local law enforcement, hospital and fire department were given some of the bears and blankets.
4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

4-H SPECIAL INTEREST CLUBS

In addition to school clubs, Cumberland County 4-H offers Special Interest Clubs as well. These clubs allow youth with common interests to meet as a club and share their special interest. Cumberland County offers a variety including Shooting Sports, Horse Club, Livestock Club, Dog Club, and Sewing Club. Each meets at regular times throughout the year.

Each of the special interest clubs offered also feature competitions for the members to showcase their skills. Many of the local members of the Shooting Sports, Horse and Livestock Clubs competed in local, District and competitions.

Jeremy Wright, a former 4-H member and current volunteer with the Shooting Sports program demonstrates the firing of a black powder rifle. Shooting Sports is one of many special interest clubs available for youth through 4-H.

Many members of the Dog Club have mastered the skill of dog training and as a result have planned and conducted community dog shows and hosted a dog skill-a-thon. Furthermore, members of the club have taught a series of classes for adults to instruct participants how to train their own animals.

COMMUNICATIONS

Positive youth development researchers theorize that youth who are confident and who have strong communication skills are more likely to make substantial contributions to their family, their community, and society. One way that youth can develop confidence and their communication skills is by completing a speech or demonstration project.

In the 2012/2013 program year, 98 youth from Cumberland County completed a speech or demonstration project. In collaboration with other 4-H programs in District 5, an evaluation of the 4-H Speech and Demonstration was conducted. The results of the evaluation indicated that 90% of the youth improved their public speaking skills and 91% of the youth reported that they gained confidence in their ability to speak in front of others.

TEEN PROGRAMS

In 2008, the Cumberland County 4-H Council identified a need to increase programs that engaged teenage youth in the county. This past year saw the one of the highest teen participation to date.

Eighteen local teens attended the weeklong Teen Conference held on the beautiful University of Kentucky campus. Six local high school teen club members were participants in the fall Issues Conference held at the Leadership Center in Jabez. Furthermore, eight middle school youth 4-H members attended the Pre-Teen Summit also held at Jabez.

Senior 4-H member Mary Alex Owens was selected for the Performance Arts Troop. She sang with the group at the Grand Ole Opry among other venues including the KY State Fair. While performing at the fair, she met former UK basketball coach Mr. Joe B. Hall.

Cumberland County Cooperative Extension Service

Extending Knowledge, Changing Lives

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