Extension provides practical education you can trust by helping individuals, families, businesses, and communities solve problems, develop skills, and build a better future.

County Extension Agents Tracey Tashjian, Virginia Langford and Trent Murdock along with Kentucky State Aquaculture Specialist, Forrest Wynne work together to serve the citizens of Graves County. Every four years members of the County Extension Council meet to develop strategies for improving the lives of families, youth and individuals through the Plan of Work. Each year this plan is reevaluated and may be revised to ensure that the most current needs of the community are being addressed. Graves County’s plan of work includes key issues such as: promoting environmental education, developing necessary skills for success in life, promoting leadership and personal development, promoting financial literacy, making healthy lifestyle choices and improving agricultural profitability. This Report to the People is a snapshot of the many programs and activities that occur through Extension to help meet the concerns addressed in the Plan of Work. If you are interested in serving on the County Extension Council, the Graves County Extension Office needs you. Please contact our office at 270.247.2334 for more information.

Priority Program Efforts

- A total of 73 people are now involved in addressing significant community issues
- 75 youth made an impact in their community through service projects
- 334 local residents implemented practices that promote sustainable agriculture
- 558 Producers reported an economic impact (i.e., increase in agricultural productivity, increase in higher returns, decrease in expenses) in their agricultural operations
- 250 youth indicated an increase in leadership skills, knowledge or confidence through participation in Extension-related leadership programs
- 300 citizens (youth & adults) acknowledged utilizing the skills learned through Extension programming
- A total of 730 individuals reported making lifestyle changes (diet, exercise, managing stressors, healthy home practices, etc.) for the purpose of improving their health
- A total of 350 youth and adults demonstrated informed and effective decision-making skills
- 162 individuals incorporated new or additional conservation practices.
Family and Consumer Sciences

Biggest Loser Challenge

The obesity epidemic threatens the quality of life of Kentuckians. Obese individuals are at increased risk for many chronic health problems. Thirty percent of Kentuckians report no leisure time physical activity. The Biggest Loser Challenge was an attempt to help reverse this trend. The Challenge kicked off in January just in time to help with New Year's resolutions. FCS agent used Weight the Reality Series and USDA Dietary Guidelines as the curriculum. Low-fat cooking, crock-pot cooking, Zumba, walking groups, and group support were used to generate behavioral changes and weight loss. FCS Agent used traditional media outlets to promote the event and used the county web page to post weekly results. Fifty-three challengers registered for the event with 37 finishing the 10 week challenge. Classes were conducted twice a week with Zumba being one of the meetings. A survey conducted at the end of the Challenge revealed that 70% of the participants were 1st-time users of Cooperative Extension service which allowed the Challenge to double as a marketing tool for future Cooperative Extension Service programs. In addition to challengers losing a total of 414 pounds, 100% indicated they were making healthier food choices as a result of the classes; 91% were exercising more and 100% were motivated to continue with positive behaviors beyond the 10-week sessions. The survey also revealed that 100% of participants were interested in another biggest loser challenge and wanted to be informed of other Extension programs.

“I learned that weight loss is a journey; I have more confidence that I can lose weight; I now bring healthy choices for snacks and lunch to work.”

~~Biggest Loser Participant

Managing in Tough Times

The cost of living continues to increase and unemployment is over 10% in Graves County. The number of adults and children living in poverty increased 6% and 8% respectively in the last 10 years. Money management skills have not been passed on from one generation to the next, so savings, budgeting and planning is not practiced. To help parents and families with strategies for managing in tough times, FCS agent conducted a series of workshops and parenting classes to help offset the above gloomy situation. Managing in Tough Times publications along with other Cooperative Extension Service publications were used as handouts and talking points. Three nighttime Gifts from the Kitchen (GFTK) workshops were conducted with 38 Head Start parents and children; eight Girl Scout troops; and 14 church youth. GFTK teaches the practicality and financial sensibility of using resources available in one’s own kitchen to make visually appealing, tasty, and inexpensive confections for gift giving to friends and family during holiday times and any other gift giving occasion versus spending limited resources on high priced commercial gifts. With the help of FCS agent and teacher volunteers, parents and children working together are guided through a series of hands on activities of prepping, cooking, and packaging the gifts. Each family receives a tray of the finished product which they can use themselves or use as gift for someone else. Parents who return to the workshops have indicated that they have used the recipes over and over to make gifts for friends and family and enjoy learning new recipes each year.

Head Start parents assemble at the Extension Office for the annual Gifts from the Kitchen Workshop.

4-H/Youth Development

4-H members take top honors at the 1st Annual Kentucky Department of Agriculture’s Farm to School Junior Chef contest. Jade Gowins, Aolani Madera and Morgan Newell began working with
Coaches Tracey Tashjian, County Extension Agent for 4-H/Youth Development, and Leah Holland-Mills, Food Service Director for Mayfield Independent Schools, in March with one goal – to win it all. The contest required students to first create a “kid friendly” recipe that could be easily duplicated in school cafeterias using “Kentucky Proud” ingredients. After choosing their recipe each team came to the contest ready to prepare their dish for a panel of judges. The girls practiced all summer making the recipe, a baked fajita dish, tweaking the garnishes and putting together a portfolio to present to the judges. The hard work paid off when the 4-H’ers won against Connor High School and Montgomery County during the first week of the State Fair in Louisville and advanced to the semi-finals. During semi-finals the second week of the Fair the girls defeated Boyle County and Fern Creek for the state title. As sophomores, the three were the youngest in the competition and faced competitors that were members of high school culinary programs. The contest was sponsored by Sullivan University who awarded over $70,000 in scholarships to student participants. Jade, Aolani and Morgan each received a $6,000 scholarship, $200 cash, 2 Sullivan University cooking manuals and free books during their tenure at any culinary institute courtesy of John Wiley.

This year Graves County 4-H provided:

- Animal Science lessons at Central for 4th grade;
- County public speaking (6-12 week) in class workshops for Farmington 5th, Fancy Farm 5th and 6th and Wingo 6th;
- Monthly Family and Consumer Science lessons at Lowes for 3rd graders;
- Monthly after school clubs for Central, Cuba, Farmington, Fancy Farm, Lowes, Sedalia, Wingo, Symsonia, Mayfield Elementary School 4th, Mayfield Elementary School 5th, and Northside Christian School;
- Volunteers provided Sewing Club for levels 2, 3 and 4 seamstresses;
- Monthly in class meetings in Leadership, Parliamentary Procedure and Community Service at Fancy Farm for 5th graders;
- Monthly science lessons for Wingo, Fancy Farm, Central and Cuba;
- Practical Living Skills for Fancy Farm 2nd graders;
- Five sewing entries and two food entries in the State Fair;
- 4-H camp experiences for youth ages 9-14.

**Agriculture and Natural Resources**

In July, Graves County welcomed a new agricultural and natural resources agent. Since that day the agent has met and worked with individuals, farmers and businesses to facilitate, set-up, create, and maintain programs for the community. Cuba Elementary School Farm Safety day has been a tradition in the past and this year was no exception. One-hundred and eighty nine children attended presentations from local farmers on topics such as farm equipment and animal safety.

Agent has been working with after school 4-H groups teaching lessons in kitchen safety specifically cutting vegetables and proper knife handling techniques. Students learned to make healthy dips that would taste good with vegetables in hopes of improving snack choices. During in class science club meetings at Central and Sedalia Elementary, the agent assisted with soil education, teaching students about soil makeup and later showing a model to demonstrate soil erosion. From the model, students learned about proper tillage practices and the effects rock structures can have on soil and farming.
One goal of Extension is to help keep income within the county and help farmers provide for their families. The Farmers Market continues to be a successful enterprise for local producers. The Mayfield Graves County Farmers’ Market is another successful program that receives leadership from Cooperative Extension Service. Locally grown produce is a major health benefit to the citizens of Graves County. For the past two years, the Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program has been implemented which allows eligible to families receive food vouchers from the Local Health Department which can then be used to purchase fresh produce from the Farmers’ Market. This year ten vendors provided fresh vegetables each Tuesday and Thursday afternoon and Saturday morning and it is estimated that approximately $92,000 in income was generated through the sale of market products. The FCS Agent and ANR Agents worked with the Farmers’ Market during their Customer Appreciation Day to provide food sampling and to share SNAP-Ed incentives.

**Aquaculture**

Roughly 50% of U.S. catfish pond acreage has been lost since 2003. A combination of high feed prices, a sluggish economy and continued market pressure from low priced imported fish have contributed to the decline. Some Graves County catfish producers may end production in 2014.

Catfish feed prices are slightly less than $500.00 per ton, locally delivered. Live pond bank prices received by growers were in the $1.00 -$1.15 per lb range. Fish were sold to live haul operation to supply fee fishing operations (pay lakes) with some fish sold to processors. Fee fishing demand for locally grown catfish was strong from March through September due to early short supplies of fish and for the most part, consistently mild weather. Sales to fee fishing markets have now dropped off in October, but U.S. Catfish processors are anticipating low inventories for the winter months and pond bank prices to farmers are expected to remain stable, or to rise. Still, many in the industry feel small-scale catfish growers must receive nearly $1.25/lb live weight to profit.

A relatively wet summer in western Kentucky kept the pond owner calls coming into the office regarding aquatic plant control, water quality issues, fish populations and fish kills. Private pond and lake owners are assisted state wide with all issues related to pond and lake construction and management.

I continue to serve as a member of the Southern Regional Aquaculture Center’s (SRAC) technical committee where we distribute USDA funds to conduct research projects and write and review Extension related fact sheets which are used throughout the United States and the world. I will serve as the committee’s co-chair for extension for the next three years and was appointed as the SRAC representative on the USDA/NOAA Sea Grant National Aquaculture Extension Steering Committee for three years.

Forrest Wynne

State Extension Specialist for Aquaculture