COOPERATIVE EXTENSION 2016

University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Food and Environment

Kentucky State University College of Agriculture, Food Science, and Sustainable Systems

EXTENDING KNOWLEDGE

Changing Lives

IN LAWRENCE COUNTY

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

Veggie Buck$ Program offered by Lawrence County Extension Office and Lawrence County Health Department

Kids Veggie Buck$

Extension partnered with the local County Health Dept. and Farmer's Market Association to launch the 2015 Kids Veggie Buck$ program to accomplish several objectives that would benefit our community, including the following: providing local access to fresh produce; increasing fruit and vegetable consumption among children and youth; and promoting the local farmer's market.

Using funding from a local diabetes grant, $5 Kids Veggie Bucks were distributed to 187 children/youth during the summer program. $852 total Kids Veggie Buck$ were spent at the local farmers market. 48% were first time shoppers at our market; 96% tried KY Proud Plate It Up recipe samples; 43% made the recipe at home; and 87% tried a new fruit and/or vegetable. A parent summed-it-up by writing: "Besides the financial help needed and healthy foods to eat, we had lessons throughout the whole procedure, naming fruits & vegetables, counting the bucks that was 'just for her,' helping choose and cook the family meal/snack, and how the farmer grows food."

Priority Program Efforts

- A total of **30** people are now involved in addressing significant community issues
- **20** youth made an impact in their community through service projects
- **10** local residents implemented practices that promote sustainable agriculture
- **15** Producers reported an economic impact (i.e., increase in agricultural productivity, increase in higher returns, decrease in expenses) in their agricultural operations
- **380** youth indicated an increase in leadership skills, knowledge or confidence through participation in Extension-related leadership programs
- **80** citizens (youth & adults) acknowledged utilizing the skills learned through Extension programming
- A total of **265** individuals reported making lifestyle changes (diet, exercise, managing stressors, healthy home practices, etc.) for the purpose of improving their health
- A total of **138** youth and adults demonstrated informed and effective decision-making skills
- **5** individuals incorporated new or additional conservation practices.

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Lawrence County Extension Participates in Rural Eating and Cooking Healthy (REACH)

REACH was a 2015 research study with UK College of Nursing involving six eastern KY counties including Lawrence County. Nutrition education and hands-on food preparation skills were taught monthly to enrolled participants. The primary objective was to increase consumption of foods associated with decreasing cardiovascular disease, such as fruits and vegetables, unsaturated fats and minimally processed foods. The UK Nutrition Education Program (NEP) Assistants (EFNEP and SNAP-Ed) assisted with the study and incorporated the NEP curriculum to supplement the lessons. The REACH grant provided an estimated $6000 for cooking class demonstrations, food for participants to take home to prepare, cooking utensils, and transportation costs. As a result, 14 families enrolled in a NEP program; participants increased their fruit/vegetable fiber score by 0.5% (47% of these who increased their fiber score also increased their fruit/vegetable consumption by 2-3 additional servings weekly).

REACH participants during a class

Financial Wellness

Lawrence County Extension Service hosted a *Financial Wellness Series* addressing personal, family and farm financial information. Topics included Estate Planning; Family Farm Transitions: Wills, Probate and Power of Attorney; and Home, Land and Auto Insurance. Along with UK Extension Specialists assisting with the series, several community partners included five (5) local banks; one local attorney; and two local insurance companies. As a result of this series, 68% reported gaining knowledge and 50% reported making a financial decision or change. One person wrote, "This (series) is my database for future decisions that I have to make."

Bridging the Gap

Through a multi-group effort to reduce high school dropout in Lawrence County, the Bridge Days Program developed. By having a close working relationship and direct support with the school system, community organizations and Extension, Bridge Days has continued to be supported and encouraged. The purpose is to address issues identified by 8th grade students and high school freshmen that could correlate to reasons students may want to drop out of school before graduation. By using surveys conducted for students, teachers, administration and school staff, topics are identified concerning these youth. Bridge Days events occur four times throughout the school year. Each meeting brings together the 8th grade students from across the county, on non-biased turf, so the students become known as one unit, the Class of 20__, instead of students from each of the schools that feed into our high school. It's one small stepping stone in the attempt to build unity.

Programming has ranged from bullying to Reality Store to college visits and more. It's all relative to identified needs. Student mentors from the junior class also work with these students to encourage and serve as their big brother/sister the upcoming year. It is a positive lead into building a great high school experience.

Over the past four years, the dropout rate has decreased 1.5%. Although this is not an astounding percentage, it is a positive change. Over the long term, not only has BRIDGE Days come to be an expected event by the youth, but it has become part of the 8th grade routine adopted by the school district to target these students for great success and positive relationships. It is hard to "steal" instructional time from teachers and administrators. The fact that they willingly help plan and orchestrate these days now speaks volumes to the benefits of the program.

Students participating at Bridge Days

Legos are More than Toys

Lawrence County 4-H First Lego Team

According to research on the effects of robotics education with today's youth, researchers state that robotics is an effective tool for improving 21st century skills. These skills include creativity, collaboration, teamwork, self-direction, communication skills, social and cross-cultural skills, and social responsibilities. The intensity and depth of this engineering program increases intellectual capacities as the minds of our youth transform. LEGO Robotics has a "Learning by Design" technique which emphasizes that students learn as a result of collaboratively engaging in design activities and reflecting appropriately on their experiences (Kolodner et al., 1998). This has also been shown to enhance problem-solving, decision making, and collaboration skills (Nagel et al., 1999; Puntambekar et al., 1998).

In 2015, Lawrence County 4-H partnered with the Community of Sharing Program to bring the first LEGO Robotics team to our county. The unknown of something so expensive and new brought great doubt as to what type of response there would be. The anticipation of one team quickly became the reality of three teams, two of which were junior teams made of students ages 6-8 and one team of students ages 9-14. Twenty-one students and four coaches came together to learn the First Lego League program and put into motion what is looking to grow in the upcoming year. One of the three teams was also selected to participate in the Lego World Expo held in St. Louis, Missouri in April. Not only was this an experience of a lifetime for the junior FLL team and coaches, but it was a highlight for the program that created even more curiosity for the upcoming season.

Lawrence County Master Gardeners Build Community Garden

A once vacant lot on Lackey Avenue is now home to a beautiful community garden, full of raised beds with rich soil. Several members of the Lawrence County Master Gardeners approached the Mayor about putting in a community garden on Lackey Avenue in hopes of helping local families. Together with the help of the City, the Lawrence County Master Gardeners and the Lawrence County Cooperative Extension Service, 15 raised beds were built, filled with soil, and assigned to families in the neighborhood.

During the summer of 2015, 15 families from the community were given a 4X6 bed and vegetables plants that will provide fresh fruits and vegetables at almost no cost. The Lawrence County Master Gardeners took their skills and knowledge that they received from taking the Master Gardener class at the Lawrence County Extension Office and applied it to this community garden project. They worked with the families and individuals and taught them how to plant, grow healthy plants and how to harvest. The community garden has shown the importance of access to nutritious foods and how they can improve the health of our families. The Lawrence County Master Gardeners and the Lawrence County Extension Office hope to expands the gardens and develop educational classes that the participants can be involved in.

Lawrence County Master Gardener's Sign at the Community Garden

Beekeeping 101

After several people in the County expressed interest in beekeeping, the Lawrence County Extension Office hosted two classes aimed at beginning and seasoned beekeepers. The first class was taught by a beekeeper from Rowan County who owns and operates a beekeeping supply store. He talked to the group about installing a package of bees, the equipment needed to get started, and covered the basics on feeding bees, maintaining the hive, and how a hive operates. Over 50 people showed up for the session. Some people were just interested in getting started and others were advanced beekeepers. The second class was taught by a wildlife biologist from KY Department of Fish and Wildlife. The class was for those who have hives and how they need to prepare for the possibility of hive damage caused by bears. The bear population in Eastern KY is increasing each year and each year the reports of bears causing damage to hives is increasing. Beekeepers in the area need to be aware of this and how to control it.

Bee hives at the Lawrence County Extension Office

The number of beekeepers in Lawrence County is on the rise. Farmers, landowners, gardeners, and homeowners are seeing the benefits that pollinators have on nature. More educational sessions regarding beekeeping will be scheduled for anyone interested in learning more about the importance of and the benefits of honey bees.

Tree Giveaway

The Lawrence County Extension Office partnered with the Kentucky Division of Forestry and the Arbor Day Foundation to help restore trees in Eastern KY that were destroyed during the tornado in March 2012. The campaign is helping rebuild the Kentucky forests. This partnership supplied Lawrence County residents with 5,000 tree seedlings to replace trees around the county. Lawrence County was given 1,000 white oaks, 1,000 red oaks, 1,000 persimmon, 1,000 pecan, and 1,000 smooth sumac. Over 100 Lawrence County residents participated in the tree giveaway.

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"Everyone has loved the Veggie Buck$ program, especially our WIC participants. They could combine Veggie Buck$ with their Farmers Market vouchers they received through WIC to have lots of fresh fruits and vegetables for their family! Our WIC Farmers Market vouchers redemption rate increased by over 50%. We have Veggie Buck$ to thank for this!"

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