

# EXTENDING KNOWLEDGE

## *Changing Lives*

### IN McCRACKEN COUNTY

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



*This is a photograph of one of the featured Quilt Block Trail barns in McCracken County. Brochures of the Trail are available at the Extension Service and some area businesses. Contact the Extension Service at 270-554-9520.*

### **Quilt Block Trail** *Family and Consumers Science, Horticulture*

In an effort to promote Kentucky's cultural heritage the Quilt Block Trail in Paducah/McCracken County was started to:

- Bring to life Kentucky's Cultural Heritage and pride in quilting
- Stimulate tourism
- Add to the theme and enthusiasm of "Quilt City USA" a name that is coined to Paducah

The Quilt Block trail has grown over the years and now features 34 hand-painted quilt blocks. The grassroots group still works to bring new quilts to the trail, inform the public of how to become involved, invites places of interest to be a part of the trail, and promotes the trail through websites and brochures.

The printed driving trail brochure saturates the town during the spring when Paducah is host to the American Quilter's Society Annual Quilt Show held at the National Quilt show in downtown Paducah. Whitehaven a registered rest area, the Downtown Visitor's Bureau, and the National Quilt Museums now request the brochures.

People from across the United States have driven the Quilt Block trail in Paducah. People from California, Alabama and Texas as well as surrounding states have contacted Extension in regards to the trail. The trail has become a part of the uniqueness to Paducah that helps draw people for a day or weekend trip according the Visitors Bureau director. The Quilt Block Trail will continue to be work in progress. The McCracken County Cooperative Extension Service has gained name recognition for starting the Quilt Block Trail and has furthered its reach to clientele.

### Priority

### Program Efforts

- A total of **501** people are now involved in addressing significant community issues
- **60** youth made an impact in their community through service projects
- **90** local residents implemented practices that promote sustainable agriculture
- **114** Producers reported an economic impact (i.e., increase in agricultural productivity, increase in higher returns, decrease in expenses) in their agricultural operations
- **1699** youth indicated an increase in leadership skills, knowledge or confidence through participation in Extension-related leadership programs
- **1,0479** citizens (youth & adults) acknowledged utilizing the skills learned through Extension programming
- A total of **740** individuals reported making lifestyle changes (diet, exercise, managing stressors, healthy home practices, etc.) for the purpose of improving their health
- A total of **998** youth and adults demonstrated informed and effective decision-making skills
- **74** individuals incorporated new or additional conservation practices.

## “Ag Day” for Area Third Graders

Situation: Today’s non-farm youth and adults are far-removed from agricultural roots and experience which results in a lack of knowledge of basic food production.

Intermediate Outcome: Youth and Adults recognize the Extension Service to better understand the value of Agriculture/Horticulture as an economic sector.

In the fall of 2014, all McCracken County Agents worked with McCracken County Elementary School teachers to set up an Agriculture Field Day for area third-grade students. Carson Park in Paducah, KY, was chosen as the location for outdoor agriculture-based activities designed to educate students about farms. Students were transported by buses from the county elementary schools for the day’s program. McCracken County Cooperative Extension Service 4 H, FCS, ANR and Horticulture Agents plus area school teachers created different educational opportunities lacking in everyday life of non-farm families. Each activity offered information about an aspect of farming as a thirty-minute program. On the day of Friday, October 17, 2014, 500 students and 50 adults participated in this Ag Day for McCracken County School third-graders. Testimonies of the attentive youth and their adult educators expressed appreciation as they participated in Ag Day.

*“Ag Day ” where all Agents worked with youth at Carson Park*



## Junior MANRRS *A Program of The 4 H*

According to the American Council on Education in 2014, 29% of Americans ages 25-29 had obtained at least a Bachelor’s degree. Among minorities, Asian Americans aged 25-29 were at the top with 58% holding a Bachelor’s degree, followed by whites at 36%, African Americans at 18%, Hispanics at 12%, and Native Americans at 10%.

Kentucky consistently lags behind other areas of the Country in the area of household incomes indicators including personal income, population living below the poverty line, and unemployment and revolving debt loads.

In efforts to increase the number of minorities who continue their education post high school, Extension worked with the local Jr. Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (Jr. MANRRS) club at Paducah Tilghman High School, and was able to take 3 delegates to the 2014 Jr. MANRRS conference on the campus of the University of Kentucky. All delegates reported the trip made them aware to the University of Kentucky and the College of Agriculture, Food and Environment. Two delegates reported the trip encouraged them to want to attend the University of Kentucky. This was the first time 3 delegates were in Lexington, Ky. Two delegates participated in the impromptu speech completion, and one youth won 2<sup>nd</sup> place. Both were afraid to participate in the beginning, but after a little encouragement they stepped out of their comfort zones and participated. One delegate quoted “I want to be like you”. He was speaking to the representative from John Deere who was the keynote speaker. This conference planted seeds in the delegates that Extension will work to water over time. This conference and other related conferences provide opportunities for the youth to meet youth and adults from different parts of the state and varying occupations.

*“Jr. MANRRS positively affected my life by meeting new friends, exploring campus, and interacting with helpful volunteers. UK is now a college option for me in the future”. - Erycah Edwards*

## The “Reality” of Saving

All Agents

The current trend in Kentucky is that we, as a state, trail other states in the area of household income indicators. These include personal income, population living below the poverty line, unemployment, and revolving debt loads. As 4-H Agents, it is our responsibility to provide today’s youth with tools and information that can be helpful to them in the future. To support the idea of financial stability in the future, we conducted a program entitled **Reality Store**. This event allowed 1,000 McCracken County middle & high school students the opportunity to experience financial responsibility first hand. Each participant is given an allotment of money for the month, and is required to spend their money responsibly in order to survive. As participants purchase items such as housing, automobiles, child care, health insurance, and utilities, they are confronted with the “reality” of money management. For example, one goal was to stress the importance of saving funds. This is a skill students can actively utilize at this stage in their lives. The purpose of events, such as this, is to create paradigm shift within the state of Kentucky in the future. Healthy spending habits begin early in life, and this experience exposed them to the benefits of spending wisely. It is also a goal for the youth to share some of the tips learned with their parents. The seed was planted and it is our responsibility to cultivate it in the years to come. This can be done by other programs in the area of personal income and financial stability.

## Backpack Program All Agents

McCracken County residents realize the struggles families encounter due to hardships. Loss of a job, loss of a home, family drug problems, divorce, and other life changing situations create those hardships for many families with school-age children. Community pantries exist all over our Nation, but most of the time the donated food isn't something a child in preschool, kindergarten or even in 4th grade can use without help from an adult. McCracken County residents identified a need and began "backpack" program for youth. Money as well as child-friendly food donations have been collected over time from the community to help children in need.

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Volunteers filling backpacks

This monetary amount does not include the amount of food that has been donated through various church, school, homemaker, individual and Retired Senior Volunteer efforts. In December of 2014 a local bank "Paducah Bank" recognized four charities in the community that would receive quarterly allotments of money. Paducah bank awarded \$7,900.00 to McCracken County 4-H and highlighted the backpack program in a marketing campaign for 3 months Following this in April of 2015, Paducah Bank awarded the program an additional \$7,850 and the local chapter of Woodman of the World donated \$11,100.00 The bank and Woodman not only provided financial support, but also donated over 60 hours of volunteer time to the program by filling backpacks along with youth volunteers from McCracken County High School and home school 4-H club members. *Continued on Page 4*

*Backpack Program, continued from Page 3*

Recently 4-H was contacted by the National Weather Service out of McCracken County to do a food drive along with the Home Team Realtors Association to continue supporting this program throughout this 2014-2015 school year.

4-H and the McCracken County community is truly engaged in making a difference in the lives of youth. Residents, businesses and Cooperative Extension Agents realize and address the need to become a self-sufficient community in the battle against hunger.

*All McCracken County Agents participated in Backpack Program.*

## Scholar House FCS, ANR and Horticulture

In McCracken County, there is a large interest in “homesteader” agriculture and homegrown goods. McCracken County Extension Agents recognized this need and initiated conversation with local public housing complexes to discuss resources that Extension could make available to address this need. Many residents aren’t equipped with adequate outdoor space or education to grow their own homegrown goods. Therefore, as a solution to this problem, McCracken County Agents saw fit to install a community garden at the site of a public housing community. This would allow residents the proper space to grow fresh vegetables for consumption while learning how to grow nutritious food. A community education program was focusing on growing vegetables as a practical-living skill was developed. Agents collaborated to create a plan for a raised bed garden to provide fresh vegetables and allow residents the opportunity to learn about garden establishment and production.

To begin, Agents worked together to list local public housing facilities with the potential to help families with children. After reviewing and contacting several local housing complexes, The Scholar House of Paducah was chosen as the site for the project. Their leadership, interest of clientele and amenities proved for a perfect site to begin our project. There are 48 residential apartments at The Scholar House of Paducah making up the following demographics: 51 adults (48 female, 3 male); 13 African American adults; 20 African American children; 38 White American adults; 38 White American children; 1 Hispanic adult; 2 Hispanic children.

Agents communicated with Debbie Patterson, Manager of The Scholar House of Paducah, to discuss needs and potential for resident workers to establish and maintain a public vegetable garden at the site. Once a group was identified, preferred vegetables were chosen according to preference and mature size of plants related directly to the size of the space. Space was marked on the property to allow three 8x4x1 beds to be installed. As weather permitted, McCracken County Extension built raised bed garden frames and installed the beds.

Agents purchased vegetables and professional growing mix from two different locally owned stores. Beds were planted with help from Scholar House residents and Nutrition Assistant. Extension Agents and Nutrition Assistant maintained contact with Scholar House to learn of on-going needs. As season progressed, tomato cages were furnished to allow for better fruit production. Metal fence posts and string were provided to trellis the cucumbers. The Nutrition Assistant planned monthly educational classes with the residents to provide education and recipes to use with their harvest.



Families planting raised bed at Scholar House

COOPERATIVE  
EXTENSION  
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**The McCracken County  
Cooperative  
Extension Service**

*Extending Knowledge,  
Changing Lives*

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