EXTENDING KNOWLEDGE
Changing Lives

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

Priority Program Efforts

- A total of 2341 people are now involved in addressing significant community issues
- 27 youth made an impact in their community through service projects
- 109 local residents implemented practices that promote sustainable agriculture
- 145 Producers reported an economic impact (i.e., increase in agricultural productivity, increase in higher returns, decrease in expenses) in their agricultural operations
- 70 youth indicated an increase in leadership skills, knowledge or confidence through participation in Extension-related leadership programs
- 71 citizens (youth & adults) acknowledged utilizing the skills learned through Extension programming
- A total of 20 individuals reported making lifestyle changes (diet, exercise, managing stressors, healthy home practices, etc.) for the purpose of improving their health
- A total of 35 youth and adults demonstrated informed and effective decision-making skills
- 265 individuals incorporated new or additional conservation practices.

Cowan 1st and 2nd Grade Students with the City of Whitesburg Fire Department

Letcher County’s First Safety Day
The first Safety Day in Letcher County was held on October 11, 2016 at the Letcher County Cooperative Extension Service. This was a great multi-county community partnership between the Whitesburg City Fire Department, The Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Knott County Division of Parks and Recreation, 4-H/FCS Curriculum Home Alone and community volunteers.

A total of 555 people attended the Safety Day. The total number includes the youth of Letcher County. Each first and second grade student in Letcher County was in attendance, along with teachers, school staff, community volunteers, extension agents and staff.

Educational programs of Kentucky Cooperative Extension serve all people regardless of economic or social status and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, marital status, genetic information, age, veteran status, or physical or mental disability.
Another part of the Safety Day was having the youth participate in learning about such things as fire safety, camp fire safety, stop drop and roll, smoke detectors being checked seasonally, boat safety, swimming safety, bike safety, poisonous snakes and animal safety. They also learned about being prepared while out in the woods with a safe pack that had first-aid supplies in it and food supplies. This was a great day and next year several new community partners will be involved. The event also took place on National Fire Safety Day.

Anytime that 4-H has the opportunity to work with multi-county programs and community partners it makes an impact on the youth and it is a great success for the adults and youth.

CDC Partnership

The Centers for Disease Control has long recognized that there are pockets of poor health across America. Appalachia has been known for its chronic heart disease, diabetes and other illnesses that are strongly linked to a sedentary lifestyle and obesity. The 2013 Numbers from the CDC show that Letcher County in particular has an obesity rate of 44.3% for females and 44.5% for males, making it in the worst 25% in the nation. Life expectancy for the county was in the worst 10% in the nation, with females at 74.7 years and males at 68.3 years. Physical activity was in the worst 10% for both females and males at 37.3% and 41.5% respectively. And all these were growing worse, with trends showing that nearly all of them were trending in the wrong direction.

The CDC posited that partnering with the UK Cooperative Extension Service and its grass-roots community programs would be an ideal way to address the cultural causes of obesity in targeted populations known for their below average health. The CDC selected six counties across the commonwealth and worked to promote a long-term, community-wide culture of activity and personal wellness.

As part of the effort, Letcher County was selected and pooling recommendations from a site-specific advisory council, work began to promote increased activity through a walking and biking trail, the Plate-It-Up program, which offers menu recommendations, calorie-healthy recipe ideas, and recipe taste testing, and MyPlate, which targeted youth.

As a result of the efforts, the office has partnered with the City of Whitesburg and begun installing benches, Fit Trail Stations, and other improvements to increase use of the existing walk/bike trail. The trail is being expanded to connect residential areas with schools, attractions, and shopping centers; all in an effort to facilitate higher activity levels. Plate-It-Up efforts have been used with low-income clientele & Farmers Market users.
Maple Syrup Gaining Momentum in the Coal Fields

The Letcher County Extension Office has been a primary promoter of maple syrup production in Kentucky for the last five years. The work is especially important in heavily forested Eastern Kentucky because of a large percentage of maples—a tree largely seen as having little commercial timber use, but that is abundant and easily utilized. The enterprise also matches up nicely with the tourism industry and promises the hope of an additional agricultural enterprise that is uniquely suited to the coal fields.

The office first installed a maple syrup demonstration, provided facilities for new producers to prepare their syrup, and hosted numerous workshops, radio programs, and TV shows on the subject. To increase the likelihood that our clientele will consider it further, the office then hosted a producer tour of the New England maple syrup industry. In a next-step move, the office partnered with Harlan Co. and Wise Co. (VA) Extension to develop the enterprise into a regionally targeted program and to grow the number of producers to a point where multiple local festivals would magnify the impact during a time of the year when most agricultural enterprises are idle. This was accomplished through a three-county maple syrup workshop series, with a guest lecturer and candy-making demonstrations. The inter-state partnership also laid the ground work for a maple syrup newsletter.

Horticulture Important Part of Extension

Letcher County Extension strives to educate the youth in the county of the importance of crops, plants, trees, pest and diseases that affect the horticulture industry.

Since coming to the county as the 4-H Agent in 2013-14, it has been a goal of mine to get the Horticulture Team to have a Grand Champion. Finally, in 2016 that goal was met.

This is the second year in a row that the horticulture team was Reserve Grand Champions overall. Letcher County had an individual that was the Grand Champion for the Senior Division.

Cody Adams, is now the State Grand Champion and has worked very hard to achieve his dream. He is a homeschooled youth that is part of an Extension 4-H Homeschool Group. He has worked each year to up his game in the Horticulture competition.

Letcher County has three veterans on the horticulture team and hopefully next year will be the year the team is Grand Champion for the KY State Fair.

Cody Adams, State Grand Champion
This year our office was fortunate to visit new locations and events like the Bluegrass Bird Festival in Lexington and Masterson Station. This was our first year participating in Hazard’s Black Gold Festival and the United Furbearers annual event in London, Ky. We still enjoyed many of our regular events like Carr Creek Enviro-Day and our biggest event at the State Fair in Louisville. We were fortunate this year to have the opportunity to do a couple of bird releases at Jenny Wiley State Park and at the JAKE event in Jonesville, VA. It isn’t always a happy ending for some birds, so when the change to turn a rehabilitated bird of prey back into the wild it is very rewarding to our program.

We end on a high note this year as our program is getting close to establishing an American Bald Eagle program with the help and direction of the American Eagle Foundation in Pigeon Forge. Having on of these magnificent creatures in our list of birds will definitely promote our message and make for new and exciting challenges for 2017.

During the camp, kids designed, built and tested home made sling shots.

At our energy camp we learned of possible alternative energies and their role in our future. Students constructed their own personal solar powered cell phone charger they built from solar panels, wire, and solar. They looked at other energy sources like wind, water, and geo-thermal.

Our Raptor program worked with other agencies such as conservation offices in Morgan and Johnson Counties to promote our wildlife message. We also teamed with Desi-Scott and Buckhorn youth detention centers to possible open up young troubled kids who may otherwise not be aware of the importance of these beautiful creatures are to our world.

4-H Raptor Program

The Letcher County 4-H Raptor Program soared to new heights in 2016 reaching more students and adults than previous years.

Letcher County Extension has hosted two summer camps this year at our home facility. One week was devoted to wildlife and the second to renewable energies. The wildlife week was filled with guest speakers from Fish and Wildlife agencies, state park naturalist and local individuals with informative workshops.