

EXTENDING KNOWLEDGE

Changing Lives

IN MERCER COUNTY

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

Kentucky's Fort Harrod Beef Festival

Kentucky's Fort Harrod Beef Festival just celebrated its 11th year, but was a year marked by many changes.



KCBS Scoring Plate with Brisket from the Grill-Off Competition

We achieved Kansas City Barbeque Society sanctioning for our grill-off event, which brought in several grilling teams from the past and drew some new competitors as well. Over 30 Kentucky proud, agriculture and arts and crafts vendors set

up at our festival. Several segments of the festival grew to largest participants that we had ever seen. Many, many volunteer hours are contributed to making this event a success. Education efforts were increased at the festival again this year to teach people about Kentucky agriculture, beef industry, and healthy diets including beef. Throughout the weekend there were around 3,000 visitors and participants. Over the years, we have seen grilling competitors move from backyard grillers to opening their own catering company. A couple have even opened restaurants. This festival contributes significantly to economic development and tourism in Mercer County and surrounding areas as both participants and visitors come from throughout Kentucky and beyond.

Priority Program Efforts

- A total of **102** people are now involved in addressing significant community issues
- **89** youth made an impact in their community through service projects
- **20** local residents implemented practices that promote sustainable agriculture
- **107** Producers reported an economic impact (i.e., increase in agricultural productivity, increase in higher returns, decrease in expenses) in their agricultural operations
- **66** youth indicated an increase in leadership skills, knowledge or confidence through participation in Extension-related leadership programs
- **391** citizens (youth & adults) acknowledged utilizing the skills learned through Extension programming
- A total of **70** individuals reported making lifestyle changes (diet, exercise, managing stressors, healthy home practices, etc.) for the purpose of improving their health
- A total of **1,347** youth and adults demonstrated informed and effective decision-making skills
- **70** individuals incorporated new or additional conservation practices.

Plant Day Camp

Do you know where your food comes from? How is your food grown? What is a healthy food choice? Children frequently don't know the answers to these questions. In order to help with this issue the Mercer County Extension Agent for Horticulture, Jessica Bessin along with neighboring Boyle County Horticulture Agent started a summer program called Plant Camp. Plant Camp consisted of a four-day camp for children ages 9-12. Half of the campers time was spent in Mercer County the other in Boyle County. They were exposed to many horticultural topics from botany, soils, beneficial insects, nature walks, food preparation, and growing their own food. Campers were also able to visit a commercial vegetable production farm in Mercer County and learn how farmers use high tunnels to extend the growing season.

Other successful horticulture programs that occurred over this past year include: Garden Flavors Series a program held once a month at the Mercer County Farmers Market, Fort Harrod Beekeeping Field Day, and a Master Gardener class that has volunteered 140 hours of their time back to the Mercer County Community.



Linda McMaine shares how she utilizes high tunnels in vegetable production

Master Marketer

Due to challenging markets for cattle producers, area agents decided to host a Master Marketer series and make it more convenient for producers across the district by utilizing Microsoft Lync technology. Previously producers had indicated interest in the program but had been unable to attend previous sessions due to travel and time constraints. 7 producers from Mercer County attended the multi-session program. UK Specialists delivered the program with the ANR agent being at the host location to facilitate use of technology and questions that arose. 100% of attendees indicated they had gained knowledge and planned to utilize what they had learned on their farm or with their farming operations.

Master Cattlemen



Beef cattle remains one of the top agriculture commodities in our region but input prices and markets present challenges for producers. County ANR agents from Mercer and surrounding counties teamed up to offer the Master Cattlemen program, an intense 10 session look at all aspects of beef cattle production. Agents worked with specialists to utilize Microsoft Lync technology to offer the program to a wide portion of the district and as a result saw an increased number of producers participating in the program. Participating producers indicated they had gained knowledge in various areas ranging from nutrition to reproduction. One hundred percent (100%) of attendees indicated they would utilize knowledge gained on their farming operations.



Minority Leadership

Mercer County Extension Agent for Family and Consumer Sciences, Luci Hockersmith, has been working with minorities in Mercer County since December of 2006 when

plans for the first MLK Day event were made.

Unfortunately, Mercer County lacks in diversity however the African American and Hispanic population has been little served in the past. Mercer County Extension professionals, advisory members and community leaders have placed a priority on increasing programming for these audiences.

Ten (10) years later, many activities have culminated in the creation of a local documentary preserving the stories of five individuals participating in the 1964 March on Frankfort with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Through these intentional efforts, a committee of local volunteers and teachers has produced an original documentary (complete with lesson plans) of African American Oral Histories. These materials have been developed for implementation in school at the elementary, middle and high school levels. During the 2015-2016 school year, 20 youth from Mercer County Senior High School learned about non-violence and acceptance of those that look and believe differently than yourself. Fifteen (15) of those youth developed their own presentation and the history, importance and significance of the MLK Day holiday and presented to more than 200 people in attendance at the 10th Annual MLK Day events in Mercer County. As a result of these activities, youth and school officials are looking forward to initiating a Jr. MANRRS (Minorities in Agriculture Natural Resources and Related Sciences) chapter this winter with plans to attend the National Conference in Spring 2017.

Job Preparation with 10th graders

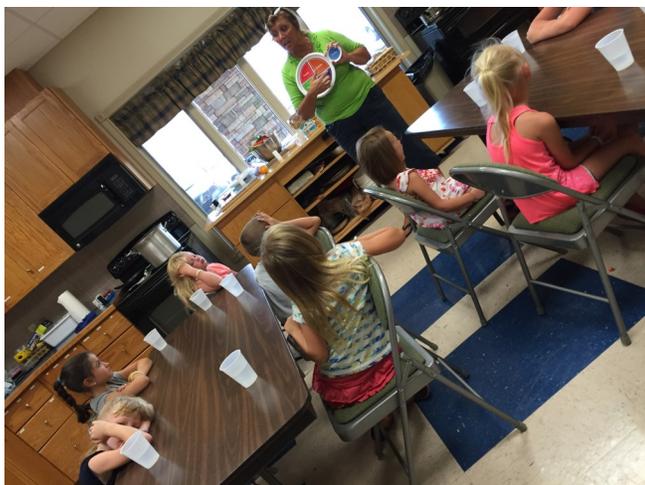
Preparing high school students for the transition to college or the workforce is vital to ensure their personal success but also the future of the state of Kentucky. Advising students on workforce prep is a key component to prepare youth for their future. Local businesses, employers and school officials have indicated that high school graduates are not prepared to enter the working world because they do not know how or understand how to make a positive impression through their resume, job application and interview. Through a partnership with Cooperative Extension, High school Youth Service Center, and Chamber of Commerce a job prep day for sophomore students was held. Students spent the day engaging guest speakers that focused on: Successful Interview techniques, how to prepare a resume, how social media can affect your prospects for a job, dressing for success, personal finance, what does it mean to network and how your public behavior can affect your prospects of getting a job, how to keep your job and paying for higher education. 4-H Youth Development Agent presented session on social media and your job. Over 83% of the students did not realize the impact of social media can have on their prospects of securing a job and retaining that position. This program has given students the tools to start on the right direction for planning their own future to continue their education or to enter the workforce.



Increased Comfort and Consumption Among Low-Income Youth

Additional efforts to reach low income youth included the Mercer County Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service SNAP-ed assistant partnering with the Horticulture Agent and local Housing Authority to host a Summer Day Camp. The purpose was to educate a small group of sixth through eighth graders about proper nutrition and to introduce them to the importance of fruits and vegetables in their diet, increased water intake, MyPlate and more.

Children living in apartments indicated they do not have the opportunity to grow their own food if they are not living on a farm. The Mercer County Horticulture Agent challenged the notion by teaching youth how to grow vegetables in recyclable containers during the Summer Day Camp. The lessons covered different types of vegetables that can grow in a container garden, types of containers that can be used, and steps for growing vegetables successfully. Each child received an empty milk jug to begin their gardening journey. Youth cut the jugs, filled them with soil and planted a grape tomato plant to take home. Youth also selected



Bobbie Hancock explaining how to utilize MyPlate

vegetable seeds to take with them to continue expanding their container gardens. Other sessions included gardening, hand-washing, food safety, food preparation, cooking, and exercise.

After completion of the Summer Day Camp, the SNAP-ed assistant initiated and conducted monthly programs to build on previous lessons and introduce new information. Through these programs survey results showed youth became more comfortable preparing food, following recipes and adding fruits and vegetables into their diet.

Post-survey results of youth participating in the SNAP-ed monthly programs indicated:

- 89% increased consumption of vegetables in their diet
- 71% increased comfort following directions in recipe
- 65% increased consumption of fruits in their diet
- 65% increased demand for 2% milk
- 59% washing fruits and vegetables before eating
- 56% increased comfort using measuring cups and spoons



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