The North Carolina A&T Cooperative Extension Program provides research-based educational programs and information regarding critical issues to individuals, families and communities. Cooperative Extension's educational programs and outreaches also emphasize improving the quality of life for individuals and families without the financial resources and educational backgrounds mainstream America enjoys.
Look at the faces and programs of today’s Cooperative Extension. If you conclude that “this is not my grandfather’s Cooperative Extension anymore” then you’re forming an assessment that many program users and observers have already made. The fact is these people are right — and wrong. Wrong in the sense that Cooperative Extension is not new. Its programs still do what they’ve done since they were begun in 1914: provide solutions to the problems people encounter on their farms, in their homes and in their communities.

You’re right, though, in realizing that there is a new era in Cooperative Extension. As the challenges that people face in their lives become more complex and diverse, the subsequent solutions that we offer must be matched in a manner that is responsive, respectful and result-producing.

No matter what generation we’re coming from, the thing that has not changed about Cooperative Extension is its educational commitment to its audiences. We were... be around for their children. We serve your communities because we’re from your communities. We’re in them and of them.

In a society whose youth seem to need more guidance than ever, we continue to offer a 4-H program that provides the staples of leadership and citizenship. But we also feature programs that address the needs of urban and limited-resource children by empowering and involving them in decision-making activities such as 4-H Mini-Society, and community gardening programs that give them alternatives to hanging out in the wrong places.

We remain viable in the area of personal finance, but instead of the rigid structure of budgeting and self-denial, Family and Consumer Sciences educators are helping families create spending strategies that focus on goal-setting and achievement.

As a disproportionate number of limited-resource families and individuals face such crippling diseases as diabetes and hypertension, Extension is there with needed advice and solutions. Our nutrition programs have evolved from providing good and cooking recipes to ones that help people change harmful eating practices and save lives.

When communities struggle for ways to improve their neighborhoods and achieve their dreams, it is extension agents who are introducing them to the adult leadership and community development programs that give them stronger legs on which to stand, and foundations on which to build.

And, yes, agriculture continues to be a major focus of what we do. But in addition to meeting farmers in the field, we’re taking them with us online for computer training and to the classroom to learn more about marketing, specialty crops and organic production.

The people featured in the following pages are a part of our great and vast family, families whose color, religions and beliefs may be divergent, but whose needs are all being met by the new Cooperative Extension.

So, yes and no folks, we’re no longer just your grandfather’s Cooperative Extension. We’re there for grandmother, too. We’re there for the new great grandbaby, and... cut. We’re there for the nieces struggling with obesity, and the newlyweds down the block who want to save for a new home.

As my role model and agrarian pioneer George Washington Carver said: “It has always been the one ideal of my life to be of the greatest good to the greatest number of people.” That’s the goal we strive for every day in the Cooperative Extension Program.

— Dr. M. Ray McKinnie
Associate Dean and Administrator
The Cooperative Extension Program
at N.C. A&T State University
**Forsyth County Family Consumer Sciences educator Deborah Womack helps Lisa Williams organize her finances using the financial literacy program developed through Cooperative Extension.**

**WINSTON-SALEM** - Lisa Williams, 38, a bright, expressive, divorced mother of three, is the type of woman who all in one day can work eight hours at her steady full-time job at the Juice Shop, take her youngest son to his Cub Scout meeting, drive her grandmother grocery shopping, change the oil in her own car and baby-sit one of her two recently-born grandchildren.

All that Superwoman profile and it wasn’t until Williams began financial counseling at the Forsyth County Cooperative Extension Center that she learned to effectively use the word, “no.”

Rick Streng, the co-owner of The Juice Shops in the Triad, was concerned enough about Williams that he called the Forsyth County Extension Center asking them to work with her. Williams was such a valued employee that Streng agreed to give her paid time off from work to meet with Family and Consumer Sciences Educator Deborah Womack.

For the past year Williams has worked with Womack using a money tracker and other tools of the NC Saves financial management program. Even though the program does not encourage denial, Williams realized that many of her own money problems stemmed from her inability to turn down family and friends for loans that she could ill afford to make.

“’No, you can’t have that; No, I can’t do it now,’” Williams says, repeating the simple phrases that empowered her to reorganize her life. “’No’ was a word I needed to work on.’’

She’s also used the word on herself, but in a way that encouraged rather than discouraged her practices. No, she doesn’t spend $26 every month to get her nails done anymore. No, she doesn’t need digital cable anymore. No, she doesn’t go grocery shopping anymore without a list — a strategy that helps her sort out needs versus wants. Williams reset her priorities and still manages to enjoy her life through planning and goal setting.

“I’ll still go out to dinner with my girlfriends, but I may not have dessert,” she says.

Williams now routinely saves at least $20 a paycheck and is using a checking account for the first time in five years. Her short-term goal is to “Have $500 in the bank and have all household expenses taken care of. I’ve really gotten better with that.”

Williams’ own behavior is already setting an unexpected example for long-term goals. Her 7-year-old son, Sean, learning the value of a dollar from his more focused mother, has opened his own bank account and is saving for the future.

**LISA WILLIAMS: JUST SAY NO**

2,356 low to moderate income people developed money management plans and practiced debt reduction and saving strategies.

In Forsyth County, Cooperative Extension collaborated with a local church to provide money management classes to 37 people during a five-week period.

229 limited-resource people saved a total of $7,995 and changed their spending habits to meet higher priority family needs.

400 individuals completed the H-plan financial management tool as part of a new financial literacy project, NC SAVES, that helps families practice sound money management skills, reduce debt and increase saving.

The North Carolina Financial Literacy Network Web site was created to connect individuals, groups and institutions that promote and support financial literacy statewide.
Crossnore students make important bids during a Mini-Society auction, designed to help children understand goal setting and entrepreneurship.

Then she became active in the 4-H Mini-Society program, brought to Crossnore by Debra Buchanan-Hughes, an Avery County Extension program assistant. Mini-Society lets young people, ages 8 to 12, learn entrepreneurship by setting up their own communities and running their own businesses. The rebellious girl discovered that she, in fact, does have a future and that she can succeed.

“When we started talking about jobs and stuff and Ms. Hughes gave me good compliments, it made me think, ‘Hey, Ms. Hughes thinks this about me. If she thinks this about me, I should think this way about myself,’” the girl says.

After a few weeks of operating her own business, creating her own cash and then using it to buy items at a weekly auction, the student began to apply Mini-Society’s lessons to the larger blueprint of her life.

“It made me say, ‘Hey, you’re not going to get here if you don’t buckle down and stay out of trouble.’”

By the end of that first semester, the former D student was making all As and Bs. A year since, she can’t even remember the last time she had to visit the principal’s office for misbehaving.

The girl has since aged out of the program, but retains an empowering sense of achievement developed through Mini-Society’s crucial lessons in goal-setting, creativity, perseverance and flexibility. As other young hands and faces are now busy shaping their own future through the Mini-Society program, the new achiever is just beginning to dream.

“In 15 years I see myself leaving my one-story house with the white picket fence, headed for the doctor’s office where I am a pediatrician, and pulling into my parking space in my black Eclipse with the tinted windows, the 20-inch rims and the ‘nice’ bass system.”

Debra Buchanan-Hughes

Crossnore Academy: If You Can Dream It

The 2002 N.C. Public Housing Mini-Society Program implemented in Avery, Bertie, Guilford, Harnett, Martin, Rockingham and Sampson counties involved 724 youth in 20 programs, that included day camps, after-school and in-school activities; 91% of youth (657) increased their knowledge of such areas as government and ethics, economics and entrepreneurship and decision-making; and 88% (657) formed committees to accomplish such Mini-Society goals as creating a currency, interviewing and hiring civic leaders.

Of the 46 counties that formed 149 new 4-H clubs for youth aged 5 to 8, 22 of those clubs were organized in diverse/public housing: Robeson County added nine new clubs for children ages 5-to-8, Catawba added 10, Sampson added 12, Beaufort added 15 and Richmond County added 20 new clubs.
Farmer Stanley Hughes cradles this gangly three-week old chick that is part of his profitable new venture in pastured poultry.

CEDAR GROVE – At some point, says Orange County farmer Stanley Hughes, “I have to get something down to an art.”

The lifelong farmer has experimented with various agricultural ventures to help make up the income he once reaped from tobacco: before the federal government cut his tobacco allotment from 25 acres to 15 acres. Rather than walk away from the farm he inherited from his parents, the savvy Hughes is diversifying his farm production mix.

Already, he is cultivating organic crops and herbs, getting earlier yields by insulating his seedlings in a synthetic cover, and selling his specialty produce at area farmers’ markets.

He’s gotten even more punch with his latest endeavor: pastured poultry. Using a $2,500 grant from Golden LEAF — the nonprofit foundation that uses money from the tobacco settlement lawsuits to assist displaced groups, including farmers — Hughes is raising chickens in a pasture at his Cedar Grove farm. Consulting with specialists at the Cooperative Extension Program at N.C. A&T, and with Orange County Cooperative Extension agents, Hughes gathered research on how to pasture his chickens.

Raised on land without chemical fertilizers, pesticides and other artificial treatments, naturally-produced poultry is praised by consumers for its flavor and nutritional value. Prices are higher than for those conventionally-raised birds. Hughes nurtures newborn biddies in an incubator and then raises them, for eight weeks, on a specially-formulated diet of chicken feed, fresh air and natural surroundings.

The free-range fowl are turning out to be so tasty that Hughes believes he may have just found a new niche enterprise for his farm.

One of Hughes’ best customers is his neighbor and cousin, Lacy Bradsher, a self-described chicken connoisseur. “It used to take a whole chicken to fill me up,” Bradsher says, “but three or four pieces of this is all I need. It has more flavor. It is delicious.”

Capitalizing on that endorsement, Hughes is now selling the chickens to area upscale restaurants at a price that, after his expenses, gives him a $3 profit, per chicken.
Local teenagers love doing homework in the Peachtree computer lab, renovated from a ramshackle single-wide trailer into one of two community-center buildings.
Adrian Chavez, right, and Jamie Allen, center, deliver fresh produce from the Durham Inner-city Garden (DIG) to the chef of a Durham restaurant.

DURHAM - By 8:30 a.m. on a Friday morning, Jamie Allen’s boots have collected as much morning dew as their owner has gathered beets, peppers and Swiss chard from the Durham Inner-city Garden (DIG) he helps cultivate.

Allen, 18, and Adrian Chavez, 22, both veteran members of DIG — the urban garden program that teaches horticulture to at-risk young people — are on a mission this particular morning.

They have to glean the best produce from two fields, 10 miles apart; wash it; weigh it; spruce it up and get it to The Mad Hatter restaurant before 11 a.m. so that the upscale restaurant can prepare for its lunch rush.

Before the sun is up on the following Saturday morning, the two community college students are joined in their agrarian ritual by six other pairs of nimble young people — are on a mission the particular morning.

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“TThey need to have something other than the streets calling them,” says Earl Matlock, the DIG program coordinator who goes every step of the way with his young charges. “They get paid and educated about horticulture, and these kids work.”

Drs. Robert Williamson and Ellen Smoak, specialists with the Cooperative Extension Program at A&T, introduced the Garden Mosaics curriculum to DIG. Their strategies enabled Matlock and his crew to double the amount of DIG garden space, increasing crop yield and income; and generating more money to go back into the program for salaries and supplies.

Even more importantly, though, DIG is cultivating young people who might have become dropouts, inmates or be otherwise disenfranchised from their communities.

Chavez, 22, got involved two years ago because the Mexico native wanted to work at something productive, and to improve his language and American socialization skills. Through DIG-sponsored workshops and presentations, Chavez has increased his interaction with the public and grown more confident in talking to people.

“When I first started speaking in the program, my accent was very strong,” says Chavez, who moved from Mexico to Durham 10 years ago. “The program has helped me a lot with language, being able to speak better.”

The program that began by transforming an acre of inner-city commercial property into a wondrous garden is, four years later, well on its way to transforming lives.

LEADERSHIP AND VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT continued

• Bogue Community Citizens’ Organization in Columbus County renovated a community center to use as a learning center to address educational needs of youth in their rural community. Volunteers assisted about 30 children a week.

• Norrington Community Development group in Harnett County created a community health education center. Collaborating with Campbell University and other health education sources will help the community group reach its goal of improving community health, especially related to diabetes.

• 1,671 limited-resource community volunteers in Forsyth, Nash, Warren and Brunswick counties contributed an average of four hours to community development activities at a value of $61,670.
DONALD STOKES: WASTE NOT, WANT NOT

Today, he is one of the biggest advocates of the FACT program and of the difference computers have made in his life and business. “It’s easy for me to go to this computer and push a button and find my profit and losses, versus having to go through my file cabinet and finding all these papers,” Stokes says. Better record keeping and tabulations have also helped Stokes get a firm and early handle on his expenses, so much so that he knows in a matter of weeks how his spending and income are balancing.

“That computer helped me to see my pitfalls years before I would have gotten there,” Stokes says. “I’m turning my entire farming operation around.”

Nearly as confident with technology as he is with the rest of his farm operations, Stokes has bought a personal computer of his own. He returned the FACT computer to that other farmer, who need it, can learn on it. “If God blesses us and we don’t bless somebody else in return, then we’ll lose our blessings,” Stokes says.

Yesterday, a lion-sized voice is down to a virtual purr as he confides: “I’m embarrassed to tell you, but I didn’t even know how to turn a computer on.” That was three years ago, when educators from the Cooperative Extension Program at N.C. A&T began talking to him about the Farmers Adopting Computer Training (FACT) classes. Ofters to lend him a computer for his home and provide him with one-on-one instruction, were just an excuse to waste government money, Stokes remembers thinking.

But Extension Associate Marcie Jorrits and Sampson County Farm Management Agent James Hartfield made a believer of Stokes. Jorrits’ patience in training Stokes and Hartfield’s persistence in encouraging the farmer’s progress have put him in the FACT forefront.

Today, he is one of the biggest advocates of the FACT program and of the difference computers have made in his life and business. Stokes is one of Sampson County’s busiest farmers. He raises naturally-fed hogs, owns a small fleet of farm equipment, and double crops about 700 acres of corn, potatoes, collards and other crops.

Keeping up with his finances used to be a muddled tangle of ledgers, receipts and file-cabinet chaos. With the electronic record-keeping program he and his wife, Marjorie, learned through FACT, the couple is able to record and track the farm’s finances on a timely basis.

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Paul Pittenger and Hayley

“Paul Pittenger and his 5-year-old daughter, Hayley, read from one of her library books.”

Paul Pittenger: Becoming a Patient Father

Southport - Paul Pittenger, father of 5-year-old Hayley, agreed to participate in parenting sessions as a compromise in a custody agreement. He went, not so much willingly, as resignedly.

Taught through the Brunswick County Cooperative Extension Center, the training ended up changing Pittenger’s parenting style. Two hours each session, once a week, for seven weeks, Pittenger attended the training alongside single-mothers, teenage parents and various others.

“They told me I was only required to make five of the seven sessions and I said, ’No, I’m getting too much out of this. I’m going through all seven,'” Pittenger says. “I did all the homework and all the exercises.”

What he learned seems to be tested daily by his vivacious daughter, whose constant curiosity, continual energy and occasional intractability keep her father on his toes. Pittenger, 46, is of a generation in which he says the parental mantra was: “Do as I say” and “Children should be seen and not heard.”

“It was a real power thing and we all grew up OK,” Pittenger says. “I love my parents and they did a good job, but I was very adamant about becoming a better parent than my parents were.”

The training equipped Pittenger with different strategies — patience being chief among them — to encourage his daughter’s positive behavior. He finds daily opportunities to practice his lessons, particularly at bedtime, when an obviously tired Hayley stalls for “just five more minutes.”

“So instead of saying ‘Get in bed or else’ and making her cry herself to sleep, we’ll do something, rock or read a book,” Pittenger says, explaining how that strategy actually saves time in the long run.

In another bedtime ritual, Hayley didn’t want to stop watching a video until all the credits had rolled. She and her father disagreed about when to turn off the video.

“The next time she watched it,” Pittenger says, “I just sat there and let her watch it, and after the credits she said, ‘OK, it’s time for me to go to bed now.’

“She also teaches me.”

What he learned, Pittenger says, has enabled him to be a better parent than he was when he was married; and before he attended the parenting training.

“I would recommend it for anybody,” he says. “Had I known it was going to be that good, I would have gone through it regardless.”

Improving personal development through family relationships and management skills was the goal of 3,834 people, 1,897 of which were limited-resource families. Through training programs, 1,084 people adopted family education practices; 2,251 improved their personal development; 607 improved their family relationships; 72 had better family management, and 1,433 increased the quality of their lives by improving their family relationships, managing stress and conflict, efficiently using time and enriching their marriages.

In Forsyth County, nearly 150 parents and grandparents — who ranged in age from 16 to 70 — say they are practicing effective discipline techniques and self-esteem development in caring for their children and grandchildren.

In Guilford County, 285 limited-resource people and families, consisting of teen parents, foster parents and homeless parents living in transitional housing, participated in parenting programs, resulting in greater involvement with their children through such activities as reading, talking and playing games with them, spending quiet time together, helping with homework and other activities.
Beulah Moone has learned, with assistance through Cooperative Extension nutrition workshops, to manage her diabetes through exercise and proper nutrition.
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