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Report to the People

Stanly County Center

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From the Director

With an economy that continues to struggle, NC Cooperative Extension’s work is more important than ever. Whether it’s an Agriculture Agent assisting a farmer in reducing input costs or a Family & Consumer Science Agent helping participants prepare healthy, affordable meals at home, our staff works to address issues facing families, landowners and the total community. Many of the issues today are similar to issues our community was faced with many years ago – nutrition, management of resources, improving efficiencies. Though issues are similar, the manner in which we address them is certainly different. Our newest marketing and communication tool is the Stanly County Extension Facebook fan page; you can visit our website for a link to Facebook. This is just one of the examples of how we are reaching out to meet today’s customers. In an effort to work smarter, we rely on volunteers to assist us in programming. We are fortunate to have a number of volunteers that that give many hours of their time each year enabling us to reach many more citizens though Extension programs. In this issue of Report to the People, we’ve highlighted examples of how we have addressed issues and met needs in our community, including how volunteers have assisted in carrying out our mission. NC Cooperative Extension—Empowering People, Providing Solutions. For additional information on programs, contact us at 704-983-3987.

We make a living by what we do, but we make a life by what we give. --Winston Churchill
**Family & Consumer Science**  
Lori S. Ivey, County Extension Director

**Healthy Eating, Physical Activity & Chronic Disease Risk Reduction**

A core behavior in achieving and maintaining a healthy weight is cooking healthy meals at home. Stanly County Cook Smart, Eat Smart Cooking School helped participants learn how to prepare simple, healthy meals for their family. Participants learned simple preparation techniques using simple ingredients and simple equipment to prepare tasty, healthy recipes. Following the school 60% of participants completed a post-evaluation and reported as a result of their participation in Cook Smart, Eat Smart that they:

- Eat more meals at home;
- Eat more fruits and vegetables;
- Eat smaller portions;
- Eat more meals together;
- Plan meals for the week;
- Have family involvement in meal preparation;
- Eat less meals out or from prepared foods.

**Family Financial Management Skills**

Medicare recipients are faced with the challenging dilemma of selecting Medicare Prescription Drug Plans during the Medicare PDP open enrollment period—November 15-December 31. In 2010, NC Cooperative Extension staff and Seniors’ Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIPP) volunteers assisted 440 Medicare recipients during the open enrollment by helping them to review their current plan or select a new plan fitting their prescription drug needs while saving them additional dollars. Two Hundred Twenty Five (225) of the 440 Medicare recipients assisted changed drug plans. On the average Seniors saved an estimated $450 annually by selecting a drug plan better meeting their needs with a resulting savings for Stanly County residents approximately $101,250.

**4-H Youth Development**

Diane Stevenson, Fairview ECA Club Member at local Farmers Market.

**School to Career**

Many youth today are one to two generations removed from the farm and do not understand where their food and fiber originates. In an effort to assist them, Seniors Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) Volunteers coordinated by NC Cooperative Extension provided one-on-one counseling appointments for 1,063 (including 440 in November & December). Medicare recipients gained valuable information to help them make better decisions about healthcare saving them an estimated $239,175. Volunteers gave 766 hours (estimated value for volunteer time—$15,512) of their time to help make this program successful. Total savings in Stanly County as a result of the SHIIP program were $254,867.
and post survey indicated they observed the following behavior changes in their students as a result of attending Ag Awareness Days:

- 68% increase in number of students able to identify farm animals and their related products;
- 76% increase in the number of students able to identify the different soil types of the county;
- 85% increase in the number of students able to identify five different crops grown in the county for food and fiber; and
- 88% increase in the number of students increasing awareness in direct impact honey bees have on our food supply and the environment.

The first calf crop of 22 head averaged 655 pounds and sold for an average of $725 per head. With an expanding herd of 42 brood cows the young farm family is looking forward to their 2011 calf crop.

**Profitable & Sustainable Agriculture Systems - Beef Cattle**

Young and beginning farmers have limited resources for knowledgeable, research-based information when beginning a new livestock farming venture. We have assisted one such operation over a span of three years in establishing a successful beef cattle farm. Knowledge gained and practices learned from this venture have happened through educational programs and individual farm visits. Farm planning and implementation have included herd genetics, herd health, nutritional guidance, pasture management, facility development, and other best management practices. Pasture layout and water quality was also addressed with the assistance of Natural Resources Conservation Services. Feeder cattle marketing strategies were also planned and implemented through the NC Beef Quality Assurance program and calves were sold at the Value Added BQA feeder cattle sales.

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**Field Crops**

For the past three seasons wheat producers have experienced epidemic levels of a disease that affects wheat head development known as Head Scab. This disease greatly hinders the marketability of the crop as well as decreasing yields by as much as 15%. According to researchers Head Scab levels may continue to be problematic due to the adoption of continuous no-till farming. In an effort to combat this epidemic disease research has been conducted by Extension agents to evaluate both wheat varieties and fungicides that can serve as a useful tool in combating this disease. Following research results more than 75% of growers in Stanly and Union Counties, representing more than 45,000 acres, now plant Head Scab resistant wheat. This planting decision has resulted in a yield increase of 405,000 bushels of wheat and an increase of gross returns of $2.4 million.
Extension Quick Facts from Stanly

- Youth involved in 4-H .................................................. 1,992

- 282 Volunteers provided 13,753 hours of time valued at $281,937

- 180 growers participated in annual Tri-County Winter production Meeting and Tri-County Field Day representing more than 186,000 acres of crops. Estimated that growers can increase profits by $10.75/acre—a conservative estimate resulting in a savings/profit of more than $530,000.

- Cattle Sold at Feeder Calf Sales........................................ 5,942
  Average of $50 additional income per head resulting in Total increased value $297,100

- Rocky River Alliance ...................................................... $19,200
  A Beef Cattle cooperative marketing strategy generating added value of 5¢/lb on 8 truckloads (avg. wt. 48,000 lbs) (.05 x 8 x 48,000 lbs. = $19,200)