

2010 Virginia Cooperative Extension

***Unit Extension Leadership Council
Development Awards***

Mission Statement

Virginia Cooperative Extension enables people to improve their lives through an educational process that uses scientific knowledge focused on issues and needs.

First Place
Franklin County

Relevance: Virginia Cooperative Extension-Franklin County staff surveyed the Extension Leadership Council to see what goals they wanted to focus on as a council this 2009 term. The ELC's main concern was that VCE was not visible in the entire community, and that not everyone was benefiting from-aware of-Extension's research based programs and publications.

Response: The ELC began looking at how VCE-Franklin County already marketed programs. The ELC members were divided into subcommittees to focus on separate marketing issues such as a publication, events, and program areas. The ELC subcommittees would meet and come up with solutions and then we would come back together as a group and finalize all projects. The agents acted as facilitators while the ELC members discussed different options to improve Extension's visibility. (Because of this new meeting arrangement we have seen an increase in board member discussion and program interest). The publication subcommittee reviewed the office brochure and made several changes to make it user friendly. They added more community pictures and removed technical languages and terms and additional highlighted program information of each area, the entire ELC agreed with the changes and our UAA made the finalized corrections. The event committee suggested an open house and made recommendations, designed what should be highlighted such as 4-H camp information and club scrapbooks, Dairy Council information, Master Gardener class information, food safety and childcare provider training classes. The event committee also suggested items to bring families to the table such as a pumpkin carving contest and face painting. The entire ELC thought that materials such as pencils, bags and T-Shirts with our logo on it would remind people that VCE was available to answer questions to improve the quality of life in Franklin County. The program area subcommittee designed a T-Shirt. On the front there are three logos to represent each area; a tractor, fruit basket and the 4-H clover surrounding the statement "Got Questions?" and on the back it has call your local Extension Office with our number listed.

Results: Extension facility and staff worked with the ELC board to make recommended changes. Because the ELC took a personal approach of passing out updated brochures, designing an open house staffed by ELC members and assisting with developing marketing materials, our office has seen an increase in calls and program participation from different areas in the county, especially the Smith Mountain Lake area. The Master Gardener program has a class of 25 which is the largest class VCE-Franklin County has had in five years. The ELC is excited about the progress we have made and has been working on a program to highlight VCE-Franklin County to the Board of Supervisors in 2010.

Second Place

City of Virginia Beach

Relevance: There is an increased growth of gang-related crime throughout Hampton Roads (116 gang organizations with 6,700 members). Virginia Beach Extension Leadership Council (ELC) and city leaders identified "Positive Youth Development" as a top priority concern for the city. Youth are influenced by many external pressures: gangs, peer pressure, drugs, alcohol, physical violence and crime. Youth need to have positive structures and role models, stability and a sense of belonging in their lives along with guidance, support, mentors, physical activities, safe places, life skills education, and opportunities to develop self confidence. ELC members felt these external factors have a direct effect on the roles and behavior youth display in our society. By engaging young people in mentally and physically stimulating programs, the ELC recommended that the Extension Agents develop a youth oriented plan.

Results: In coordination with ELC members various youth programs from Agriculture, Horticulture, 4-H, Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS), and Family and Nutrition Program were developed to address concerns of youth gang involvement, and to give youth positive interactive experiences and life skills to make positive decisions. VA Beach has 12 active ELC members who are engaged in various educational programs including hosting, conducting, advertising and developing workshops. Master Gardeners, ELC members, and Horticulture Agent provided two week-long sessions of the 4-H Junior Master Gardener Summer Day Camp. Campers gained an appreciation for the importance of implementing sustainable environmental practices, preventing water pollution, preserving endangered species, and recycling waste products. The 4-H Livestock Club adopted Navy Strike Fighter Squadron 213. ELC, 4-H'ers, and 4-H Agent collected 19 large boxes full of items such as toiletries, movies, CD's, games, and books, non-perishable food, magazines, etc. Many of the 4-H'ers continue to correspond with the Sailors indicating positive impact on their lives. ELC worked with Ag Agent to enroll 46 youth and 46 adults in the 4-H Cured Ham Project curing 124 hams; four top 4-H'er hams sold for \$1,600 at auction and six donated hams brought \$2,750 for scholarships. ELC organized the "Capture the Dream Camp", a summer camp for youth in low income neighborhoods and involved the FCS Agent and FNP Assistants to conduct financial and nutritional education during the camps. ELC members also helped to develop partnerships with other organizations to provide children with nutritional and financial education programs. Camp Millionaire was hosted by the FCS and 4-H Agents in collaboration with ELC and Credit Union staff. Thirty-one middle school students enrolled and were taught how to make better financial choices, how to create their own financial independence and were taught their roles in becoming financially responsible. The Credit Unions included program information on their webs, newsletters and as part of their in-branch media. Camp information was on the City's website and in the 4-H bi-monthly newsletter.

Response: Approximately 500 youth were exposed to these specialized programs in a safe, fun-filled and secure environment without the negative influences of gangs, drugs, etc. Many youth also learned life skills to assist them in making positive decisions about their lives. Partnerships were developed by ELC linking city organizations, businesses and Extension Agents together to deliver youth positive development programs. Thus, most of these programs will be offered again in 2010 to further the ELC's goal of making positive influences on more young lives.

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Chesterfield County

Relevance: Diet, health and nutrition across the lifespan was identified by Chesterfield Extension Leadership Council (ELC) and stakeholders in our 2008 Situation Analysis as a top-priority issue. The latest public health recommendations for adults and youths are the consumption of at least 2 ½ cups of vegetables and 2 cups of fruits daily and for adults to include at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity five or more days a week and for youths, 60 minutes daily. Adopting healthy eating habits and physical activity along with safe food preservation, managing resources and improved water quality reduce risks of preventable diseases, aid in management of chronic diseases and contribute to a healthy productive society.

Response: To address our local program needs, Extension agents and staff in partnership with our Extension Leadership Council (ELC) and Boulevard Flower Gardens implemented two Extension Extravaganzas at the garden in March and September of 2009. Varied educational opportunities were offered to address our priority issue. Two ELC members who are master gardeners presented information on water quality, plant selection, pruning and tool care. Our county liaison and eight master gardeners exhibited resources on gardening practices. Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) Extension agent and ELC subcommittee member, Cultural Assistance Coordinator, Family and Community Education (FCE) members and FNP assistants with three youths provided resources and interactive displays on healthy eating, food safety practices, pressure canning and pressure canner testing, managing resources and the Fit Extension – physical activity state-wide initiative. Two of our 4-H Clubs (eight 4-H'ers) engaged children in planting and making bird feeders and distributed resources on 4-H. In November, three of our 10 ELC members hosted a legislative reception at the Extension office and met with our State ELC representative, three of our local board of supervisors, six legislators and other stakeholders to discuss our priority issues using our Unit's interactive resource display from our Extravaganza to highlight our program accomplishments and impacts.

Results: Over 225 participants received Extension resources at the Extravaganzas' interactive displays and presentations on healthy eating, food preservation, managing



resources, healthy environment, improving water quality, planting, pruning and tool care. Ninety-five percent of participants indicated that the information was relevant and useful for increasing their families' healthy eating and food safety practices. Ten participants stated that information on proper use and care of the pressure canner was helpful, resulting in nine pressure canners being tested in the office. An article "Canned, county residents get into food preservation" appeared in Chesterfield Observer due to an increased interest in gardening and the availability of additional resources and assistance with canning needs. Participants' responses from master gardeners showed they were very likely to follow recommendations and that resources on protection of water quality, proper pruning, good tool care and selection, and gardening practices were beneficial. 4-H youth involved 30 youth in planting and making bird feeders and for potential 4-H members. In Fit Extension, 171 participants increased their physical activity and fruit and vegetable consumption. Three Board of Supervisor members, three House of Delegates and three State Senators and other stakeholders received our Unit's highlights and program impacts on Extension's priority issues and the need for their input on local, regional and state planning.

Contacts: Mary Clair Thomas, ELC Chair and Linda Jackson Cole, FCS Extension Agent

Lee County

Relevance: The wellbeing of Virginians is dependent on both their individual and family economic wellbeing. The Virginia state legislature recognized the need for financial education with the passage of Senate Bill 950 in 2005 that requires financial literacy and economic concepts be integrated into the Standards of Learning in K-12 classrooms. The Lee County Extension Leadership Council (ELC) identified several issues related to economics/commerce. They felt that youth needed information about career planning and financial management. The FCS advisory committee also felt that issues related to family and teen financial education were major concerns in Lee County.

Response: Members of the ELC, including Extension faculty, partnered with the school system to plan and implement a Reality Store simulation in October 2009. More than 80 volunteers were recruited from local businesses, civic organizations, public agencies and private citizenry to help with this exciting event. Some of those volunteering were bank officers, the County Treasurer and the Commissioner of the Revenue, local law enforcement officers, Extension Master Gardeners, and staff representing the Commonwealth Attorney's office, the Agency on Aging, the regional Office on Youth, the Head Start Program, and the local Community College. Donations for supplies/materials totaled \$550. Agents trained volunteers, provided student orientation and assisted with site logistics both before and after program. Nearly 400 students from (2) middle schools and (2) high schools participated in the event.

Results: Of the 376 students who participated in the simulation and returned completed evaluations:

- Sixty-eight percent (257) recognized that their performance in school and participation in community activities were clearly related to their future occupation
- Ninety-four percent (355) reported an increased awareness of making smart financial decisions

Anecdotal information:

Law enforcement officers issued "citations" for several offenses including "driving without insurance and speeding." The simulation was observed by members of the Kingsport Chamber of Commerce, Jr. Achievement of Tri-Cities, and other community leaders with the goal of incorporating the Reality Store into their annual 11th Grade Career Expo in 2010.

Student comments in response to the question: *What other important thing did you learn in this simulation?*

- Never get a credit card; money goes fast; cars are expensive; how life really works; can't have the most expensive things; can't have everything you want; life isn't as easy as it seems; if you are single with no kids you don't need as much money

Volunteer comments in response to the question: *Do you feel Reality Store is beneficial to the students and WHY?:* ---- realized that most things were more expensive than they thought; shows them how to work with the amount of money they have; very beneficial—students learn how expensive "real" life is; starts them thinking; hopefully they will see how important having an education is; they are realizing life isn't all about clothes and cars.

Pittsylvania County

Relevance: Virginia Cooperative Extension, especially the Pittsylvania County Office, has numerous supporters who volunteer on their behalf. Their service comes in different ways such as serving as 4-H volunteers, providing meeting space, providing places for on-farm demonstrations, helping to advertise meetings, assisting with fundraisers, or providing financial support through donations. These supporters are seldom recognized, but yet they are an important key to the success of Extension's programming efforts. The Pittsylvania County Extension Leadership Council is a small but dedicated group.

Response: The idea of starting a recognition program for Extension supporters was began during an ELC meeting in December 2008 and a committee was formed to bring back recommendations. At the first ELC meeting of 2009, the committee (made up of one Extension Agent and two non-paid ELC members) recommended that the ELC

create a recognition program. As a part of this, each staff member would be allowed to nominate one individual or business per year through a one-page written nomination describing why the recipient was deserving and how they had contributed to Extension. The nominations would be due by the end of October. The entire ELC would consider the nominations and select the winner at the December ELC meeting. The winner would be invited to the first ELC meeting in 2010 to be recognized and presented with a token of appreciation. All ELC members saw this idea as one small way to provide some recognition for those who go out of their way to assist us on a regular basis.

Results: In October 2009, both ANR Agents and the 4-H Agent submitted one nomination each for the ELC Recognition Award. At the December 2009 ELC meeting, the nominations were carefully considered by all non-paid ELC members and a very deserving recipient, Bill Nuckols, who had helped both the areas of Agriculture and 4-H was selected. At the March 2010 ELC meeting, the first recipient will be invited to the ELC meeting where he will be recognized and presented with a plaque. A picture and article will be provided to the local newspaper to recognize the outstanding work of our recipient.

Collaborators: Pittsylvania County Extension Leadership Council and Virginia Cooperative Extension-Pittsylvania County Office faculty and staff.

Scott County

Relevance: While conducting the local Situation Analysis to address local programming needs, the Scott County Extension Leadership Council determined the community, youth, and residents lack an awareness of the importance of agriculture within the county.

Agriculture contributes in excess of \$13.1 million of income to farmers, \$4.2 million tax and additional \$1.2 million in property tax to the local economy. As a major contributor to the county's economic health; it is important that our citizens, especially the youth, understand the impact of agriculture to the total financial health and prosperity of Scott County.

Response: The Scott County Extension Leadership Council decided the most effective way to address the lack of agriculture awareness was through a field day activity. The field day was structured to provide educational opportunities to the county residents on the impact of agriculture to the overall economy and life style.

Educational programs were conducted as part of the Scott County Extension Leadership Agriculture Awareness Day on October 10, 2009 at Scott County Horse Park. Topics included: Marketing/Home-based Business, Organic Vegetables, and Heirloom Vegetables. Displays and demonstrations also provided information about agriculture



and home-based business that contribute to the overall economy of the county. Youth exhibits highlighted current 4-H activities such as the 4-H Poultry Project, 4-H Stockman's Judging, and Dairy Education by milking the simulated cow, "Tulip". Other youth activities were also provided.

Local businesses and individuals were contacted to build support and a relationship in an effort to provide local buy-in and success.

Results: As a result of afore mentioned relationship, the Scott County Board of Supervisors (Tourism Committee) donated \$3,000.00 in start up funds and local businesses and individuals provide approximately \$4,000.00 in additional income, which provided for fliers, brochures and bill boards to be used in advertising the Scott County Extension Leadership Agriculture Awareness Day.

A local teacher commented that the brochure was the best she'd ever seen. The local Boy Scouts, Scott County Sheriff's Office, and Scott County Horse Association donated additional time and facilities in support of the event. Attendance was in excess of 350 in spite of poor weather and competition from other locally scheduled events. Those attending were exposed to the importance of Agriculture in Scott County and its relevance in providing everyday necessities, such as: food, fiber and fuel.

Collaborators: Scott County Extension Leadership Council; Scott County Tourism Committee; Scott County Board of Supervisors; Scott County Regional Horse Association; Scott County Sheriff's Department; Scott County Boy Scouts; Scott County Extension Staff; Mann Farms; New Peoples Bank; Scott County National Guard Armory, local businesses and individuals

Shenandoah County

Relevance: Funders and stakeholders at local, state, and national levels need to be aware of the ways Extension programs in Shenandoah County improve the quality of lives and meet local needs. Since it is difficult to convey the impacts of programs through written reports, the Extension Leadership Council searched for a venue that would bring these stakeholders into contact with the volunteers and clientele who know the value of the programs firsthand.

Response: Beginning in 1992, the Shenandoah County Extension Leadership Council has coordinated an event each year to "Showcase" Extension program successes and educate stakeholders about how our programming benefits the residents of the county. Our 2009 event highlighted the "Buy Fresh, Buy Local" initiative through a delicious dinner of locally grown agricultural products. Before and during the dinner, attendees were invited to view exhibits focusing on a variety of Extension initiatives. Following dinner, the Extension Leadership Council Vice-Chair introduced speakers, including



program collaborators, volunteers, and participants, who described their experiences with agriculture, family and consumer sciences, and 4-H programs in Shenandoah County. Hearing directly from those involved in the programs, rather than staff, offers a perspective that enables the stakeholders to understand not just facts about a specific program, but also the ways in which that program has touched people's lives and "made a real difference." All staff members serving the county are introduced at these events, regardless of where they are housed, so that the stakeholders can visualize the depth of resources available to the county through Virginia Cooperative Extension.

Roles: The Extension staff members coordinate the logistics of the event, including reserving the location, inviting speakers as identified by the ELC, and arranging for the meal. As hosts of the event, the ELC members encourage people to attend the event, assist with set up and clean up, and purposefully interact with guests to emphasize the value of Extension programming and encourage continued support of all program areas. In addition, each year the Extension Leadership Council raises between \$500 and \$700 in sponsorships to cover the cost of the meals.

Results: Forty-two people attended the 2009 event, including members of the Board of Supervisors and the School Board, County Department Heads, ELC Members, VCE Staff, and Sponsors. As a result, funders and stakeholders became more aware of how their contributions benefit the residents of Shenandoah County through Virginia Cooperative Extension. We believe that this event contributes to the excellent working relationship the Shenandoah Unit has with local officials and other county departments. In addition, it has cushioned us from funding cuts, particularly in recent years when other departments have been threatened with reductions. Due to the effectiveness of these events through the years, we feel that the Shenandoah Unit is in a stronger position to weather the storms of uncertainty during the continued economic downturn.

VCE Staff: Karen Poff, Bobby Clark, Carol Nansel, Nicole Ross, Ofelia Tapia, Nancy Santry, Teresa Richardson.

ELC Members: Mike Jones (Chair), John Gangwer (Vice-Chair), Pete Benedetto, Lance Braun, Bob Carlton, Fabiana French, Glenn Keller, Wayne Kipps, Terry Martin, Dennis Morris, Wilhelminia Santiful, Jeff Sonafelt, Janey Trent, Bill Zirkle and youth members Ashley Nolen, Chelsey Rickard, and Zachary Roy.

Westmoreland County

Relevance: As financial challenges grow nationwide, it is more important than ever to provide youth with the financial knowledge and skills they will need as adults. Financial illiteracy is a major issue facing youth. Jump \$tart Coalition reported in a national survey that high school seniors answered correctly 52% of financial and consumer questions. The President's Financial Literacy Council and the US Treasury's Consortium on Youth



Financial Literacy are just two national groups addressing this issue. The Virginia General Assembly mandated teaching financial literacy to all students by 2008. The Reality Store had not been offered in Westmoreland County before 2009.

Response: Westmoreland's Extension Leadership Council (ELC) decided that the Reality Store was a programming effort that should be pursued and offered in partnership with the public schools. In 2008, Anne Geyer, Westmoreland ELC member and State ELC representative for Planning District (PD) 17, invited Delegate Albert Pollard, Senator Richard Stuart and Congressman Robert Wittman, school administrators and board members to attend a local Reality Store event to bring awareness of the program and recognition of its potential impact. Ms. Geyer and Westmoreland ELC chair, Belinda Johnson, attended that event along with other PD17 ELC members. Leaders at all levels were impressed and supportive of the program's implementation. To actively address youth financial literacy locally, Reality Store events were scheduled for February 2009 at Montross Middle School for eighth grade and March 2009 for Washington & Lee High School for ninth grade. The Montross Middle program was requested by a Health/PE teacher as part of her career exploration unit and the Washington & Lee program was at the request of school administration. The 4-H agent was the coordinator for the events. Volunteer recruitment was a major effort of this program. Three ELC members volunteered to lead specific tables for the events and others worked to recruit more volunteers. ELC member, Wanda Atkins, contacted another high school inside the county but outside the school district to extend an invitation to observe.

Results: One hundred seventy six Westmoreland youth participated in Reality Store simulations at two schools. The school superintendent came to observe and other school division administrators both observed and volunteered. These programs were covered in two newspapers before and after the event. Pre-Post test results indicate that after participating in the simulation, 4% more students would choose not to max out a credit card to take a vacation, 8% more students would save money until they had enough to make an expensive purchase rather than use credit or borrow and 95% agree to put a portion of earnings into savings. There was a slight increase in the number of students who could correctly distinguish between wants and needs. Volunteer evaluations stated, "kids recognized that things were more expensive than they thought", "students were able to see how making adjustments to their spending would enable them to live within their means", "students could not afford child care". Students said, "now I know what my parents have to go through", "this taught me how money management is important in maintaining a healthy and happy lifestyle" and "Thanks to you guys, I'm going to finish school, go to college. After I get straight I will consider having kids." Ms. Atkins has since identified potential funding sources for future Reality Store efforts and found a grant through Mary Washington University Foundation that could fund further efforts.

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Wythe County

Relevance: Agriculture is the largest industry in Wythe County. The county ranks 17th in the state for agricultural receipts (2008 Virginia Agricultural Statistics) and in the top 500 Beef Counties in the nation (Beef Magazine). Even with agriculture being such a large industry, many citizens of Wythe County rarely have a chance to visit and learn about local farms.

Response: The Wythe County Extension Leadership Council (ELC) took charge in the planning and implementation of a family farm tour day, to educate Wythe county citizens of socio-economic benefit of agriculture. The farm tour was open to anyone that wanted to attend but was targeted towards urban families that did not have an agriculture background. The tour consisted of three farms; a beef operation, a dairy operation and a horse stable. Two common threads running between the locations were the dedication each of these operations had towards the community and the environment. Also included on the tour was a picnic lunch where participants heard about natural resource and conservation service efforts of area farms. Council members designed the tour, reserved transportation, served lunch and acted as tour chaperones County extension agents and staff advertised the event, gave presentations at each site and introduced the farmers. Council members were instrumental in securing promotions materials from SUDIA, the Virginia Horse Council and the National Beef Council. Extension agents visited with producers on the tour to prepare them for the presentation on their respective operations.

Results: As result of the tour, participants had a better understanding of the challenges, activities and importance of local agriculture as a major economic driver. They were also exposed to the activities of the local extension unit and its leadership council. Producers who volunteered their operations and time indicated that hearing and dispelling many misconceptions about agriculture was very enlightening. Participants shared that it was helpful and enlightening to hear the story of agriculture from talented, professional farmers. From an internal standpoint, the exercise of agents working with the ELC to plan an event was a great team activity; unifying the Wythe County VCE faculty and staff into more of a team.

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York County

Relevance: The York County Extension Leadership Council (ELC) recognized that with the pending retirement of the only Extension Agent in the Unit, all activities and programs would cease upon his retirement, and the Council saw this as unacceptable. There was great concern and discussion about the different options that were available, the outcry of citizens response that would be expressed, and the unfortunate situation that such a strong educational program with wonderful volunteer, citizen, and county government



support would no longer exist in the County of York. Rebuilding this type of strong educational program would take years. The ELC was determined to address this situation with a program that they called "Save Our Agents." In order to accomplish this task, the ELC decided to broaden its base of volunteers to include volunteers from all of the extension educational program areas.

Response: Members of the ELC recruited volunteers representing 4-H and Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR). The ELC explained to the volunteers the situation that was soon to occur in York County and wanted to develop a campaign of awareness to be presented to elected officials. The "Save Our Agents" campaign met weekly to determine all of the critical factors, such as who to include and add to the committee, what information should we develop as handouts for elected officials and others to list our talking points, and finally what members of the committee would approach these identified elected officials. The "Save Our Agents" committee met weekly for ten consecutive weeks and compiled valuable information and significant talking points that addressed the elected officials specific concerns. The committee members sought out specific information to support their advocacy efforts. The committee compiled this information into one page fact sheets. The volunteers met with the Extension Agent in order to gather information and data to develop specific reports. The agent provided these details. The agent supported the ELC when asked and arranged meeting space. The subcommittee divided the elected officials contact list and scheduled meetings with county officials.

The committee contacted elected officials, talked with local county administration to educate and make them aware of what the situation will be upon the agent retirement. The committee members met with members of the Board of Supervisors, communicated by phone with members of the Extension administration, and discussed matters with state elected officials.

Results: Because of the work of the York County Extension Leadership Council, awareness of the situation was heightened and citizens have contacted decision makers to ensure that their wishes and concerns were heard. This effort of advocacy continued through the year as committee members continued to make contacts. The committees efforts of advocacy and education are being heard. The goal of the "Save Our Agents" committee was successful in making administration aware of the situation and getting a commitment from administration that there will be a transfer of an Extension Agent in the York County position before the present agent retires.

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