Message from the Director

Our hats are off to you, our customers and our local community members who have challenged us to bring the best educational programs to Cabarrus County. Thanks to your input, we’ve had a very successful year marked by many outstanding programs in Community Development, Agriculture, Horticulture, 4-H Youth Development and Family and Consumer Science. We are most appreciative of the many partnerships and collaborations throughout our county that allow us to strengthen and extend our educational outreach. We are proud that you ask us and allow us to be part of your lives and families. Please let us know of your needs. We are here to assist you.

Deborah G. Bost
County Extension Director

Value Added to Cabarrus County
Through County-State-Federal Partnership

In order for N.C. Cooperative Extension programs to exist in Cabarrus County, the county, state and federal governments must commit to a funding partnership. This report shows additional value to the county in the form of grants and volunteer support provided through Cooperative Extension programs.

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Cost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>County Support</td>
<td>$324,540</td>
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<tr>
<td>State and Federal Support</td>
<td>$701,158</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$1,025,698</td>
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As a result of this partnership, extra value is added through the following:

- **Number of people reached:**
  - Grant Support: 6,351
  - Cabarrus County School Kids: Plus Support: 3,245
  - Volunteer Time (adults) - 42,893 hours valued at $17/hr.: 895
  - Community Service (youth): 57
  - Total: 77,000

- **Value of improving the economy, environment and quality of life for Cabarrus citizens:** Priceless

Keep Land in Agriculture, Hold the Line on Taxes

Farm, forest and horticultural landowners in Cabarrus County now have additional tools that they can use to protect their personal property rights, and all taxpayers may benefit from the reduced need for expansion of the county’s infrastructure.

After five years of discussion and review by interested parties, the Cabarrus County Commissioners unanimously enacted a Voluntary Agricultural District Ordinance and an Enhanced Agricultural District Ordinance.

The Voluntary Agricultural District Ordinance allows farm-land owners the option of entering into an agreement with the county that keeps their land in agriculture and not commercially developed for a 10-year period. The ordinance does recognize that unforeseen conditions can arise, and a landowner can opt to remove his or her land from the Voluntary Agricultural District by giving 30-days notice.

Landowners who are certain about their intentions have the Enhanced Agricultural District Ordinance option, which allows farmland owners to participate in an irrevocable 10-year agreement not to develop their land. In return for this agreement, the landowner can be eligible for up to 90 per cent cost share by the state for certain conservation practices that they apply and maintain on their land.

All taxpayers may benefit when land that remains in use for farming, horticulture or forestry rather than being developed, because local government doesn’t need to build as many schools, roads and expand other costly infrastructure.

INSIDE...

- Horticulture Industry is Strong and Growing . . . 2
- Promoting Wellness, Fighting Obesity ............ 3
- Involved Neighbors ................................ 3
- Cabarrus 4-H’ers Bring Home Gold ............... 3
- Volunteers Share Success Story ................... 3
- Citizen Leaders .................................... 3
- 4-H Afterschool Report Card ...................... 4
Horticulture Industry is Strong and Growing

Horticulture is rapidly on its way to becoming a multimillion dollar industry in Cabarrus County. Cooperative Extension is busy training the nursery and landscape industry with research-based information from NC State University. Information is the key that helps local businesspeople create a dynamic, competitive industry that improves our local economy, beautifies our communities, and protects our environment.

A highlight this year was preparing 14 professional horticulturists to take the Certified Plant Professional Exam. This certification requires participants to identify 125 plants and answer 100 written questions. Of the 14 who took part in the training, 12 passed both portions of the exam.

Cabarrus County Cooperative Extension gave 97 professionals a well-received presentation on Hazardous Tree Evaluation at the International Society of Arborist meeting held in Greensboro in December.

Improper use of pesticides and fertilizers can pollute rivers and streams and pose safety threats to the public, animals and wildlife. Over 250 horticultural professionals, who are responsible for maintaining over 2,000 acres of ornamental plantings where pesticides and fertilizers are used, attended five meetings in 2005.

Of course, agricultural producers must also use pesticides responsibly. Cabarrus County farmers are legally required to have licenses to purchase certain pesticides and to train employees about pesticide safety. Currently, Cooperative Extension is the sole trainer for farmers. Extension trains all certified pesticide applicators on a three-year rotation. In 2005, eighteen local farmers were re-certified as private pesticide applicators.

Residential and consumer horticulture information was provided through 3,500 phone consultations, classes, newsletters, 19 horticulture articles published in local newspapers, and 12 Successful Gardening Segments aired on Extension Today, which is broadcast on the local Time Warner cable television public access channel.

Staffed displays at the Southern Spring Show and at the county fair provided additional opportunities to distribute horticulture information and answer the public’s questions. The total value of horticulture information provided for residential and consumer horticulture was $347,000 in 2005.

Master Gardeners Keep Us Green

Fifty-one Cabarrus Master Gardeners volunteered over 1,200 hours helping the public develop its green thumb in 2005. These handy volunteers constructed and staffed a fair booth teaching gardening at the County Fair. Twenty Master Gardener volunteers also taught more than 1,500 youth during the Agribusiness and Environmental Field Days held during the County Fair.

Volunteers also worked in the demonstration garden open to the public. This garden was also used for teaching the certified plant professional course. In addition, Master Gardeners prepared 8,000 packets of horticulture information for distribution at the Southern Spring show. Master Gardeners have developed a question-and-answer column for the Cabarrus Neighbors, and the newspaper ran 18 columns in 2005. Total value of Master Gardener contacts is $171,000.

Students Learn About Environment, Agriculture

Over 100 volunteers helped 2,860 sixth grade students learn about soils, plants, animals, human interaction with the environment and agribusiness during 43 different interactive sessions in September at the Agribusiness and Environmental Sciences School Days.

Students were tested before and after the event, and their scores improved by an average of 14 percent. On their evaluations, 91 percent of students said that they had learned the importance of agriculture, 83 percent thought that the information was presented in an easy-to-understand way, 65 percent realized that agriculture touches their lives every day, and 63 percent said that they would tell someone else about the importance of agriculture.

North Carolina Commissioner of Agriculture, Steve Troxler (identified as Head Agriculture Guy by some of the children in letters they wrote after the event), stressed the contribution that agribusiness makes to the economy and quality of life in North Carolina during his address during lunch.

One of the students who participated in the hands-on activities wrote “I learned just how important it is to take care of our land and how important agriculture is to all of us.”
Promoting Wellness, Fighting Obesity

Family wellness and obesity were addressed successfully in the following programs:

- The county launched a wellness program with a survey of county employees. Weight management was their number one health concern, so Extension ran two Noonlighting sessions at county office facilities. Noonlighting is a 10-week program that stresses healthful eating and reasonable exercise in a support-group environment. Each 45-minute weekly session was held at the employees’ place of work during the lunch hour. The 45 county employees who completed the program lost a total of 219 pounds in just 10 weeks.

- Extension also teamed up with Cabarrus Family Medicine and offered Families Eating Smart and Moving More. Four class sessions were offered each month from March through December. Eighty-eight people learned how to plan and prepare meals, “eat smart on the run,” and incorporate exercise into daily routines.

- Twenty-nine childcare providers, who work with approximately 715 young children in the county, received resources and training to help reduce and prevent childhood obesity through Extension’s Color Me Healthy Program. This program encourages healthy eating and physical activity among preschool children, ages 4 and 5.

4-H Report

- As youth obesity rates continue to increase, Cabarrus County 4-H strives to encourage its young people to commit to fitness and healthy living. Through the 4-H summer programs, 258 youth participated in classes promoting movement and exercise, while another 562 youth were educated on healthy eating.

- Education was also fun in the workshops provided for Boys and Girls Clubs. Through 4-H Expanded Food and Nutrition Educational Program, youth used hands-on activities to learn the importance of healthy eating. Each week, participants would learn a new aspect on choosing healthy foods and have a chance to create their own healthy snack.

- The 772 young people in 4-H Youth Expanded Food and Nutrition Program learned how to eat healthier. After the 6-week program, 88 percent of the youth indicated that they now eat a better variety of foods, 91 percent had increased their knowledge of the essentials of human nutrition, and 85 percent said that they improved practices in food preparation and safety.

Volunteers Share Success Story

Adult volunteers shared a successful county 4-H program at the Southern Region Leaders Conference in Rock Eagle, Georgia. Longtime 4-H volunteers Judy Furr and Jo Ann Lowder explained “4-H Mission… Nutrition” in a workshop attended by 26 adult volunteers from across the South.

The curriculum, developed by the county 4-H staff, is used by volunteers working with 3,200 youth every month. The workshop gave participants a new curriculum to use to help people in their states, and it also helped raise awareness about youth wellness issues at the conference.

Cabarrus 4-H’ers Bring Home Gold

Kayla Mason and Beth Tevepaugh represented North Carolina at the National Junior Horticulture Association Conference in Ohio after taking top honors for their presentation at State 4-H Congress in Raleigh. Kayla, who presented on the topic of peanuts, came home as a national winner. Beth’s presentation on fruit and vegetable use earned her the title of grand national winner, a great honor given only to the top presenters at the conference.

Congratulations to Kayla Mason and Beth Tevepaugh for earning national 4-H recognition.

ECA Members Extend Family Programs

Family programs and wellness information were the focus as Cabarrus County Extension and Community Association (ECA) members brought information into their 11 communities and across Cabarrus County. Among their many efforts were hosting a county wide forum on “Protect Every Child” promoting internet safety; “showering” the Community Free Clinic with much-needed supplies, and hosting “Healthy Eating and Loving It” classes.

PROGRAMS ADDRESSING COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Shankletown Neighbors Meet to Discuss Issues

Shankletown neighbors in Concord are holding quarterly meetings to address issues and concerns. Local government agency representatives also attend, bringing the 125 residents information on safety, building, zoning, code enforcement, leadership and community development. The neighborhood group’s president, secretary and treasurer continue to seek additional support and guidance by participating in county policy-making meetings.

Leadership Training Certificates Earned

Fifty-nine county residents received certificates at the first ever leadership training collaboration between NC Cooperative Extension and the Department of Social Services in Cabarrus County. Sessions included facilitating effective meetings, handling difficult people in groups, resolving conflicts and public speaking. Ninety-eight percent of the participants reported in evaluations that the information was useful.

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4-H Afterschool Report Card

Elementary School Program

The Cabarrus County 4-H Afterschool program received three grants totaling $105,000. The grants were awarded to Bethel Kids:Plus, Harrisburg Kids:Plus and Kids Next Door afterschool programs. The funding, which allowed each site to expand their programs by at least 25 children, was made possible by the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Child Development and the 4-H School-Age Care Department at NC State University.

Other highlights included:
- More than 4,000 hours of community service activities were logged this year with a value of $68,000 to Cabarrus County.
- Leadership skills taught to 153 4-H club officers and their families attended the 4-H Afterschool Club Officers Retreat.
- Business skills as 20 learned how to run a successful business during a summer program entitled Mini Society.
- Gardening as 91 afterschool 4-H’ers learned gardening first-hand as they planted and maintained a garden throughout the school year in Successful Gardener Kids.

Middle School Program

4-H Support Our Students (SOS) Goldminers program provided 104 middle school students with a nurturing, balanced, and structured afterschool program at three Cabarrus County middle schools. Eighty-seven percent of these students would be home alone during the critical after-school hours when young people this age are most likely to be involved in risky behaviors. Students who needed assistance in developing academic and social skills were encouraged to participate.

All students enrolled at least 30 days during 4-H Summer Fling classes. Volunteers supplied a total of 1,041 hours of support for a value of $12,492. Community organizations, businesses and individuals supplied $48,710 of in-kind support. The largest source of funding, totaling $124,693, came from grants. This vital support was provided by the NC Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Support Our Students Grant, and the Philip Morris USA Positive Youth Development Grant and the Philip Morris Employee Community Fund, a workplace-giving program managed, administered and supported by employees of Philip Morris.

4-H Youth have fun refining their large motor skill development with the parachute game during 4-H Summer Fling classes.

4-H Afterschool members participate in space camp activities at the Lights On! Afterschool program.

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Our educational programs and information are available to everyone!

Call us at (704) 920-3310 or stop by to see us at 715 Cabarrus Avenue West in Concord. Our hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Visit our website at www.ces.ncsu.edu/cabarrus/

Director of the Cabarrus County Center of North Carolina Cooperative Extension: Deborah G. Bost

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