

**COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE**  
**WEEKLY UPDATE**  
**Week Ending 7/3/08**

1. Items for Approval – None this week.
2. Items for Discussion – None this week.
3. Summary of County Visits by Dr. Jon Ort

DATE	COUNTY VISITED	PURPOSE
	None this week.	

4. Items for Information

- ✚ In 2007, \$1,964,903 (approximately 8%) of total dollars spent on Northampton County Medicaid were attributed to overweight and obesity. Northampton County has few community resources for physical activity. Research supports the adoption of a healthy lifestyle and physical activity to reduce the incidence of chronic disease and the health care costs associated with chronic disease. A partnership consisting of North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Northampton County Center, Health, Recreation, and Aging Departments secured a \$60,000 *Fit Community* Grant. This funding provided a sidewalk to access a nature trail, exercise equipment for the county wellness center, and additional resources for citizens to increase physical activity. As a part of the *Fit Community* partnership, Cooperative Extension is a strong collaborator in building community capacity for healthy living.
- ✚ Plant nurseries work diligently to maintain quality plant material for the market place and in doing so struggle with many plant pests to keep plants growing at the optimal level. Recently, North Carolina Cooperative Extension in Forsyth County assisted a local boxwood grower with 2,600, 6-year old plants that were not producing quality growth and were soon to miss the market year and possible longer. This means a loss of income for the grower and the employees that work on the farm. On investigation by the Extension agent, the pests were identified and treated allowing the plants to resume quality growth and meet the market cycle. The sale value of these plants was \$208,000.
- ✚ The City of Kannapolis is undergoing rapid transformation from a textile mill town to a knowledge-based economy. Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation has provided the City of Kannapolis with a grant to improve relationships and communications in the James Street area, which is located near the North Carolina Research Campus. The collaborative effort includes individuals from NCSU's College of Design, Agriculture and Resource Economics Department, 4-H and Family and Consumer Sciences Department, NC A&T SU's Agribusiness, Applied Economics and Agriscience Education Department, Fashion Merchandising and Design Department, an NC A&T SU Specialist in the area of Community and Economic Development and our Community and Rural Development Extension Agent from North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Cabarrus County Center.
- ✚ After the extended drought in 2007, many home gardeners are aware of the need to conserve water. After receiving several calls from citizens wanting to know where to purchase rain barrels, our Extension Agent from North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Buncombe County Center and Extension Master Gardener volunteers arranged a truck-load sale of 80-gallon rain barrels. A feature newspaper story and other promotion helped to raise awareness of the potential for water conservation by collecting rain water. As a result of the sale, 414 rain barrels were distributed to nearly 300 area residents. If each barrel was filled and used only twice a month from March through October, a conservative estimate of 530,000 gallons of water could be saved.

- ❏ In Sampson County, our Family and Consumer Sciences Agent was conducting a home visit with a senior citizen who was widowed. Our agent asked if there were monies to help with repairs to her home. She currently has a mortgage with Rural Housing and could not afford to borrow money for the needed repairs (leaking plumbing, and roof, rotting overhangs, a few electrical problems, and painting). A call was placed to Rural Housing to inquire about the possibility of assistance. Following the application process, the applicant was awarded a grant of \$12,000 to make the needed repairs.
- ❏ Research indicates that civic engagement during childhood relates to civic engagement as an adult. The Lincoln County Schools Special Projects Coordinator expressed a need for educational enrichment activities for the after school program. In collaboration with Lincoln County Schools, Lincoln County 4-H received a grant of \$8,000 from the NC Civics Consortium to deliver the program. In Lincoln County, 375 After School kindergarten through fifth grade youth are participating in a 4-H Civics in After School project. The project utilizes the 4-H After School Resource Guide, *Civic Engagement, After School Activities for Citizenship, Leadership and Service*. A pre-test of their civics knowledge was administered during the spring of 2008 and a post-test will be given in December of 2008. Through games and sharing, students have already demonstrated an increase in knowledge of civics.
- ❏ There is a growing demand for locally produced food in the Triangle area. In addition, there are a significant number of people interested in the production of vegetables for local markets that do not own property or have the means to begin production on their own. North Carolina Cooperative Extension and Orange County, with assistance from NCSU, NC A&T SU and others, decided to start a farm incubator project at the NCSU owned Breeze Farm in Orange County. After an eight-week training program in late winter, the project was started with land preparation, irrigation set-up and laying of plastic mulch. Currently, a total of seven new farming operations are growing on five acres at the Breeze Farm. Growers will be marketing vegetables through different means, with continuing educational assistance given by staff.
- ❏ Over \$2.1M of Anson's County's Medicaid dollars were attributed to overweight and obesity last year. The obesity rate of children ages 5-11 in the county is 25%. Continually targeted by health groups as a prevalent issue in the county, North Carolina Cooperative Extension conducted the *Promoting Healthy Eating Across NC* program with third grade students at Wadesboro Primary School. A total of 65 students in five classes participated in the ten-week program. Curriculum, lessons and demonstrations addressed eating healthier, increasing physical activity and food safety. Each child received recipe handouts, workbooks, story books and an interactive CD with games. Pre-test and post-test scores revealed a 48% increase in knowledge, while written comments indicated students planned to practice more of the healthy habits they learned. In addition, teachers welcomed the opportunity to implement more nutrition curriculum in their lessons, as part of the statewide initiative towards healthier schools.
- ❏ Graham County has many economic challenges. It has been classified as economically disadvantaged. It has a consistently high unemployment rate and the average household income falls below national and state medians. There have been recent rumors about the closing of the only remaining manufacturing plant. The NC Department of Commerce (NCDOC) has selected Graham County to become part of its 21st Century Community Initiative. For two years, NCDOC will assist the county in developing programs that will provide long-term economic impacts. Extension staff members have worked closely with the NCDOC, county government, citizens groups, and other county agencies to address economic issues. To date, county staff has served on four grant writing teams, participated in community surveys and focus groups, and assisted NCDOC in providing information to citizens. Work is in progress that will help the county build heritage and nature-based tourism efforts.

5. Routine Items – None this week.