



NC COOPERATIVE EXTENSION - STATEWIDE IMPACTS

Week Ending 2/20/09

- ◆ Child Care provides an economic value to families and communities in that it provides the needed care so parents can work. Child care small businesses, however have been suffering with the economy lately, often allowing parents to slide with fees while cutting the hours of their own workers. **Dr. Karen DeBord has been providing leadership to the North Carolina Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development. She has interviewed child care directors about their hardships and needs. She has posted helpful resources to the Institute website that she maintains. To read more, see: <http://www.ncchildcare.org/econ.html>**
- ◆ The production of corn, cotton and soybeans on approximately 70,500 acres in Bertie County generates approximately \$25 million in farm income annually. It is crucial that farmers select varieties that produce high yielding and high quality crops to insure their economic viability. To assist growers in this area, our Extension Agent in Bertie County conducted seven corn, six cotton, and three soybean variety on-farm tests during 2008. Yield data has been taken on the variety tests and reported to area farmers and agri-businesses. Through this local testing program, crop varieties have been selected by area farmers, which could increase the average of corn, cotton, and soybean yields by five percent or more. **Through proper variety selection, net farm income has the potential to increase by approximately \$1.25 million.**
- ◆ Traditional, part-time beef cattle producers cannot take full advantage of the premium prices offered for selling truckload lots due to small farm sizes and thus small herd sizes. Grouping cattle from these smaller farms into similar lots and marketing them as truckloads offers these producers premium prices that they could not obtain on the average weekly auction market. Through recommendations from NC Cooperative Extension and the Stanly County Livestock Market, area beef cattle producers participated in the fall feeder cattle sales, marketing 4,384 head of cattle. **With average premiums being \$0.05 per pound and average calf weights being 645 pounds, this is an extra \$32.25 per animal for a total additional income of \$141,384 for area beef cattle producers.**
- ◆ In these difficult economic times, traditional program funding is becoming increasingly more difficult to come across. Due to this reality, alternative funding sources such as grants are imperative in maintaining a quality program that meets the needs of local clientele. In 2008, **Lee County 4-H applied for and received nearly \$25,000 in grant funding. This total included nearly \$18,000 in first-time monies that Lee County 4-H partnered with the Lee County Health Department and Lee County Schools to obtain.** These funds were used to develop new and innovative programs in healthy eating and physical fitness like the *Fit for Life* initiative, along with a container gardening program entitled *Growing Healthy Kids*, as well as the creation of an on-site community garden at the Extension Center. These grant funded programs have already reached an estimated 750 students in an effort to combat youth obesity, improve overall healthy lifestyles, and develop leadership skills in local youth.
- ◆ The economy in the country is not in a very good state currently and individuals have to really stretch their dollars. NC Cooperative Extension has spent much time educating residents regarding energy conservation, which in turn helps them decrease the money spent on electricity and gas. Over 150 CFL bulbs were given out in Onslow County during 2008. **This is a savings to the resident of \$4 a bulb and a total of \$600 to all of the participants combined. This does not take into account the amount of electricity saved and money saved for their electricity bill.**

- ◆ Many senior citizens and others on Medicare have questions and concerns about what insurance they have and what they need. Our Family and Consumer Science Agents in Stanly County recognized the need and coordinate The Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) in Stanly County. SHIIP answers questions and counsels Medicare beneficiaries and caregivers about Medicare, Medicare supplements, Medicare Advantage, Medicare prescription drug plans, long-term care insurance and other health insurance concerns. In 2008, these agents along with 5 trained volunteers were able to help 301 Stanly County Citizens with their Medicare concerns. During the Part D open enrollment, Medicare beneficiaries brought their medicines in so the agents and volunteers could make sure they had the best plan for the upcoming year. **On average, those who changed plans will save around \$320 a year. Many saved more, and others left knowing their current plans are the best ones available for the coming year.**
- ◆ Obesity rates in America have doubled in the past 30 years. In Lee County in 2007, over \$1 million were spent on Medicaid due to obesity related complications. Childhood obesity leads to heart disease, stroke and diabetes. NC Cooperative Extension teamed with Lee County Schools and the Lee County Health Department to present the *Fit for Life Program*. Over 700 students participated in the program that focused on making healthy eating choices, learning about where food comes from, eating fruits and vegetables and getting plenty of exercise. Students kept records of fruit and vegetable consumption as well as documenting their physical activity. Each student was also recognized for their participation in the program and completing their journals. **Based on the journals completed, over 70% of students involved in the program increased the amount of fruit and vegetables they consumed as well as the amount of physical activity they participated in.**
- ◆ In North Carolina, 25% of children have a weight above the 95th percentile, putting them at increased risk for heart disease, diabetes and other chronic health problems. Contributing factors include inappropriate eating behaviors and low levels of physical activity. The *Color Me Healthy*, train-the-trainer educational program targeting children ages four and five, is considered a prevention strategy. The program is a community partnership led by NC Cooperative Extension in Wake County and teaches healthy eating and physical activity learning strategies. Partners include Smart Start, Human Services, UNC-CH Public Health Interns and local childcare associations. To date 1,141 providers have received training, 108 providers were trained in 2008. **Evaluations indicate that 95 percent of providers found the tools provided were useful in teaching healthy eating and physical activity, with 92 percent learning new knowledge or skills that help them eat healthy and stay active.** Follow-up and more in-depth evaluations are ongoing.
- ◆ Foodborne illness outbreaks have major economic repercussions, even in areas that are not implicated. For example, Georgia tomato growers estimate a loss of \$13.9 million because of alerts issued by the Federal Drug Administration (Southeast Farm Press, 9/4/08). A major source of foodborne pathogen contamination is workers' hands, and the most effective method of preventing produce contamination with organisms like E. coli and Salmonella is proper handwashing. On September 11, NC Cooperative Extension trained 25 field workers and 4 vegetable farmers in Haywood County (in English and Spanish) on proper handwashing techniques and good hygiene practices and learned how these techniques protect themselves, their families and consumers. **Growers are required to train workers on proper handwashing and hygiene as part of their food safety plan for Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification. At least one grower will apply for GAP certification in 2009, allowing him to market his produce as GAP certified.**

- ◆ With the demand for local grown vegetables and related produce the need to become more efficient in producing this product is critical to the economic survival of small farmers. The 2008 drought only magnified the struggle to grow quality crops in large enough volume. Through the team work of the Cooperative Extension office and NC A&T State University, 4 farm sites were selected for trials of black plastic with drip irrigation placed for vegetable production. All 4 sites were successful with one shining example being a farm operation growing 1.5 acres on plastic. **In 2007, this farm grew 5,464 pounds of vegetables and in 2008 with the use of drip irrigation and black plastic on the same site the pounds of vegetables jumped to 14,548 pounds. This is a value increase of \$8,311.**
- ◆ Mold is a fact of life in southeastern North Carolina due to the high humidity and warm temperatures. An Onslow County resident had been having a terrible time controlling mold growing in her home. She was spending a lot of time in the doctor's office due to her respiratory system being affected by the mold spores in the air of her home. After attending a class provided by the NC Cooperative Extension, she learned how to improve the quality of air in her home by cleaning mold and providing ventilation along all walls and using the proper filter for her HVAC filter. **The resident is no longer being bothered by respiratory infections and has decreased her time in the doctor's office.**
- ◆ The preservation of farmland and green space has been shown to have economic and quality of life benefits for farm and non-farm citizens as well. According to the NC Agricultural Development & Farmland Preservation Trust Fund, "In North Carolina the number of farms and farmland has been steadily declining. 5,500 farms and 300,000 acres of farmland have been lost since 2003." NC Cooperative Extension office was approached by the agricultural leaders in McDowell County who expressed an interest in seeing a farmland preservation program implemented in the county. A group of citizens in McDowell County then began writing a farmland preservation district ordinance for the county. **The ordinance was completed and adopted by the McDowell County Board of Commissioners. As of December 2008, 1,086 acres of farmland have been accepted into this program.**