



NC COOPERATIVE EXTENSION - STATEWIDE IMPACTS

Week Ending 3/6/09

- ◆ Water quality is a problem in the lower creek watershed. To help, NC Cooperative Extension in Caldwell County and the NC State University Department of Biological & Agricultural Engineering (BAE) in cooperation with the City of Lenoir and Caldwell County developed a plan. The plan is to convert three acres of developed floodplain to a functional wetland. Flowing into this wetland is a 120 acre neighborhood. **The NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) through the Clean Water Management Trust Fund has awarded \$770,000 toward this project.** When the project is complete it will be monitored for two years to determine its impact on water quality. The neighborhood is excited for the project to begin. NC Cooperative Extension also worked with BAE and the City of Lenoir to improve a stream in Wilson Park. The plan is to restore the tributary stream to a stable, functional stream. **The NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) awarded \$120,000 to implement the project.** The project goals are to improve water quality, provide education, and increase aesthetics of the park.
- ◆ NC Cooperative Extension in Rutherford County was an instrumental member of the Daniel Road Complex Team in 2008. **At the request of Extension Advisory Council members, County Commissioners and other interested citizens purchased a 112 acre tract of land to house an agricultural services building, farmer's market and livestock arena.** The area will also be used for a pet center and soccer fields. This multiple use property is located on a main road in Spindale, which will give high traffic opportunities to the farmer's market. **This cooperative effort of Cooperative Extension, county government and local citizen groups will enhance economic opportunities for local produce growers and artisans. The \$4.2 million land purchase is planned to serve the county well into the next two decades, and serve as an attraction property for tourism in the county.** The master plan for the property is currently being developed, and building can start as early as 2010.
- ◆ In Cabarrus County the combined percentage of overweight and obese is 62.5% of all adults. NC Cooperative Extension, Cabarrus County Center partnered with the county wellness program to address this need by providing a 14-week program focused on healthy eating and physical activity. *Eat Smart, Move More, Weigh Less* was held at a downtown location during the noon hour. **Information regarding nutrition and physical activity education was shared weekly, with 21 participants completing the program, losing a total of 257.4 pounds. Nine people lowered their blood pressure and 13 moved to a lower Body Mass Index (BMI).** Increased portion control, more mindful eating, increased fruit, vegetable and fiber consumption and a more careful reading of labels were the most consistent behavior changes reported.
- ◆ The year-end brings stress and concern for the majority of people on Medicare. In Pasquotank County, there are 9-10 calls or office visits to the Extension Center daily for assistance with Medicare. During the year, 79 people received assistance with answers to questions, plan comparisons and/or enrollment into a Medicare Part "D" prescription drug plan. **The regular cost of the prescription medicine was \$282,778, the Medicare recipients cost was \$63,725 with a savings of \$219,053.** The people gained decision-making and comparison-shopping skill knowledge as they compared one of the 47 drug plans available in the area, and then made the decision on the correct plan to meet their needs. Most of the Medicare recipients stated that once they've received the information and are able to choose a plan that they have been relieved of major stress and the majority of them are able to save money.

- ◆ Cleaner air, the biofuel wave, and location revitalization all came to together and added up to success near Denton, N.C. A facility, originally built by DuPont that produced formaldehyde was phased out of production. In an effort to save jobs, and utilize an existing infrastructure, **NC Cooperative Extension agents and a specialist felt this facility could be easily converted to produce ethanol.** Excellent rail and highway access was weakened without natural gas. **However, the JT Russell & Sons Company saw the site as a true opportunity and purchased the property. In July of 2008, they began bringing in ethanol by rail from Illinois, utilizing existing storage tanks. The ethanol then travels by highway to Greensboro, Selma and Charlotte where it is blended with petroleum gasoline for delivery to local filling stations. Currently, they have four full-time employees and are on track to handle 4,000,000 gallons of ethanol annually.**
- ◆ Due to the vast economic woes and budget cuts, the Housing Authority of Winston-Salem decided to eliminate the youth teen centers and teen center directors in public housing communities. Teens stated that this was a problem because these locations provided necessary services such as computers for school work, a safe place for youth, teen fellowship, meeting space and adult guidance. **Several teens that participated in the Citizenship Focus Conference and National 4-H Conference gained skills from meeting with and writing to local legislators and representatives. Utilizing these skills, they had legislators and representatives make contacts with Housing Authority officials to keep these centers open. Public Housing has now decided to keep the teen centers open and keep the teen center's directors employed.**
- ◆ Black Shank continues to be a disease threatening the livelihood of Person County tobacco producers. In 2007, one producer only averaged 2,110 pounds per acre due to moderate black shank infestations. As a result of the educational efforts of NC Cooperative Extension, this grower changed his variety, adopted a chemical treatment program, and changed his cultural practices. **These three changes raised his yield in 2008 to 3,140 pounds per acre, a difference of 1,030 pounds per acre. With an average of \$1.83 per pound, he increased his gross return per acre by \$1,885. His total cost for the chemical treatment was only \$140 per acre. His total net income increased by \$38,390 on 22 acres of tobacco. In Alexander County, control efforts recommended by NC Cooperative Extension prevented outbreaks of this same disease. One producer saved \$9,000 by following these recommendations.**
- ◆ Many homeowners that have automated irrigation systems lack the knowledge to efficiently use these systems and waste precious drinking water through misuse. As an outgrowth of the Extension Greenscaping program in Pitt County, our Extension Agent and several Extension Master Gardener Volunteers worked with 24 homeowners in the *Cornerstone* development to calibrate irrigation systems and educate homeowners on their proper use, how to soil test, proper use of fertilizer, integrated pest management, and environmentally friendly maintenance. **Changes made to the irrigation systems result in a yearly reduction in drinking water use for irrigation of 2,152,008 gallons.**
- ◆ Narrow profit margins caused by high fuel and fertilizer prices can be offset by maximizing tobacco yields. Variety selection is a critical component in the grower's decision-making process, because it determines the crop's ultimate yield potential. Educational efforts by the NC Cooperative Extension in Edgecombe County have helped tobacco growers select high-yielding tobacco varieties where practical. **The increase in the selection of high-yielding varieties improved grower profitability by \$382,162 in 2008.**

- ◆ **Columbus County Community Farmers' Market, Inc. received an \$18,000 grant to help promote locally grown produce through the Farmers Market. U.S. Congressman Mike McIntyre announced that the Columbus County Community Farmers Market, Inc. is the recipient of one of 85 grants totaling \$3,445,000 directed by the new farm bill to encourage the use of farmers markets.** Some of the 2008 grant funds will be used to promote new electronic benefit transfers (EBT) to help low-income consumers buy locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables. "We are so pleased that the Columbus County Farmers Market is receiving these grant funds," said Congressman McIntyre. "The market does a great job promoting and providing locally grown, farm fresh produce. These funds will help strengthen the connection between farmers and the community."
- ◆ The National Endowment for Financial Education and the Community Action Partnership indicate that limited resource individuals struggle to pay bills and provide food and clothes for their families, much less being able to afford home ownership. NC Cooperative Extension's Family and Consumer Sciences Agents provided money management information to Habitat for Humanity potential homeowners in Catawba County. **Using skills developed in educational sessions, thirteen participants were able to reduce their debt by \$6,251.93 and save \$2,164.95 within a three-month period. This achievement enabled the families to move forward toward their goal of home ownership.**
- ◆ Black Root Rot is an emerging issue for North Carolina tobacco greenhouse transplant producers in the Piedmont. The symptoms of the disease strongly mirror another disease, Pythium, and have often been misdiagnosed by farmers and others involved in agribusiness. **As a result of the educational efforts of NC Cooperative Extension in Person County, three transplant producers were able to correctly diagnose the problem with their greenhouse and therefore not waste money for a treatment that would be ineffective, saving them collectively, \$9,200.**
- ◆ According to the Department of Health and Human Services, obesity has reached epidemic proportions in the US and Johnston County is no exception. To address the problem of obesity and the chronic illness that often accompanies it, such as: Type II Diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and joint disease, the *Eat Smart Move More Weigh Less* program was conducted in Johnston County. **The average weight loss at the completion of the 15-week program was 7 pounds. In addition there were drops in blood pressure, waist circumference and Body Mass Index, which are all important indicators of health.** Participants stated that they felt better and more confident that they could achieve and maintain a healthy weight. In addition, they stated that they now get physical activity for at least 30 minutes most days of the week, which has a huge impact on the avoidance of chronic disease.