In the depths of the Great Depression a young boy planted a plot of peanuts as part of a 4-H project and roasted them in his mother’s kitchen. Amidst the pleasing aroma of roasting peanuts, Rudolph Carl Ellis detected a scent of potential profit as well. At that instant, Ellis’ Fancy Peanuts was born. Peddling — and literally pedaling on his bicycle — the bags of peanuts throughout a territory ranging from Dunn to Elizabethtown, the Cumberland County native amassed enough money to put his family into a new house on land of their own at the eve of the Second World War.

The “House That 4-H Peanuts Built” was gifted to 4-H by the Ellis Family and is today the centerpiece of the new North Carolina 4-H Museum and History Center at Millstone 4-H Camp in Ellerbe. The North Carolina 4-H Museum and History Center will be a major learning-by-doing complex where a new generation will meet the past interactively. Here, the story of 4-H — the story exemplified in the lives of young people like Ellis — will be retold in the context of the broader history of the state and nation during the last 100 years.

Once complete, the 4-H Museum and History Center will tell the 4-H story in lively and vivid detail, using the voices of the people who lived it as well as their artifacts; will engage young people in heritage agriculture, teaching them the history of traditional agriculture in non-traditional ways with live, agriculture displays; and will instill in visitors a sense of history and an appreciation for our rich 4-H heritage.

To achieve these ends, the North Carolina 4-H Museum and History Center will feature a state-of-the-art interactive history center with classrooms, a multimedia theater, interactive timelines and displays and, of course, a 4-H gift shop where young people can purchase items that will further enrich their minds after the visit to the museum is over.

An old-fashioned Farm Shop will feature antique farm implements and will serve as the learning center for visitors interested in the Heritage Agriculture plots around the property. And the entire property will be unified by a courtyard and pavilion where bricks and markers will commemorate 4-H Century icons, families and clubs for all time. The urgency of this project grows every day. This is our museum, a home for our story. We must not forfeit this once-in-a-century chance to preserve that story for all time. If you are ready to take your place in 4-H history, contact us today.

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Volunteer contributions to North Carolina Cooperative Extension are tremendous. In addition to the 22,000+ advisory leaders across the state, there are an additional 56,000 volunteers who contributed 871,804 hours, valued at $17.1 million.

These volunteers serve in such roles as 4-H Leaders, Master Gardeners and the Extension Community Association. Cooperative Extension relies on volunteers to assist with programming, marketing, advocacy and resource development, as they help to expand Cooperative Extension’s educational programs to more citizens across the state. Our volunteers are all highly valued for their contributions.

Extension advisory leaders serve on county advisory councils, program committees, specialized committees and the state advisory council, as well as district councils and/or clusters. The partnership that we have with advisory leaders gives Cooperative Extension the grassroots connection to our citizens, which ensures that Cooperative Extension stays relevant, responsive and focused. Advisory leaders also provide communication to key groups and help to expand our resource base.

Driving these efforts is the strong passion our volunteer groups have for the educational programs provided by Cooperative Extension. And that enthusiasm is contagious – something we in Extension recognize we are fortunate to have. Volunteers are our partners, a part of the Extension family. In fact, among the greatest privileges in working for Cooperative Extension is serving alongside volunteers.

The differences Extension makes in the lives of citizens across the state are not possible without the assistance of volunteer leaders. So I want to take this opportunity to recognize those volunteer contributions, to thank all of our volunteers for all of your efforts and to let you know that you are very much appreciated.

If you are not a volunteer for Cooperative Extension, please find one and thank him or her for helping to fulfill Cooperative Extension’s mission to partner with communities to deliver education and technology that enrich the lives, land and economy of North Carolinians.

Please join me in expressing thanks to all of Extension’s volunteers!
SAC members attend PILD Conference

by Lynn Yokley

In April, State Advisory Council members Pete Miller, B.A. Smith, JoAnne Stroud and Lynn Yokley traveled to Washington, D.C., to attend the two-day Public Issues and Leadership Development (PILD) forum, sponsored by the Joint Council of Extension Professionals. Dr. Jon Ort, Cooperative Extension director and associate dean of NCSU’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences; Joy Staton, Extension advisory system leader; and Dr. Ed Jones, Extension associate director and state program leader, ANR/CRD, accompanied the Council members. Among the workshops and presentations available were Research, Education and Extension Office Stakeholder Listening Session; Food Market Trends; Understanding the Changes Needed in Risk Management for Families, Communities and Business; Conducting Crucial Conversations; and Working Effectively with the Members and Staff of the U.S. Congress.

Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday morning were spent on Capitol Hill. State Advisory Council members, along with members of North Carolina A&T State University’s Strategic Planning Council, visited 10 of our state’s U.S. House representatives and its two U.S. senators. We were able to meet either with the representative/senator or his/her congressional aides. Advisory Council members thanked them for their efforts in the past and asked them to support 1) adequate funding to sustain effectiveness of all capacity programs, 2) a substantial increase in funding for AFRI (Agricultural Food and Research Initiatives) to reach full authorized levels within 5 years, 3) full funding for all mandatory programs established in the 2008 Farm Bill and 4) funding at not less than the FY 2009 level for all CSREES/NIFA programs.

These visits with our state’s representatives in Washington, along with the gratifying and beneficial conference workshops, made for an overall successful trip for Pete, B.A., JoAnne and Lynn.

West Central District holds first district meeting

The West Central District held its first district meeting this past December 5 in Jefferson. This was the first time that counties had been together since the district realignment in January of 2008.

Ron Joyner, West Central State Advisory member, along with the Ashe County Extension staff, hosted the event and made attendees welcome at the Jefferson United Methodist Church, which was beautifully decorated for Christmas. There was a light snowfall to create a Christmas card effect.

West Central State Advisory Council members Joey Bullard and Chuck Mosley presented success stories from each county, offering wonderful examples of how Extension has empowered people to find needed solutions.

Dr. Jon Ort, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences assistant dean and director of Cooperative Extension, gave the keynote address. He highlighted budget concerns and explained how North Carolina Cooperative Extension plans to address this situation. Also speaking to the group was state Rep. Cullie Tarlton, who expressed his appreciation for all the services that Extension provides for the citizens of Ashe and Watauga counties.

The first annual West Central meeting was certainly a success, with anticipation high for the next district meeting.

State Advisory Council visits North Carolina Research Campus

In February, the State Advisory Council met at the North Carolina Research Campus, in Kannapolis. Just 30 minutes from Charlotte, the state-of-the-art research campus was created by visionary David H. Murdock to stimulate discovery and to create a place where the “finest minds and the most advanced technology unite.” When completed, the research campus will be home for researchers from universities including N.C. State, Duke, UNC-Chapel Hill, UNC-Charlotte, N.C. Central, N.C. A&T State and UNC-Greensboro. Research campus staff members Tara Vogelien, Blake Brown, Diane Ducharme and Leah Chester-Davis, all from NCSU, along with Beverly Jordan of UNC-CH, provided an informative tour of the new facilities.
North Carolina 4-H, Cooperative Extension’s youth education program, is celebrating its 100th anniversary. And as is fitting in this centennial year, some strong testimony to the value of 4-H comes in the form of State Advisory Council member Steve Timberlake of Granville County.

Timberlake essentially has been part of the Extension family since youth. He grew up on a dairy/tobacco farm in northern Granville County in the Grassy Creek Community. His two older sisters were 4-H’ers, so young Steve couldn't wait until he was old enough to join. His first 4-H project was a dairy calf. That was the beginning of many projects, including a tobacco demonstration that was a state winner. In summers, he attended 4-H camps and the annual state 4-H Congress.

He credits 4-H with teaching him to develop a sense of responsibility, speaking skills and learning to work with others. The values he learned in 4-H he now puts to use as the retail manager of Southern States in Oxford and in his continued support of Extension and 4-H.

After Timberlake earned his bachelor’s degree in business from Campbell College, he returned 24 years ago to Oxford, where he began working with Southern States Cooperative and helping the cause of Extension. Under his management, Southern States of Oxford became the first recipient of the Granville County Friend of Extension Award. A former chairman of the Granville County ALC, Timberlake is currently serving as adviser. While serving on the ALC, he has chaired Farm City Week three times, each time making it different and innovative.

He has served on the 4-H Youth Specialized Committee, and during National 4-H Week he has led the way selling 4-H clovers for a $1 donation at his store. The National 4-H Council announced that Southern States raised $250,000 to help local 4-H clubs through the Paper Clover promotion. It’s all just a way of saying thank you for the opportunities afforded by his lifelong involvement, Timberlake says. “4-H taught me and meant something to me then, and I just want to return something back.”

Quietly and unobtrusively, he also supports the Granville County Extension staff by giving his time and resources to help them achieve their goals. He believes Extension is a team effort and that each person plays an important part. He sees a bright future for Extension and looks forward to its continued growth in improving our communities. He intends to help improve methods of conducting the work of Extension and achieve successful results in his home county of Granville.

Timberlake also is active in the local Lions’ Club, and he and his wife, Ann, teach a couples’ Sunday school class at Oxford Baptist Church.

As he continues to assist in meeting people’s needs through Extension work, he shares a thought from Winston Churchill: “We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give.”

Soltrén finishes six-year term

Gabriel Soltrén, State Advisory Council member at large, rotates off the council in June 2009 after six years of service. He began his term in Lee County and later moved to Chatham County. During his tenure, he represented the State Advisory Council at the Strengthening Extension Advisory Leadership Conference, the Public Issues Leadership Development Conference and with the Diversity Catalyst team, as well as serving as editor of the LINK newsletter. A native of Puerto Rico, he has also accompanied Extension specialists in making presentations across the state to the growing Spanish-speaking population. Soltrén, a graduate of UNC-Greensboro, lives in Chatham County.