Diversity 101: As simple as respect

County seeks Extension help for diversity training

As local governments struggle to prepare new local and national emergency management plans, they sometimes find communication roadblocks interfere with local planning.

'I learned more about my co-worker today than I have in 15 years of working with her.'

That was as evident in the Hurricane Katrina disaster as it is in local planning efforts in Caldwell County.

Many local governments have excellent employee retention rates, and as in day-to-day family life, when long-standing relationships get tangled up with past hurts, turf wars or stereotypes and biases, such situations can interfere with communication.

For instance, as a local safety coordinator attempted to set up Caldwell County’s communication plan, several departments refused to speak to other departments for a variety of reasons.

The county’s human resource director sought the help of Debbie Cox, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Family and Consumer Science agent and safety coordinator, to design and plan a training program to address communications breakdowns.

Cox is a member of the Extension Diversity Catalyst Team, which has worked for several years to improve awareness and professional competencies in Extension to assist colleagues to reach out to underserved populations and develop materials for improving inclusion of diverse groups in our programming. Biases, stereotypes and refusing to work in all locations are common in many work settings.

Extension has devoted resources to team members to attend workshops, national conferences and academic coursework to improve skills in training others to become knowledgeable of our multicultural world.

Cox developed a two-hour training session, delivered over five weeks to 280 Caldwell County employees.

David Hill, county human resource director and Rosalind Johnson, childcare coordinator for Caldwell County Smart Start were co-leaders. The session explored Mark Williams’ ‘The 10 Lenses of a Multicultural World,’ which provided students with a questionnaire to increase their understanding of the “world view” or “lenses” by which they make judgments or assessments about others. Additional activities and videos directed students thorough a journey of self-discovery and real-world examples of disrespect in the workplace. Participants discussed additional strategies to counteract negative communication styles, weaknesses, prejudices and biases.

One student remarked, ‘I learned more about my co-worker today than I have in 15 years of working with her.’

Increasing awareness is the first step: from there we can begin to build new understandings and better communication that will keep us all safe with each other.

Chiquita McAllister, North Carolina A&T personnel officer, and Harvey Lineberry II, North Carolina State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences assistant dean for personnel, lead the Extension Diversity Catalyst Team. The team represents every sector of Cooperative Extension.

Ongoing diversity trainings are planned for 2008.

For information on the Diversity Catalyst Team please visit: http://harvest.cals.ncsu.edu/index.cfm?showpage=798
Cooperative Extension works to better serve our audiences and to improve our expertise as a high-touch organization, our fundamental mission is still intact and is one that we can apply to each turn we take. Always, we must be vigilant in doing the work that needs to be done: providing solutions to the problems that plague our citizens.

I’m using this measuring stick as our Change Management and Marketing efforts continue to evolve and our recommendations become reality. Already in place: the development of our marketing infrastructure, including the hiring of a marketing director who’s been in place for nearly a year. Also, our planning and development planks have been girded, and our evaluation focus has been sharpened, with the hiring of key experts in those respective areas and through the program development institutes that just ended.

As we proceed with this work, I routinely measure our progress by asking, “Are we doing the work that needs to be done?”

For the past several weeks as our county Extension staff have been out doing environmental scans of their communities, that applicability standard has come to bear. We’ve included a broader spectrum of people in the scans, relying not just on individual residents, but on information from policymakers such as county managers, health directors and organizations, all of whom reach a varied citizenry. In finding out from our audiences what issues they face and what they need to contend with those issues, Extension learns which programs adequately serve our audiences and what we need to do to be responsive.

All this feedback helps us govern our new plans of work, being formulated system-wide to become effective next year. These evaluative processes help us to continue a circle of learning and empowerment. We design, implement, evaluate and assess and then we design, implement, evaluate and assist.

We’re doing the work that needs to be done.

Cooperative Extension hosts 2007 ‘Back Home’ visits

Extension’s State Advisory Council thanks everyone involved in making the 2007 Congressional Back Home Visits a success. The visits allow representatives to speak one-on-one with their constituents. Participating in this year’s seven visits were U.S. Congressmen Brad Miller, Heath Shuler, G.K. Butterfield, Bob Etheridge and Walter Jones.

Pictured here are, above left, Congressman Miller (in suit) on a 'Back Home Visit' hosted by Cooperative Extension’s Rockingham County Center and Congressman Etheridge (above) at a visit hosted by Extension’s Johnston County Center.
State Advisory Council meets on Outer Banks

By Lynn Yokley

Ann Ward, N.C. Cooperative Extension’s Dare County director, welcomed us to the State Advisory Council’s Oct. 9-11 meeting in beautiful Kitty Hawk, N.C.

As always, Dr. Jon Ort and Sheilda Sutton gave administrative updates from North Carolina State and NC A&T State universities. Some of their news: With Northeast District Director Dr. Russell King’s retirement, Extension is dropping from seven to six districts; A&T has a new chancellor and their College of Agriculture and Environmental Science enrollment is increasing.

Several NCSU-based people made informative presentations, including: Chrystal Bartlett, Cooperative Extension marketing director; Dr. Dennis Hazel, assistant professor and Extension specialist, College of Natural Resources; Dr. Marshall Stewart, associate director, state program leader and 4-H Youth Development and Family and Consumer Sciences Department head; Dr. Matt Veal, assistant professor and Extension specialist, Biological and Agricultural Engineering Department; and Cintia Aguilar, Extension Latino affairs facilitator.

We learned about marketing initiatives, the role forestry can play in renewable energy, the direction of 4-H and Family and Consumer Science, the biofuels conversion process and Extension’s efforts to reach our Latino population. Warren Judge, Dare County Commissioners’ chair also spoke on the county and what Extension means to it.

A tour of the Dare County Youth Center and the Arboretum and Teaching Center were extremely interesting. The 4-H agent led a group of 4-H after-schoolers in determining what vegetable she had brought for them to taste. This activity is part of the Save our Schools program. Dare County Master Gardeners shared the Arboretum with us and described the work they have done there.

While at Kitty Hawk, State Advisory Council members were privileged to meet Elizabeth Dole, U.S. Senator from North Carolina and Mark Basnight, N.C. Senate president pro tempore.

State Advisory Council members also shared information about their Back Home visits and their participation in 4-H Citizenship Focus.

Advisory Council welcomes new members

Please help us welcome the following new members to the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service’s State Advisory Council:

**Dr. Connie S. Buckner** is from Weaverville, N.C. and represents the West District. Buckner is the director of the Madison Campus, Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College. Her parents were burley tobacco and beef cattle farmers. She has also completed the Master Gardener Program through Extension. She finds farming the land is a most worthy and satisfying occupation.

**Jackie Lewis** is from Brunswick, N.C. and represents the Southeast District. Lewis is a retired from IBM and now works as a real estate agent.

She has extensive experience in volunteerism with Brunswick Community College Foundation, Communities in Schools and the Thalian Hall Board of Trustees. She will provide excellent representation to all of the people of southeastern North Carolina.

**Mary Ann Lumpkins** is from Granville, N.C. and represents the North Central District. Lumpkins is a retired educator. She has served in many volunteer capacities with Cooperative Extension, including as president of the county Extension Family and Community Association. She is also a valuable volunteer and mentor for children. A strong advocate for families, all that she does focuses on strengthening families and the community.
**Ireni Tourmaras Autry**

Ireni Tourmaras Autry’s parents emigrated from the countryside near Athens, Greece to Sumter, S.C., where Ireni was born. When she was two, the family moved to Burlington, N.C., where her father was in the restaurant business. Since only Greek was spoken in the home, she learned to speak English when she started to school at age five (birth certificates were not closely checked and her mother did not speak English).

Ireni learned Greek traditions by attending Greek school in the afternoons after public school. Today she not only speaks, writes and reads Greek, but cooks many Greek foods for family and friends.

Her passion for Extension began in 1954, when as a young mother, she joined the Gaston home demonstration club. In the 53 years she has been a member of Extension clubs (Home Demonstration, Extension Homemakers, Extension and Community Association), she has been a club member, county and district council member and in 1993, state president. Through her club memberships she has enjoyed the programs offered by Extension agents and leadership development skills they taught.

Today she lives in a small Hoke County community, where she and her husband, Raz, own a 2,100-tree peach orchard, although the crop unfortunately was wiped out this year. The farm is a certified road market, also selling watermelons, cantaloupes, corn, peas, okra and tomatoes.

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**Wilson County native Paul Farris**, owner of Farris Motors in Rocky Mount, N.C., is a strong supporter of North Carolina Cooperative Extension.

After initial involvement with Cooperative Extension through his daughter’s 4-H activities, Farris has been an avid supporter of and donor to the program. Instrumental in promoting 4-H and Extension, he serves countless hours on various boards to provide leadership and direction to the programs.

Farris just completed terms as NC 4-H Development Fund board president, Wilson County Extension Advisory Council chair and Wilson County 4-H Development Fund board president.

He worked for five years as a volunteer leader for the New Hope 4-H Club in Wilson County, and received a 4-H Donor of the Year award for three years and the Green Clover Award for supporting the Wilson County 4-H Livestock Show & Sale for 10 years. He was influential in the NC 4-H Dodge Truck Fundraising Campaign, which raised more than $100,000 for the NC 4-H Program. He has served 20 years on the Dodge Advisory Board.

Farris is also involved with various community functions such as Relay for Life and with St. Therese Catholic Church and school. He also advises the Wilson County Fair board.