

EXTENSION Today

IN MCCRACKEN COUNTY

In McCracken County we're growing ideas that make a difference in your life, your family, and your community. We have a dedicated staff of trained professionals delivering educational programs in agriculture and natural resources, family and consumer sciences, 4-H youth development, and community and economic development. The McCracken County Cooperative Extension Office is your connection to the University of Kentucky and the world.

You'll see some key numbers in this report. But the numbers don't show you the people or the impact of our work. So the rest of this report shows the faces behind some of the numbers.

Farmer's Market Produce Promotion



Most produce in the US is picked 4 to 7 days before being placed on supermarket shelves, and is shipped for an average of 1500 miles before being sold. In that amount of time sugars may turn to starches, plant cells shrink, and produce loses its vitality. Food transportation is among the biggest and fastest-growing sources of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide. Only 18 cents of every dollar, when buying at a large supermarket, goes to the grower. Middlemen get the other .82 cents.

To help the local farmer's in our area the Master Food Volunteers and the Cooperative Extension Service have been promoting local foods at the Downtown Farmers Market.

There are many benefits to buying local including better tasting food, reduces energy used for transport, and more money stays in the community. In today's time when obesity is on the rise along with energy costs and grocery prices families are looking for ways to make changes and reduce costs. There has been a turn toward buying local.

It has become known that the first Saturday of the month the Master Food Volunteers will be at the Downtown Farmers Market featuring "in season" produce and the many recipes from the Kentucky Recipe Cards. The manager of the Farmer's Market stated that having cooperation with outside agencies makes it more favorable for the Market to receive monies. Individual vendors stated that when the Master Food Volunteers were there promoting produce they sold more of those items increasing their profits by up to 20%. There was an increase in customers and for the next year all the booths at the Downtown Farmers Market have been rented.

Students Gain a Great Appreciation for Cooperatives

In order for high school juniors to gain an appreciation of cooperatives as one of the important form of doing business, McCracken County Cooperative Extension Agents implemented the American Private Enterprise System Youth Program. The youth scholars displayed an increase in knowledge of the American economic system and global economy through study and became acquainted with career opportunities in business.

There were forty outstanding young people representing four of five high schools in McCracken County attended the local APES program in April

2008. This project served as enrichment to supplement lessons taught during the academic year in the business courses.

Of the 8 students invited to attend Kentucky Youth Seminar, four vibrant young minds participated in the state program. Cameron Farley, Monica Spees, Richard Scelzi, and Joshua Lynn, all from Lone Oak High excelled greatly at the event. Each study received cash prizes for their scores on the individual examinations. Three of four students won an all expense paid trip to Asheville, North Carolina for the National Institute of Cooperative Education trip. The fourth student was chosen to be an alternate for the NICE conference.



In addition to qualifying for the national conference, two students, Monica and Cameron, received scholarships totaling \$1100 to assist with college.

The McCracken County 4-H program received a \$300 mini-grant from West Kentucky Community and Technical College School to Careers Fund. With this money, McCracken County 4-H was able to host the county APES project and provide two partial scholarships to students to attend the Kentucky Youth Seminar held at the University of Kentucky.

Good Agricultural Practices Training

Food safety scares began circulating last summer with the wide spread word of e-coli tainted spinach. In fall of 2007 more media coverage continued with the thought of e-coli in our green onions. More recently, spring 2008, tomatoes received a bad media blitz with dangerous salmonella.

As a result of the media frenzy concerning deadly produce, consumers are searching safe food sources. Fortunately, McCracken County has several sources to purchase locally grown produce; certified roadside stands and the Paducah Downtown Farmers Market. The Kentucky Department of Agriculture initiated a Good Agriculture Practices certification at the beginning of 2008. Multiple local training sessions were provided to growers of the Purchase Area.

Currently, there have been 20 local producer growers attend the training; each now holding their GAP certification.

In addition to the GAP certification, ten Master Food Volunteers and four county Extension agents were trained and received certification on safe produce handling when providing samples. To encourage the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, several articles have been published in local newspapers, Extension Newsletters and magazines on the benefits of eating locally grown produce with special attention to GAP certified growers.

Fun with Science Engineering and Technology

McCracken County Public Schools have always tested well on the Kentucky Core Content Test, (better known as the CATS test). During the 2006-2007 school year, McCracken County Schools scored higher than the state average in every grade that was tested in science, (4th, 7th, and 11th). The Kentucky Department of Education has made it known that they would like for all public schools to raise their test scores to at least proficient scoring levels by the year 2014.

With these new wishes from the state, several local teachers have contacted the McCracken County Extension Office requesting ideas to raise their science scores using fun activities. This school initiative has come at a perfect time now that we have great resources through the University of Kentucky and 4-H curriculum.

The programs that have been initiated include; rocketry, simple carbon dating activities, physics, global positioning, and civil engineering. These activities have been implemented in the classroom, independent projects, and 4-H Camp. All of these activities received great reviews from the teachers and students. The teachers have seen a positive increase in classroom grades, and desire to participate in science activities.

As a result of listening and reading reviews from both students and teachers, McCracken County 4-H is going to offer two new special interest clubs including a robotics club and GPS mapping starting in the fall of 2008.

Homemakers Celebrate 75 years in KY Extension

The McCracken County Extension Homemakers took part in celebrating 75 years of Kentucky Extension Homemakers locally and at the state level.



In February homemakers went to Frankfort and the state legislature recognized KEHA in the House and Senate for their 75th year. The homemakers took that opportunity to speak with local legislators regarding upcoming proposals for budget cut. Included in the 400 plus attendees, from McCracken County Linda Kaletch, Linda Heflin, Lois Stephany, Judy Benton, Barbara Townsley, Rebecca Harned, Brenda Johnson, Shirley Bailey.

To increase awareness of the organization of Extension Homemakers in McCracken County homemakers took part in the Real Woman's Expo. The expo allowed hundreds of women to hear about homemakers and the events and programs they host each year.

Youth Development

According the National Mentoring Partnership, mentored teens are:

- 59% more likely to get better grades
- 46% less likely to get involved with drugs.
- 27% less likely to begin using alcohol
- 37% less like to skip a class
- 64% developed higher levels of self-confidence

Since the teenage years range from middle school to high school, teens as mentors was formed in the Heath community in order to help youth in the above areas.

This is the second year for teens at Heath high school to serve as mentors and teachers for middle school youth. Each month 22 freshmen through seniors worked with 60 middle school 4-Hers so that a club could be present in the middle school setting. Using the "Step Up to Leadership" curriculum, teen teachers worked together to teach micro groups of middle school youth.

After the year concluded the middle school guidance counselor and 4-H agent surveyed both the high school and middle school youth.

All high school freshmen through juniors are planning to return as teachers in the fall. 100% said they learned how to be a better leader and will use their skills in the future. All high school youth responded that the program increased their self-esteem and confidence in front of a group.

- 92% of the middle school youth reported that they learned new leadership skills and how to be a leader.
- 85% responded that they will use their new skills.
- 35% reported they were currently using their new skills in classrooms, at church or in other community clubs.

McCracken County Ag Day



In an effort to educate young people about agriculture and how foods, fibers and flowers are produced and made available as consumers, the McCracken County Extension Service in cooperation with the

McCracken County School System conducted a County Ag Day. Also participating were Kentucky Department of Agriculture, Purchase Area Master Gardener Association, Kentucky Division of Forestry and Environmental Protection, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Kentucky Farm Bureau and Commodity Groups.

Professionals and volunteers presented programs on farm equipment, animals, dairy, soybeans, corn, honey bees, pumpkin and pansy production and other educational efforts.

Teachers in McCracken County have an agriculture component in their curriculum. They say this event is important to their students' comprehension because it allows them to discuss hands-on experiences of Ag Day. Approximately 890 young people and adults attended this educational effort and 100% of teachers surveyed replied that this activity was the most

important and informative out of school experience the children had during the year.

Teachers reported that children were able: 1) to identify different farm equipment, 2) identify the difference between beef and dairy cows, 3) differentiate between goats and sheep, 4) appreciate, pansies and produce as alternative cash crops for farmers and 5) gain an overall understanding land use for agricultural commodities.

Pesticide Training and Local Testing Opportunity

Five pesticide training classes were held in collaboration with Kentucky Department of Agriculture due to popular request from local professionals. The classes were targeted for new or existing horticulture professionals with pesticide application or sales responsibilities. There were a total of 78 attendees for the programs.




The original purpose of the first class was to help prepare individuals to take and pass the pesticide applicators certification exam. When verbally surveyed, participants claimed the training helped prepare them to pass the exam. Several of the first time attendees recommended the class to other co-workers. As a result of the first class, a second test preparation class was conducted.

A large percentage of attendees were category 6, Right-a-way pesticide applicators and category 3, Ornamental and Lawn Care professionals. One of the foreman informally stated, it usually takes two times to take the test in order to pass, but the class helped most of them pass their first time. The test cost approximately \$35 plus the employees hourly or salary wage while taking the exam. This figure accumulates to \$100 saving for the employer every additional time the employee attempts to pass the exam.

The Kentucky Department of Agriculture’s representative present at the testing, complimented the programs we have here to help individuals in the

area. He stated he wished more counties would do this.

In addition to the three test-training sessions, there were two trainings held for the pesticide applicators with current certification. The meetings were well attended. The attendees were very appreciative to have local pesticide training. Many stated that more of their competitors should have attended, but are aware that many horticultural businesses are not yet certified and do not plan to become certified until they get caught. This information was brought to the attention of the County Judge Executive. His response was, an inspector is to be hired in late 2008 to inspect business licenses, which will aid in reducing fraudulent businesses.

Reaching Out to McCracken County		
<i>Educational Programs</i>		
Programs presented		405
Total participants		18,738
<i>Educational Contacts</i>		
Clientele visits		556
Telephone consultations		14,040
Newsletters distributed		63,270
<i>Volunteer Development</i>		
Volunteers		693
Volunteer hours		7116
Clientele reached by volunteers		24,080

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