

EXTENSION *Today*

AGENTS HELP COUNTIES FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE

by Martha Jackson

The Cooperative Extension Service is assisting counties that want to take the glass-half-full approach to community and economic development by first looking at what their communities have to offer rather than what they lack.

In Carroll County in Northern Kentucky, for example, community leaders and other interested county residents met over breakfast in late 2000 and early 2001 and talked about the county's assets.

The Carroll County residents realized that one of the county's biggest assets is that a lot of people cared—cared about cleaning up litter, better education for kids, and building partnerships so good things could happen.

"It helped us be more optimistic and positive about what the possibilities could be here," said Grace Angotti, Carroll County Extension agent for family and consumer sciences.

In Owsley County in Eastern Kentucky, community leaders met about three years ago "to find out what we had and where we need to go," said Natasha Lucas, Owsley County Extension agent for family and consumer sciences. The Owsley County citizens found out that the need for affordable housing for

people with low incomes was a priority for several groups.

"We decided, why not try to pull together?" Lucas said. The result was an increase in partnerships for better housing and more collaboration in general.

"From that meeting, we know who to turn to when we come up with certain things we're going to work on," Lucas said.

One of the asset-based areas that Extension is focusing on is business retention and expansion—building on the businesses already in town. (A formal business retention and expansion program is conducted jointly by the Kentucky Cabinet for

Economic Development and Cooperative Extension.)

"It's often easier to add jobs to smaller, already-established businesses than to bring in a new industry," said Rick Maurer, assistant Extension director for community and economic development.

It's All Development

Extension's efforts have always been about helping communities thrive.

"The fact is," Maurer said, "community and economic development is not completely defined by specific programs. A lot of the process involved in it really applies to every program area."

Extension agents help communities by calling on a skill set that helps make things happen, whether their program area is Agriculture and Natural Resources, Family and Consumer Sciences, 4-H Youth Development, or specifically Community and Economic Development.

"All of our successful agents know how to organize a meeting; get a community group together; and work with different agencies, county officials, and other leaders," Maurer said. "When they do that, they're doing community development."



FROM ACROSS THE COMMONWEALTH

Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service programs are locally defined and administered. Here are a few examples of county Extension programs that are making a difference in people's lives.

Cabbage Transplants on Demand

Wayne County farmers traditionally have had trouble finding quality cabbage transplants for their fields. With encouragement of the **Wayne County** Cooperative Extension Service and in cooperation with Cumberland Farm Products Cooperative, farmers are now using Phase I tobacco money to grow their own in thin-walled, plastic transplant trays. After three years of producing cabbage transplants locally, local farmers are increasing their production—up from about 14 acres to more than 40 acres this past year. More cabbage is being marketed at less cost. In addition, local dollars are staying at home because the transplants are locally produced.

Safe Pesticide Use by Hispanic Workers

Jefferson County horticulture producers are like most producers throughout Kentucky in their increasing reliance on Hispanic workers.

These workers may have difficulty avoiding personal risk when applying pesticides because of a limited ability to read pesticide application directions written in English.

The **Jefferson County** Cooperative Extension Service is addressing this need by training Hispanic workers in Spanish to become certified pesticide applicators.

A total of 85 Hispanic workers are now certified, which means that they know how to use pesticides safely. In addition, they gain marketable skills that should increase their income.

Agritourism in Western Kentucky

The Cooperative Extension Service in several **Western Kentucky counties** offered a one-day conference for those in the agritourism industry and those who are considering becoming involved in it. A total of 88 people from the area looked at topics such as exploring agritourism opportunities, marketing, and legal issues. More than 90 percent of those attending said the conference was beneficial to them.

A Little Encouragement Goes Far

Successful career paths for kids sometimes start where least expected. Take the case of a 12-year-old Robertson County young man who had not found a great deal of success with school. He attended a spring break workshop for fourth, fifth, and sixth graders but was at first seemingly intimidated. However, he was cajoled into participating, and he revealed that he “never did nothin’ right.” With a little help, the young man was able to build a birdhouse, mostly through his own efforts. The young man and his father discussed that maybe his future could be in the construction trade. All it took for the **Robertson County** Cooperative Extension Service to start the young man on a realistic future was a little time, patience, and a solid sense of how young people learn to be self-motivated achievers.

Cost Control in the Green Industry

The Tri-State Green Industry seminar is a day-long workshop planned for growers in the Cincinnati-Northern Kentucky area. The **Kenton County** Cooperative Extension Service is instrumental in working with a steering committee that plans the seminars as well as presents much of the seminar information to the more than 350 people who attend. Half of the attendees who had also attended the previous year reported that they had changed their cost control management for maintaining profits. Several had improved their job bid process, which helped them increase profits.

From Fat to Fit

The **Barren County** Cooperative Extension Service, recognizing that young people who are overweight have health risks, instituted an information program targeted at the county's elementary school children. In addition, a community seminar for adults who work with youngsters reached 30 people in the county, 75 percent of whom were previously unaware of the county's obesity problem. The result of that meeting was the formation of the Barren County Nutrition and Activity Coalition, which focuses public attention on ways to avoid obesity.

Raising Goats a Rising Industry

Just two years ago, Jessamine County's goat producers could be counted on one hand: there were only three. Now, through the efforts

of the **Jessamine County** Cooperative Extension Service, that number is 40, with an average flock size of 40. Some 3,000 goats are marketed each year at an average price of 94 cents a pound. The Jessamine County Goat Producer Association, organized by the Cooperative Extension Service, is helping producers raise and market their goats.

Repairing a Dry Stone Fence

Time was when many a winding Kentucky back road was lined on each side with a dry stone fence. But the art of dry stone fences was lost over the years as cheaper fencing methods became more popular. Now, however, the aesthetic value of these fences, which appeal to tourists in the Bluegrass, is considerable.

The **Fayette County** Cooperative Extension Service, in cooperation with Kentucky Women in Agriculture, the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, and the Kentucky Guild of Dry Stone Masons, conducted a workshop to teach people how they can repair these ancient fences. Forty-one Fayette County farmers, residents, and farm employees completed the two-day workshop.

Child Care Provider Training

Quality child care is a sometimes a problem. To help address this issue, the Cooperative Extension Service in **Knox, Laurel, and Whitley counties** collaborated to offer a one-day child care provider training session. Of the 45 participants, nine out of 10 increased their knowledge in sciences, gardening, physical development, oral health, and music—information that can be useful in child care operations.

Developing Young Leaders in Graves County

To assure quality leadership for the future, the **Graves County** Cooperative Extension Service became

a founding member of Youth Deal, Inc. a broad-based coalition of community groups to discuss ways of improving leadership skills in young people. With funding from ConAgra, the group established a mentoring project for at-risk high school students. The group also partnered with the local Chamber of Commerce to sponsor a series of six one-day sessions about the environment, arts and humanities, health care, business and industry, and law and government for aspiring leaders who are now of high school age.

Building Confidence for Success

The **Martin County** Cooperative Extension Service helped conduct life skills classes at Martin County Works, a welfare-to-work program. Classes included, but were not limited to, job readiness, nutrition, budgeting, and self-esteem. Results have been astounding. Former welfare recipients who believed that they could not accomplish much in life have been energized to pursue more career training and jobs.

Eating for Health in Jackson County

Too many Eastern Kentuckians have high rates of diet-related diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and certain cancers. Obesity also is high. The **Jackson County** Cooperative Extension Service organized a fall cooking school for the area. A Lexington chef who specializes in health-smart food preparation showed participants how to cook health-appropriate foods. More than 210 participants attended. And after six months, a survey showed that the day's lessons stuck: 60 percent reported they had used the health information provided at the cooking school to make their lives healthier.



Healthful Snacks, Healthy People

With heart disease the number one cause of death in the county—and cancer a close second—the **Knott County** Cooperative Extension Service provided nutrition education to families. And because eating snacks has increasingly replaced meals for some people (especially youngsters), the program focused on healthful snacks as part of good nutrition. More than 450 participants learned about the link between eating and wellness. Adults suggested that they were concerned about the nutritional value of meals provided at school. Their concerns have been translated into the school system becoming committed to providing more healthful vending machine fare, especially by offering foods that provide less fat.

Rehearsal for Better Decisions

The **Cumberland County** Cooperative Extension Service initiated the STOP (Students Targeting Outside Pressure) program for seventh graders. The youngsters were paired with an adult leader who helped them cognitively rehearse, or “practice,” a response to peer-pressured scenarios where trouble might be an outcome, such as bullying, drug and alcohol use, and shoplifting. The result was that nearly 80 percent of the young people felt confident that they can ignore peer pressure to do bad things.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION IS THE "GOLDEN KEY"

University of Kentucky President Lee Todd has said "Cooperative Extension is the 'golden key' that can unlock community development." The agent's dual role—as community educator and respected community member—is the core principle that enables Cooperative Extension to serve as the key to community and economic development. We provide research-based educational information and programs to people in every county, city, and town of the commonwealth—information and programs that lead to improved opportunities and a better quality of life for Kentucky's people.

As members of local communities ourselves, we enjoy a level of trust from the people we serve, which makes them more open to the information we provide. We in turn listen to what the people in our communities have to say and help communities build upon assets already in place.

The front-page article of this edition of *Extension Today* talks about our Community and Economic Development (CED) programs and how we help communities "focus on the positive." For example, our campus-based specialists, working with county agents, have had tremendous impact in assisting communities in "asset mapping" to determine the resources present in a county or community.

Whether we are talking about Agriculture and Natural Resources, Family and Consumer Sciences, or 4-H Youth Development, all programs are related to Community and Economic Development in some way. In Agriculture and Natural Resources, CED efforts are evident in educational programs involving new value-added enterprises, entrepreneurial efforts by producers, leadership development, and rural cooperative development. Our Family

and Consumer Sciences agents help families develop home-based businesses, link fresh agricultural produce to markets and nutrition, and enhance quality of life for families across Kentucky. 4-H Youth Development agents help shape the future for Kentucky through youth entrepreneurial education such as Mini-Society and the American Private Enterprise Program. These programs also help young people develop skills for successful careers and improved quality of life.

Cooperative Extension truly is, as President Todd has said, the "golden key" to unlocking community development.

—Larry W. Turner, Associate Director,
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