

EXTENSION *Today*

NEW PROGRAM TO HELP KENTUCKIANS LIVE LONGER AND BETTER

by Randy Weckman

A new program that will combine the resources of the UK College of Agriculture and the UK College of Medicine will help Kentuckians learn to live longer and better.

The Health Education through Extension Leadership (HEEL) program will provide Kentuckians basic health care information to help them improve their health. The goal is to lower Kentucky's national ranking for major diseases in which Kentucky ranks high.

Currently, Kentucky's rate of deaths from cancer is 12 percent higher than the national average. The incidence of lung cancer is 50 percent higher, and cervical cancer is about 40 percent higher. Kentucky also ranks near the top in the incidence of heart disease and diabetes.

The new partnership to combat these diseases by prevention is funded, in part, through an \$800,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. U. S. Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky led the effort to secure that grant.

The program, which will begin in July, will provide two health specialists jointly appointed by the UK College of Agriculture and the Kentucky School of Public Health. They will work with county Extension agents to develop programs in health care education.



UK President Lee Todd announces funding for the Health Education through Extension Leadership (HEEL) program.

Ten health educators will be hired to help county agents carry out the initiative.

“The partnership between the College of Agriculture and the College of Medicine isn’t the only partnerships we envision with this program,” said Bonnie Tanner, Ph.D., Assistant Director of Extension for Family and Consumer Sciences. Dr. Tanner, along with Douglas Scutchfield, M.D., Director of the Kentucky School of Public Health, spearheaded the request for the program’s funding.

Dr. Tanner sees the program incorporating a number of county-based health education providers. She says that often many in a community have a vested interest in health care information, including physicians, health departments, schools, and nurse practitioners, among others.

“If these community people work together we can make a really

important difference in the health of Kentuckians,” she said. Dr. Tanner noted that many of the diseases that plague Kentuckians’ health are preventable with lifestyle changes.

“Helping people modify their diet, activity levels, and tobacco use will help them avoid many of these illnesses. In addition, prevention of disease is severalfold less costly than treating or managing their chronic consequences,” Dr. Tanner said.

UK President Lee Todd, in announcing the funding for the new partnership, said, “We’re going to provide a link that’s been missing between the research and academics of the university and the health issues of the people of the Commonwealth. What has been lacking is the availability of health education specialists to work with Extension agents to modify citizens’ health behaviors, both individually and on a community-wide basis.”

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 real difference in people's lives.



Seeing the Forest and the Trees

Perry County's location in the forested part of Kentucky means that many people in the county make their livelihood in the forest industry. Because of that, it is important that young people appreciate this resource. The Perry County Cooperative Extension's 4-H program worked with 370 fifth graders from eight schools in the county to teach the young people about their forest. The students learned to identify various types of trees, the benefits of trees to their well-being, and how trees have a positive economic benefit for everyone in the county.

Strengthening Agriculture in Caldwell County

Through collaborative efforts of the Caldwell County Agricultural Development Council, individual beef producers, the Caldwell County Conservation District, and the Kentucky Agricultural Development Board, the Caldwell County Cooperative Extension Service mounted new educational efforts in

agricultural education and formed a cooperative arrangement to buy expensive equipment that farmers could use. To help farmers reduce costs, the consortium funded a forage improvement program, a tobacco steamer for multiple farm use, and grain cleaning equipment.

Farm to Table Conference

The Meade County Cooperative Extension Service hosted a special program to inform county residents about the availability of Kentucky-grown food products. Some 320 participants viewed 34 booths that had Kentucky-grown products available for sampling. As a result, local producers and the food products they produce are now better known in their community.

Exploring Agriculture in Urban Kentucky

The Jefferson County Cooperative Extension Service sponsored a Young Ag Explorers' Field Day to teach young people from the city all about agriculture and its importance for all of us. Nearly 200 youngsters learned about water quality, livestock and horses, soil conservation, and forestry. The program was conducted in cooperation with several local agencies.

Young People Present Farm Safety

When the local Farm Bureau asked for help in a farm safety day, the Union County Cooperative Extension Service responded. Extension agents recruited and trained a 4-H member to present grain bin safety information to other young people. As a result of the efforts, more than 400 were trained on how to avoid hazards in grain bins.

Sweet Stuff in Menifee County

In collaboration with a host of other agricultural organizations, the Menifee County Cooperative Extension Service, along with other county Extension services, spearheaded an effort to form the Appalachian Sweet Sorghum Marketing Association, made up of sorghum syrup producers in the area. Members of the program learned to develop and write business plans, market their products, and fit in sorghum syrup production with other enterprises on the farm. Although the group is still young, it has big plans to produce and market \$560,000 worth of sorghum syrup annually, reduce labor costs, and improve efficiency.





Conserving Water In McCreary County

Two years of drought have made the residents of McCreary County more aware of the need to use water wisely. And because young people often are unaware of ways they can limit use of water without disrupting their lives, the McCreary County Cooperative Extension Service presented information about water conservation to nearly 500 young people in the county. As a result of the program, nearly nine out of 10 of them said they learned the importance of water conservation.

More Opportunities, Better Economy

Lack of business opportunities and resources are at the top of the list of what faces Estill Countians. But worrying about these issues won't change things. Instead, with the support of the Estill County Cooperative Extension Service, county leaders worked together to identify resources to come up with a

plan on how to deal with these issues. As a result of the plan, three new businesses have been developed, and skilled leadership is emerging to tackle other issues facing Estill Countians.

Herb Festival Helps Local Producers Sell

The Franklin County Cooperative Extension Service organized and held an herb festival for local farmers to feature and sell home-grown herbs. More than 550 people from the area attended, and vendors were able to showcase their stock for immediate and future sales.

Family Financial Security

With many families in tight financial situations, the Floyd County Cooperative Extension Service worked in tandem with a local social services counselor to provide 110 families with information to help them become more financially stable. After receiving the information, 97 percent of the families reported that they had changed their money management practices. As a result, some of these families are self-sufficient and others are closer to being self-sufficient.

Mushroom Production In Northern Kentucky

Shiitake mushrooms can be more than a hobby. They can be and are a source of additional income for families in Northern Kentucky. Sponsored by the Carroll County Cooperative Extension Service in cooperation with Eagle Resource and the Conservation and Development Council, a demonstration of growing the high-value mushrooms attracted 62 people who explored the idea of growing them for profit.

Preserving Your Identity

Identity theft can be one of life's more vexing problems. To help protect people from being its victim, the Warren County Cooperative Extension Service taught techniques of identity security, including simple ways to keep thieves from knowing too much about you. Of 239 people who attended the seminars, more than 90 percent learned techniques they plan to use to protect their identities.

Preparing Youth for Work

Employers indicate that young people aren't well prepared for work when they graduate from high school. Working with local businesses, the Clay County Cooperative Extension Service sponsored a day in which 260 teens in the county learned to identify their goals and what they would need to do to attain those goals. A survey of teens who attended the program indicated that more than 80 percent of them see a direct correlation between their schoolwork, and their future earnings and lifestyle.

Safe Child Care

The Governor's Early Childhood Initiative Summary has found that the quality of child care is closely associated with the education and training of child care providers. To help increase both education and training of those providers, the Ballard County Cooperative Extension Service partnered with the Purchase District Health Department to offer a four-hour workshop for child care providers in Ballard County. Those who attended received a third of the 12-hour credit they need to be certified by the state.

Re-Envisioning Cooperative Extension for the 21st Century

This issue of *Extension Today* marks a new era in Kentucky Cooperative Extension and heralds things to come.

We have excellent new leadership at the University of Kentucky in President Lee Todd and Dean Scott Smith. I am privileged and excited to be a part of the promise for the future in my new role as Associate Dean and Associate Director of the Cooperative Extension Service.

As you no doubt have heard through the media and various other communications, extending research-based information to the people of Kentucky and addressing important “higher purpose” needs and goals for Kentucky is a priority for President Todd as well as the College. This emphasis meshes very well with our land-grant mission.

To maintain that value and service to clientele, we have identified the need to broaden our vision in response to both clientele input and the President’s vision, while also remaining strongly connected to our base programs.

Broadening our vision for Cooperative Extension will require

prioritizing our focus areas while recognizing limitations on resources. We want to enhance support for our county agents through improvements in our support system and organizational structure in order to be more flexible and to better meet ever-changing programming needs at the local level.

To these ends, we have announced a new initiative called Re-Envisioning Cooperative Extension. Assessing needs and programs must be done first. The organizational structure to meet the new or revised goals of our broadened vision will then follow.

An important aspect of the process of re-envisioning Cooperative Extension includes obtaining input and guidance from all stakeholders (internal and external) in that process. For example, our state Extension council and area councils have been included in the process from the beginning.

We anticipate this re-envisioning process will affect how we function to deliver programs in both administration and as agents and specialists. It could affect how we are

organized on an area basis. The bottom line of this process is to evolve our CES system to better meet the needs of Kentucky people and improve our service to Kentuckians.

Cooperative Extension has played an integral role in bringing research-based information to people at the local level for about 100 years. Our basic mission as agents for change to meet local needs through research-based educational programs in every county of the state remains as vital as ever. That mission will not change. What is changing is our vision of how we carry out that mission through a broadened vision of CES that includes new programs such as the Health Education through Extension Leadership (HEEL) program, agricultural diversification, 4-H entrepreneurship programs, and community revitalization efforts. This emphasis complements very well our land-grant mission.

—Larry W. Turner, *Associate Director of the Cooperative Extension Service.*

Extension Today is published twice a year and highlights program accomplishments of the Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service. For more information, contact us:

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