



**N.C. Cooperative Extension, Surry Center  
(submitted by Joanna Radford)**

**Responsibilities**

Federal, state, and county governments each provide financial support and program guidance for North Carolina Cooperative Extension, which has centers in each county and with the Eastern Band of Cherokee. These centers are grouped into districts, each guided by a director. Specialists and administrators at NC State University and N.C. A&T State University also support county efforts by serving as liaisons to the United States Department of Agriculture, which is the parent agency for N.C. Cooperative Extension programs nationwide.

Extension agents in each of North Carolina's 101 local centers design and carry out educational programs aimed to serve local needs in agriculture, food, and 4-H youth development. The team in Surry County consists of:

- Field Crop Agriculture Agent
- Livestock Agriculture Agent
- Horticulture Agriculture Agent
- 4-H and Youth Development Agent
- Family and Consumer Science Agent
- Expanded Foods and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) Youth Educator
- Expanded Foods and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) Adult Educator
- Administrative Assistant
- Part-time Receptionist/Secretary

Each day Extension helps to strengthen our Surry County families and communities. Our mission and our work are dedicated to improving the quality of people's lives. We rely on research-based information from North Carolina State University and other educational institutions to develop educational programs based on the issues and the needs of our communities and citizens. These educational programs and technical assistance provide solutions and empower our clients to make better-informed decisions. Our leadership in experiential education equips our clients in Surry County to effectively transfer knowledge and skills into practical application. We develop and foster partnerships with agriculture, business, industry, education, families, and government to create a unique culture of collaboration that increases productivity and fuels economic development.

## Accomplishments and Statistical Data

### 4-H and Youth Development

- 4,056 youth contacts made by multi-part lessons in local school systems, special interest groups, and summer fun programming. (This is an increase of 2,000 from the previous year.)
- 4-H School Enrichment was implemented in all three public school systems and included embryology, career/college readiness, babysitting, butterflies, and soil curriculum. 2,128 youth participated.
- Six youth attended 4-H Camp at Betsy-Jeff Penn 4-H Center.
- Six youth participated in youth livestock. These youngsters competed in two contests.
- Two youth made presentations at the district and state level competitions.
- 27 youth participated in 4-H Summer Programming.
- 93 youth active 4-H members.



### Family and Consumer Science

- The NC Department of Insurance (NCDOI) and Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) provided training and quarterly updates for Extension and five local volunteers. 211 individuals were served by Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) volunteers in Surry County with a savings of \$350,546 as reported by the NC Department of Insurance.
- Steps to Health-Take Control program was offered and coordinated through Surry County Senior Centers for an eight-week series. This was a virtual program since many of the Senior Centers were not fully open to in-person events.
  - 40% increased their fruit and vegetable consumption.
  - 40% eat a greater variety of fruit.
  - 20% read the Nutrition Facts label more often.
  - 20% use MyPlate more often to make food choices.
  - 20% eat whole grains more often.
  - 20% increase daily time committed to physical activity.
- Extension partnered with Surry County Employee Wellness Nurse to coordinate a new 8-week Lunch and Learn series ("Take Control of YOUR Health for county employees"). Over 60 county employees participated. Five additional monthly lunchtime nutrition classes were added due to the successfulness of the program and demand. This program resulted in:
  - 75% of participants reported an increase in their fruit/vegetable consumption



- 57% increase in employees consuming more water
- 22% increase in using the nutrition facts label to make healthy food choices
- 31% increase using MyPlate to make healthy food choices
- 25% increase in selecting whole grain products
- 33% increase physical activity
- 28% are comparing prices and shopping with a list to reduce food costs
- Reduced consumption of sugar sweetened beverages
- Increase consumption of low-fat milk/yogurt
- Increase in variety of fruits and vegetables
- Home food preservation series was provided to local communities including topics on freezing, fermentation, sweet spreads, pressure canning, and boiling water canning. Other activities in this series included checking dial gauge pressure canner lids for accuracy, promoting researched based food preservation practices at local farmers markets, and educating youth on basic canning.
- There were 578 participants in the virtual “At Home” 12-part series. Program topics included nutrition and cooking skills, personal finance, and physical activity.
  - 83% of participants reported “very satisfied” with the relevance of information to their needs.
  - 80% of respondents intend to utilize effective life skills of self-care, financial management, and keeping a healthy home.
  - Responses from participants regarding lifestyle changes included: “I have found more healthy recipes that I enjoy and try to walk every day. Best of all I have gotten my A1C down to 5.7.”; “I have added more vegetables and fruits to my diet, along with daily exercise.”
- ServSafe classes were taught in partnership with Surry County Environmental Health to food handlers to help prevent foodborne illnesses at their establishments. 42 establishments were represented.

### **Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program**

- EFNEP educators have been helping limited resource families learn strategies of how to feed their families healthy meals on a limited budget and increase their physical activity. There were 172 adults participating in a twelve-week program that benefited local families. This saves county residents thousands of dollars per year in medical, prescription costs, and loss of productivity.
- 59 YVEDDI Head Start teachers and staff received EFNEP training.



- EFNEP worked with a new audience. This group consisted of adults with disabilities. There were 34 participants that had health concerns due to their disabilities. They were eager to learn about nutrition and how to prepare simple meals for themselves.
- EFNEP worked with Thriving at Three through the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. There are 30 Spanish speaking families enrolled all with children under the age of 5.
- EFNEP youth programming reached 2,522 youth in grades K-12. Each program consists of six-week curriculum delivered at local schools.
- 97% of EFNEP participants improved dietary intake.
- 85% now practice daily physical activity.
- 96% practice better food resource management.
- 91% have improved their food safety habits.



### **Agriculture and Natural Resources**

- There are 30,712.20 acres in the Voluntary Agricultural Districting Program and 922.91 acres pending approval.
- One on-farm soybean research variety trial. Information was used to help soybean producers select soybean varieties specific to local growing conditions in Surry County. This variety trial enabled producers to compare preferred characteristics such as high yields and disease resistance desired for their farming operation.
- Helped conduct a “Tobacco Nematode Survey” with Dr. Matthew Vann, Tobacco Extension Specialist, at NC State University. Information collected from local tobacco farms will be used to educate farmers about harmful nematodes and best production practices to decrease and eliminate nematodes from their soil. Managing for harmful nematodes will increase crop productivity and farm profitability.
- Extension worked with corn and soybean growers to achieve high corn and soybean yields. Growers used Extension recommendations for best management practices which resulted five entries into the North Carolina Corn Growers Association Corn Yield Contest, four local corn fields entered the National Corn Growers Association Corn Yield Contest, and two soybean entries into the North Carolina Soybean Producers Association Yield Contest. Three of our local entries were in the top four corn yields in North Carolina.
- Extension partnered with Surry County Public Works and North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services to provide a Household Hazardous Waste and Pesticide Disposal Collection Day. Local residents safely disposed of 1,453 pounds of



unwanted pesticides and 22,397 pounds of household hazardous waste. This is a savings of a conservative value of \$222,000.

- Recertification trainings were given to 135 private and commercial pesticide applicators.
- Cattlemen meetings offered to local livestock producers providing educational trainings to improve their herd. The cumulative financial effect of these programs was an amazing \$1,605,248. These numbers are based on producer evaluations, new marketing options, purchasing plans, adopted Best Management Practices and research projects based in the county.
- Surry was selected to be a participant in a USDA funded study to evaluate the tick populations in pastures and a possible link to *Theileria Orientalis*, a tick-borne disease carried by these ticks. The value of inclusion in this grant due to added surveillance and lab testing of animals in a joint effort with Virginia Tech amounted to \$111,930 in value to beef producers.
- Special program on “bull selection” was stressed to livestock producers and was followed up with one-on-one selection assistance. 21 performance tested bulls were purchased. Data from Oklahoma State University indicates an increase in value of \$221 per calf produced from a performance tested bull. These 21 bulls will be mated to an average of 45 cows producing 945 calves resulting in increases in value to the producer of \$208,845.
- Horticultural Lunch and Learn Series was offered monthly. There were 357 participants with a reported \$10,500 savings.
- Yadkin & Surry County Cooperative Extension hosted the 8th Annual Foothills Specialty Crop Growers’ Roundtable with 49 farmers in attendance. Topics included spotted lantern fly, expanding the growing season, strawberry production, cut flower production, cabbage production, food safety moderation act and produce farmers, growing safe and quality leafy greens, canning fruits and vegetables for markets, vegetable post-harvest sanitation, and attractive farmer’s market displays.
  - 79% of participants had grown fruits or vegetables prior to the event and 14% had not grown any fruits or vegetables.
  - 43% of participants said they will grow new crops or varieties that they would not have grown before attending the workshop.
  - 50% will possibly try growing a new crop or variety.
  - 79% plan on incorporating the information they learned into their farming operation.
- “Beehive Enclosure” test plot study concluded. Data from the test plot indicated that during pesticide application beekeepers could enclose bees for short periods of time WITH water and food and they would survive. Enclosures that work are small one-person tents. The results from this test plot have been shared with local and state beekeepers.
- Extension provided technical assistance to 40 local small farms with produce and small fruit production. This was a savings of \$200,000.
- Seed Libraries were implemented at each of the four county libraries and the senior centers in Mount Airy and Pilot Mountain.

- Each seed library site reported heavy use of the seed libraries.
- Many homeowners began to grow plants that they have not grown before.
- Ninety percent of the people who took seed reported growing a garden.
- One person commented, "Without this opportunity, I would not have been able to grow vegetables."
- Homeowners have gained knowledge of growing seeds and producing food for themselves.
- 39 gardening workshops were conducted in multiple areas throughout Surry County.
- Extension Master Gardener volunteers attended all three local farmer markets (Dobson, Elkin, and Mount Airy) with an educational booth every week of the markets.

## **Challenges Discovered or Experienced in 2022**

- Getting started again after COVID has been a huge challenge. Many guidelines were in place where meeting with groups was difficult or impossible.
  - Clientele became used to staying at home. Some priorities may have changed, and they did not want to attend in-person events.
  - Many of the adult EFNEP audiences had few to no participants. We had to search to find new audiences that met EFNEP criteria and provide nutritional educational programming.
  - It has been difficult to get back into local schools after presenting programs virtually during COVID.
  - There have been difficulties with scheduling programs in classrooms with teachers due to their new teacher training and workshop schedules.
- Staffing Issues
  - Two agriculture agents retired. Each had over twenty years' experience with Extension, Surry County and local farmers. It will take time for new agents to develop relationships with our farmers and become familiar with Surry County.
  - One field crop agriculture agent was hired in June. There was very little information left from previous agent due to the "base" county being Forsyth and the records, tools, and materials used for this position were kept in Forsyth County.
  - One livestock agriculture agent was hired in December. We were without a livestock agent for three months.
- Time Management
  - It has been difficult to manage time for reports with the client demand of home visits, office visits, programming for the public, telephone calls, technical assistance, and our other day-to-day activities.
- Programming
  - It has been challenging to hold hands-on food preservation workshops in our kitchen. It is not safe to can on our flat surface cooktop. We have investigated the possibility of getting a larger commercial hotplate, but we are not sure that

our electric system could handle it. The breaker has flipped with our regular appliances plugged in. We have tried to cook in the catering kitchen as a possible alternative, but it takes a long time for water to boil. We have not been successful with this option.

- Youth are involved in multiple organizations and activities making meeting times difficult to schedule.
- Getting youth to be more involved at a deeper level rather than just attending programs. They are involved in so many things they cannot make large time commitments.
- Getting volunteers for youth programming.
- Youth guidelines given by NC State University are strict and involves numerous pages of paperwork. This is cumbersome for parents when registering their youth into 4-H, but it is necessary before youth can participate.

## **Goals and Objectives for 2023**

- EFNEP has target numbers for educational trainings. We want to meet and exceed these targeted numbers.
- New agriculture agents will become familiar with Surry County, local farmers, and the agriculture industry.
- Increase social media presence to promote Extension programs.
- Participate in “Surry on the Go” opportunities to help educate Surry County residents.
- Provide programming for more diverse audiences.
- Provide school enrichment to four elementary schools.
- Continue with career/college readiness programming.
- Market fundraising opportunities for local 4-H programming.
- Contact community organizations to promote Extension and explore partnership opportunities.