Message From The Director

With the addition of myself in January and Sherrie Peeler in April, the Extension staff is again at 100%. During the past four years, all agent positions have been vacant at some point. While the time in the position is averaging less than two years, the experience the staff brings is many times that. Alleghany County has the advantage over other counties in having a fresh new staff looking for successes and opportunities, while at the same time having one of the more experienced and knowledgeable groups.

Our "young" staff has immersed itself in the county. We are on 35 committees providing leadership and guidance. At the same time, we continue to grow and develop our skills. The staff attended 31 training sessions, seminars and workshops to gather the resources to help Alleghany citizens. We value traditional Extension programming and continue to add and maintain programs such as beekeeping and cattlemen's associations, 4-H clubs, summer programming for youth, school enrichment opportunities, Alleghany Christmas Tree Association and Extension and Community Associations. We also use our Advisory Leadership System and other methods to be sure we provide the programming our county needs. To this end, in 2005 our staff has received training and certifications in areas such as: **Preparedness and Response to Agricultural Terrorism** **Tourism and Hospitality** **Balancing Nature and Commerce in the Gateway Communities of Western North Carolina** **AARP Powerful Tools for Caregivers** **Parenting Matters: Parent Education for Court Mandated Referrals** **Farm Business Succession Planning** **Forestry Investments for Life After Tobacco** **Agri / Nature / Recreational Tourism** **Considerations for Start-Up Entrepreneurs**.

Each county office of NC Cooperative Extension is responsible for delivering the state and federal mandated pesticide educational requirements for licensure and recertification of commercial and private pesticide applicators. We have had educational materials on pesticide application translated into Spanish to help meet the educational needs of our changing population and society. When needed, we also arrange to bring expertise into the county to help us as well as our clientele. This year we brought in 35 resource people and specialists to assist in providing programs and educational opportunities. Our resources include people such as NCSU storm water specialists, Treasurer of the state bee keepers, Area horse specialist, NCSU beef specialists, Family Caregiver Support Specialist from the North Carolina High Country Council of Governments, NC Farm Transition Network Executive Director, NC Division of Forest Resources personnel and NCDA&CS Agritourism Director.

North Carolina Cooperative Extension is up and running at full speed in Alleghany County. We look forward to providing programming that meets the needs of our citizens. Support and advice from our Advisory Leadership System and others are greatly appreciated.

George W. Stancil
County Extension Director
North Carolina Cooperative Extension [NCCE] is an educational partnership helping people put research-based knowledge to work for economic prosperity, environmental stewardship and an improved quality of life.

Alleghany County's program emphasis is based on the five major Extension initiatives. These include:

+ Strengthening & Sustaining Families
+ Developing Responsible Youth
+ Building Quality Communities
+ Conserving & Improving the Environmental and Natural Resources
+ Enhancing Agriculture, Forest & Food Systems

2005 Contacts

- 4,208 face-to-face contacts
- 11,020 non-face-to-face contacts
- 73 workshops/seminars held
- 22 tours & demonstrations
- 24 radio programs

Alleghany County Extension staff along with Wilkes, Surry and Yadkin Counties started a radio program with WIFM in Elkin in November 2004. This year was the first full year of the program. The Alleghany staff was on the air 24 times in 2005. The programs air on Wednesday and Saturday mornings and run approximately 15 minutes. The staff used these programs to provide educational information to the coverage area (the radio target audience is 199,000 people in the 18-49 year old range). A wide variety of topics were covered, from burning firewood, garden pest, school enrichment to eating healthy. The Extension staff uses air time to announce meetings and activities in Alleghany County. The programs have been an excellent way to get information out about activities such as choose and cut, the county fair, lawnmower races, the mountain heritage festival and other county and community functions.
Reaching Families through Physicians

Reaching Families through Physicians is a joint effort with the NC Academy of Family Physicians. Alleghany Family Practice has partnered with Cooperative Extension to provide families with information about healthy eating and physical activity beyond that which is provided in a general office visit.

Sherrie Peeler

Eat Smart Move More

Families Eating Smart and Moving More offers Alleghany County citizens simple solutions to help them eat smart and move more. Group sessions have been and will continue to be provided at the Alleghany Wellness Center. Four sessions that were conducted are **Eating Smart at Home **Eating Smart on the Run **Moving More, Everyday, Everywhere **Moving More Watching Less. Sessions included video presentations and materials for the participants to assist them in making behavioral changes.

Sherrie Peeler

Cardiovascular disease is the number one cause of death in North Carolina, accounting for 50 percent of all deaths annually. Behavior change to lower cardiovascular disease may have extended and improved quality of life for those who died. Programs are presented monthly to benefit citizens of Alleghany County who have had a cardiovascular event. Programs encourage better eating and exercise habits that can help reduce three of the major risk factors for heart disease and stroke: high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure and excess body weight. Programs include presentations, demonstrations, discussions, hands-on activities, challenges, and recipe adaptations.

Sherrie Peeler
Youth who participate in the Alleghany County 4-H program are reached through a variety of programming, including but not limited to community clubs, special interest programming, camping, and school enrichment.

Over $7000 was raised through our Special Opportunity Camping Program. This money provides scholarships to camp, and district and state level events. It is also used to help offset costs of our summer enrichment activities and trips. Also, a NC Arts Council Grassroots Grant in the amount of $1302 was awarded to Alleghany County 4-H from Alleghany County Arts Council for a series of arts and craft workshops.

School enrichment programs were offered to three grade levels during 2005. All second grade students attended a Farm Animal Day event in the spring at Alleghany County Fairgrounds. Embryology was conducted with the 04-05 and the 05-06 third grade classrooms this spring and fall, respectively. Also, the animal science class at the High School participated in embryology this fall. Forth grade students attended a Farm Safety Day.

Sara Drake
To help youth remain active during the summer months, 13 summer fun opportunities were offered to the youth of Alleghany County through the Cooperative Extension Service and 4-H. The activities focused on five of the project curriculum areas, which included science and technology, plants and animals, healthy lifestyles, consumerism and family science, and communications and expressive arts. End of summer evaluations were mailed to the participants' parents. With a response rate of 55%, 100% of parents indicated that they had seen positive knowledge/attitude change as a result of the 4-H summer fun workshops. Some of the most positive aspects that were noted include: learning new skills, interaction with other children, going new places, and the variety of programming that was offered. Seventy-five percent of the parents noted that the educational value of the activities expanded their child’s horizons.

Sara Drake

In 4-H programming, there is a need to have ideas and supplies available for volunteers to utilize. In an effort to provide this service, Cooperative Extension in Alleghany County held Adult Craft Workshops to train volunteers and have resources available for the volunteers to offer programs. Workshops were held for four consecutive months. A total of 16 adults learned how to teach four separate crafts, including shrink art, psyanky, macramé, and scarf making. In turn, these adults taught 27 youth through a combination of club meetings and special interest programming. Over 50% of the youth that attended the workshops entered items in the 4-H Expressive Arts Contest and the county fair.

Sara Drake

4-H... More than you ever imagined!
Cooperative Extension in Alleghany County is involved in many long range programs that will increase the quality of life and add to the economic development of the county. Alleghany Extension Agents are working with and are part of the following groups, activities or committees: **Alleghany Fairgrounds Board** **Alleghany Voluntary Land Preservation Program** **Town of Sparta Vision 2010** **Blue Ridge National Heritage Area** **Alleghany Land Use Planning Committee** **Alleghany Leadership Challenge** **Child Care Resources** **Juvenile Crime Prevention Council** **Alleghany County Partnership for Children** **The Wellness Center** **Fair Committee** **Sparta Pedestrian Plan** **Town of Sparta storm water control** **Alleghany Mountain Heritage Festival** **Choose and Cut Special Events Day** **Northwest Advisory Leadership Cluster** **Extension & Community Associations** **Alleghany Council on Aging.**

In addition to the above, we are also working on a pilot program in tourism. Fourteen agents in the Northwest Cooperative Extension District are developing a program that will be in all 100 counties in North Carolina. It is based on the “Texas Friendly” tourism program and works with communities by training high school students that will be working in fast food restaurants, to business owners on how to greet and treat people. What do you say to tourist when they stop at a convenient mart and ask “What is there to do around here?” Sessions include: working with difficult people, business etiquette and others.

The Alleghany County Fair provides educational, financial and entertainment opportunities to local people. Many opportunities are provided to the Extension staff as well. Extension is involved in the fair with activities such as power washing the bleachers, putting up snow fence around the track, assisting in organizing the demolition derby, helping with the lawn mower race, taking up tickets at ride booths, parking cars, organizing the exhibit hall, getting judges (for the 8 livestock, horse and dairy shows and for all the exhibits), spreading the sawdust in the barn, putting up and taking down the panels in the show barn, putting up and taking down the advertising banners, working during all the shows and finding volunteers to help with these activities.

In 2005, 95 youth from 13 North Carolina counties and three counties in Virginia participated in the livestock, dairy and horse shows. 152 Alleghany youth had exhibits in the arts and crafts division. Youth learn responsibility by participating in livestock or dairy projects, including animal selection, feeding, nutrition, health, grooming and showing. Other students participate in art classes in local schools or 4-H activities and display their art work at the fair. These young people are learning responsibility, developing talents and gaining self esteem.

George Stancil
After three growing seasons of evaluation, very positive results have been observed with use of suppression rates of herbicide combined with beneficial ground covers in Christmas tree fields.

The beneficial seeded and native ground covers are unaffected by low rates of Round-Up, which stunt growth of problem weeds, leaving a year round ground cover that can reduce labor costs by making Round-Up applications quicker and less frequent.

Another benefit of seeding ground covers such as Dutch White Clover and Birdfoot Trefoil is the amount of nitrogen these legumes provide to trees. The impact of nitrogen production by these groundcovers is currently being evaluated with final data collection underway.

After numerous farm visits and workshops from North Carolina Cooperative Extension staff, some Alleghany County Christmas tree growers have changed their weed management strategy to implement weed suppression on their farms. At least three growers began seeding clover in fields totaling approximately 75 acres in 2005 after seeing the benefits of combining these practices.

Bryan Davis

Scouting

Scouting is a very critical part of a good Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan. Unnecessary pesticide applications are very costly and can create detrimental environmental effects. Thus far in 2005, Extension worked with 26 Alleghany County growers to evaluate insect populations to determine whether a pesticide application was needed. This was important during a year in which Balsalm Twig Aphids were active over a longer period due to weather conditions. Pesticide applications made after the damage was done had no affect on Twig Aphids, so it was important to determine the growth stage of the tree to decide if treatment was needed.

Spruce Spider Mites were also a big problem due to hot, dry weather. Working with growers to determine if the mites were past the threshold level or if environmental factors such as fungus or predatory mites were affecting populations, was a priority. Two training sessions for Hispanic farm workers were offered in 2005 to instruct how to scout for insects. Approximately 20 workers from Alleghany County attended the two sessions. This indicated a strong need for this type of training that targets Hispanic farm workers.

Bryan Davis
More Alleghany County forest landowners have applied for the state’s forestry present-use property tax program. Extension has promoted this program through newsletters and seminars as a way for landowners to access property tax reductions, and as a tool for conserving private forested lands. The Alleghany Extension Center, has further facilitated access to this program by preparing the Forest Management Plans submitted to the County Tax Office. This arrangement was approved by the County Tax Administrator. With the difference in market value versus use value of forestry lands, multiplied by the county real estate tax rate, forest lands are taxed at $40 per acre less. With the minimum requirement of 20 acres, tax savings of $800 benefits the landowner. For the 411 acres that Alleghany Extension has assisted to qualify for Forestry Use, the cumulative tax savings to Alleghany landowners is $16,440.

David Isner

Alleghany agribusiness is vital to the economy of this rural county. Agriculture is a part of economic development through commodity production, but also through tourism and recreational enhancement and productive use of rural lands. Tremendous asset values are held by farmers with an average age over 55 years, implicating asset and management transfer to younger owners. The risk of failure of next generation farm business owners and managers is high if Succession Planning is not implemented. Results can be disappointing, families being torn apart, lives being damaged by sudden wealth, lawsuits, and the loss of productive farmland forever.

To address this issue, Alleghany County Extension, in collaboration with the NC Farm Transition Network, has developed and implemented a series of seminars on Farm Business Succession Planning. The first seminar was held in late September. It was successful as measured by attendance of 32 participants, positive evaluations, and requests for further seminars to address in more detail all considerations of Succession Planning. These follow up seminars will continue in January of 2006. Finally, families and individuals pursuing Farm Business Succession Planning will be assisted one on one as they discuss and implement Succession Planning.

David Isner
Having a full extension staff is enabling agents to develop programming in their areas. As a result of having all positions filled, the traditional agricultural programs are coming back. It has been 10, 15 or 20 years since Alleghany County has had programming for beekeepers, adult horse owners or cattlemen.

A group of six cattlemen met to start a county cattlemen's association. The first meeting was in November and the topic was the NCFarmID program. An animal identification program that is currently voluntary, but will become mandatory in 2008. The group plans to continue meeting and become organized and be part of the North Carolina Cattleman’s Association. There are 17 cattlemen that currently belong to the North Carolina Association, but do not have a local association to attend. Through an organized cattleman's association, the members can get discounts on animal health products, attend educational meeting and discuss "how to" topics with each other.

Extension is also organizing bee keepers in Alleghany County. This group had its first meeting in November and is planning on becoming part of the North Carolina Beekeepers Association. They plan to meet monthly and have programs to help educate beekeepers on bee health and honey production. They may sponsor a bee school in the spring.

Another group that met for the first time in many years was the adult horse owners. The group is looking to become established in Alleghany again and work on providing trails for horse owners to ride, and doing charitable work for the community.

George Stancil
Water Quality Workshops

With the mandate of water quality regulations from the state, producers are required to have continuing education workshop hours to remain certified. Currently there are 14 certified animal waste operators in Alleghany County. I continue to provide ample workshops so that producers maintain certification as well as working closely with them on record keeping, regulation updates and overall management of the waste system to avoid violations from Division of Water Quality inspectors.

Nancy Keith

Dairy Industry

Currently there are 24 dairy farms with approximately 3000 cows. Income from the dairy farms in 2004 was 10.6 million dollars. There is also 2450 acres of land that is planted in corn silage utilized primarily by dairy producers. Corn silage is the major forage fed in the dairy cattle ration. I continue to work with dairy producers to implement practices that will achieve individual and family goals related to profitability. These practices include the production of quality forages, dairy nutrition, herd health, record keeping and overall management.

Nancy Keith

Dairy Youth Programs

Fewer youth reside on dairy farms today. In Alleghany County, many opportunities are provided for youth whether they reside on an active dairy farm or not. Those involved in dairy youth programs will improve personal development and learn leadership and other skills related to the dairy industry. Many of the opportunities include dairy judging, dairy quiz bowl, dairy skill-a-thon and dairy fitting and showmanship.

Nancy Keith
The Extension Advisory Leadership System [ALS] consists of standing committees, ad-hoc committees, program specialized committees and the Council. ALS is a volunteer system utilizing the expertise of its members to plan and direct programming initiatives.

The Alleghany County Advisory Leadership Council members are:

- Don Adams
- Genia George
- Santiago Reales
- Tom Atwood
- Bonnie Hall
- Ken Richardson
- Brant Banks
- Jill Hobson
- Andy Royall
- Jackie Billings
- Twyla Kennedy
- Tim Stamper
- Nathan Bryan
- Coby LaRue
- Shelda Upchurch
- Don Conrad
- Gerald Leftwich
- Angie Wagoner
- David Edwards
- Cliff Phillips
- Patrick Woodie

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