

## Braxton County Annual Report | 2016

### Putting Knowledge to Work!

West Virginia University Extension works to provide “solutions in your community” through key program areas including agriculture, environment and natural resources, 4-H youth development, food and nutrition, health and wellness, financial planning and home gardening. These research-based programs and services are available to all residents of Braxton County thanks to the tremendous support of our community members, local organizations, volunteers and local partners – the Board of Education and County Commission.

### Highlights

We have award-winning programs and nationally recognized Extension agents:

- For the past four years, the West Virginia University Braxton County Extension Office and the Braxton/Clay Master Gardeners have sponsored “Life’s a Garden: Dig It!”—a day-long event. Concurrent workshops are held throughout the day that focus on gardening-related topics and educate participants on small business opportunities. Demonstrations and vendors are also part of the day. Plans are underway for the fifth annual day. This program received the “Team Program Excellence” award at the 2015 West Virginia Master Gardener Spring Conference.
- Extension Agent Ami Cook received a 1<sup>st</sup> place national team award for her work with the Five Love Languages research program. Debbie Friend received the Distinguished Service Award from the National Association of County Agricultural Agents.
- Ami Cook had two publications this year: “The Parenting Press: Parenting Without a Partner,” a WVU fact sheet and “Would consumers purchase a wider variety of produce and products at West Virginia farmers markets if they were available?” in the Journal of Extension.

### 4-H and Youth Development

Approximately 6.5% of Braxton County’s school age youth are members of a community 4-H club. The traditional 4-H events conducted provide educational and skill-building opportunities for our 153 4-H members and Cloverbuds (pre-4-H age).

- One of those traditional events is 4-H camp, and this year, we celebrated 100 years of 4-H camping in West Virginia!
- 81 4-H’ers attended 4-H camp, which was staffed by 23 adult volunteers.
- 16 Cloverbuds joined us for one day of fun and camp traditions.

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A major highlight of the 2015 4-H year was our state winning 4-H Air Rifle team.

- The four youth competed nationally in Nebraska in June.
- The team finished in 10<sup>th</sup> place nationally competing against several youth that had signed letters of intent to participate on collegiate rifle teams.

Increased success in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) and other academic subjects, leads to positive outcomes for youths as well as a reduction in risky behaviors. Because of their involvement in 4-H activities in Braxton County, youth are more likely to obtain well-paying jobs, create their own businesses, and contribute to the health and well-being of their communities.

- 81 campers interacted with a STEM Ambassador this summer, which, for many, was their first encounter with a scientist or engineer. These campers gained an awareness of career possibilities in a STEM field for themselves and their peers.

We have a strong Youth Agriculture program which has many programs that overlap with the FFA at Braxton County High School.

- This year, we had the top scoring individual in both the junior and senior divisions at the West Virginia Beef Expo Stockman's Contest. We also had the 2<sup>nd</sup> place junior and senior teams and the 7<sup>th</sup> place senior team. 519 youths participated in this contest from throughout West Virginia.
- Our junior Forestry judging team won the state competition with all four members finishing in the top six individually.

Other aspects of the Youth Agriculture program are the livestock shows and sales at the Braxton County Fair.

- This year alone, 4-H and FFA members earned nearly \$2,700 in premiums with 168 livestock exhibits.
- Those with market animal projects sold \$51,750 of livestock at the annual 4-H/FFA Livestock Sale.
- An additional \$3,700 in scholarships were distributed to 4-H and FFA livestock exhibitors.

In 2015, all of our 4-H club organizational leaders, shooting sports instructors and camp counselors were approved through the WVU Extension Volunteer Selection Process.

- This process helps us to ensure that our 4-H programs provide a safe atmosphere for youths involved in Extension activities, and that we select and place qualified volunteers for 4-H youth activities.
- The process included applications, reference checks, background checks, signed codes of

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conduct and training.

## Agriculture and Natural Resources

Annie's Project was held in Braxton County with 11 participants. Annie's project is an educational program designed for women's learning styles and provides research-based farming education and resources. Annie's Project participants are:

- Becoming involved in state and local ag-leadership.
- Advancing networking and innovation.
- Engaged in supportive women-to-women networks.
- Forming successful and innovative business-farm relationships.
- Growing more confident in farm and business abilities.
- Seeking more educational opportunities – at the West Virginia Women in Agriculture Conference and other trainings and conferences.

The beef cattle industry faces challenges that include, but are not limited to, increasing competition from other meats, product variability and rising costs associated with production. WVU Extension efforts in Braxton County to promote marketing pools increases production and sale of cattle in this county and in the state, thus improving the county's economy from agriculture.

- 193 calves were marked through the Central Calf Pool, realizing an increase of \$115.21 per head over Stockyard returns.

The WVU Extension Master Gardener Program provides people interested in gardening with the opportunity to expand their knowledge and sharpen their skills by taking part in basic and advanced training programs that provide in-depth training in various aspects of horticulture. In return for the training program, Master Gardeners provide volunteer service in their communities in educational programs, beautification projects, and other projects that focus on gardening.

- 17 Master Gardeners were recertified in 2015.
- These volunteers provided 855 volunteer hours in 35 projects, received 207 educational hours and had 915 face to face contacts.
- Master Gardeners are instrumental to the Life's A Garden-Dig It! program that has been successful since the first event in 2012.

As Braxton County producers compete in local food markets, more of the food dollar stays in the county. In addition, buying local, fresh produce has benefits related to healthy eating and nutrition.

- We provide educational resources to local growers.

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- We train farmer's market vendors so they can accept vouchers from the Farmers Market Nutrition Program. This program provides low-income senior citizens access to fresh, locally grown produce.

## Community, Economic and Workforce Development

The WVU-Braxton County Extension Office works with local groups and organizations to attract visitors to Braxton County and to make their stay more enjoyable.

- We work closely with Braxton County Fair to publicize and promote the fair, assist with development of the advertising campaign and distribute brochures and posters promoting the fair and Braxton County throughout West Virginia. We assisted with applications for \$12,500 in Division of Tourism grants to help with these advertising efforts. The Braxton County Fair is the largest event in Braxton County attracting over 11,000 fairgoers last year.
- We have promoted Agri-tourism opportunities in Braxton County working with Sutton Community Development Corporation and the Braxton County Senior Citizens Center to promote the development of Farmer's Markets in Braxton County.
- We coordinate the State 4-H Shooting Sports Air Rifle Competition in January and work with local hotels for lodging for participants, coaches and families. Last year, this event brought about 350 visitors to Braxton County.

Holly Gray Park is a great resource for the 4-H program, family get-togethers, exercise and large events. Our office supports Holly Gray Park in a variety of ways.

- 4-H members maintain a flower bed in front of the multipurpose building; 4-H All Stars developed a meditation area with a bench and rose bush at the Dining Hall; 4-H volunteers built wooden benches for each of the 4-H cabins.
- We regularly provide referrals for groups to use the Park for family reunions, picnics, livestock events, etc.
- The Healthy Families, Healthy Children Coalition sponsored Family Movie Nights at Holly Gray Park.

Well-kept and supportive communities are more welcoming and inviting to visitors. Our volunteers are involved in a variety of projects that make Braxton County a better place to live:

- Braxton County Master Gardeners have completed garden and beautification projects at local Community Buildings, the Braxton County Senior Center and local churches.
- Braxton County CEOS (Community Educational Outreach Service) members provide many hours of community service for the benefit of Braxton County. They provide snacks and coffee for the Virginia medical office at Flatwoods, donate proceeds from bake sales to a local cancer charity, provide breast cancer education awareness, and provide backpacks filled with emergency items for children removed from their homes unexpectedly.

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## Families and Health

- Nutrition education encourages youth to try a variety of healthy foods. 404 youth were reached in 2015 in Braxton County Elementary schools.
  - 73% of children and youth improve their abilities to choose foods according to Federal Dietary Recommendations or gain knowledge.
  - 35% of children and youth use safe food handling practices more often or gain knowledge.
  - 27% of children and youth improve their physical activity practices or gain knowledge.
- Ten 4-H campers participated in the Rethink Your Drink campaign to encourage self and others to replace sugar sweetened beverages with water and other healthy drink options including a presentation to the entire camp (approximately 80 people).
- At 4-H camp, four students participated in the Relationship Smarts program and eight in the Family Consumer Science Skill-a-thon.
- Sixteen people received Smart Money training to equip them to deal with the State pay cycle changes.
  - 70.8% of participants can now identify three categories of expenditures that they could control following this training.
  - 85% report now knowing something about budgeting that they didn't know before.
  - 83% plan to use the information or skills they learned in the class in the next six months when managing their money.
- 95% of SPOKES (Strategic Planning in Occupational Knowledge for Employment and Success, an adult education program) participants reported being more likely to sit down together for meals more often after receiving the Strong Families Eat Together program.
- \$5,000 in grant funding was secured through a Partners in Prevention grant for the Braxton and Clay Healthy Families Healthy Children Coalition to fund relationship, parenting and financial education as well as Family Fun Events. This year we hosted two movies in the park for approximately 125 people spending time together as a family.
- Thirty participants received training on home canning practices and comparing nutrient values of fresh, frozen and canned vegetables at the Sutton On-Trac Spring Gardening program.

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