

Mercer 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 Mercer County thanks to the tremendous support of our community members, local organizations, volunteers and local partners – the Board of Education and County Commission.

Highlights

Elaine Tiller, Adult NOI was awarded “2015 Best Overall Adult Educator” Award through West Virginia University Extension’s Family Nutrition Program at the Nutrition Assistants’ Multi-State Conference in Roanoke, Virginia. This award was given to Elaine for her creative programming, willingness to mentor new educators and exceeding the goal of graduates expected. Elaine also started teaching four new curriculum this year: Eating Smart Being Active, Nutrition Education Aimed at Toddlers (NEAT), Rethink Your Drink, and Teen Cuisine.

Andi Bennett won a State and National Award for relationship education. She was part of a team who worked to provide research behind Dr. Gary Chapman’s “Five Love Languages” book and make it into a seven-week program to help couples enhance their relationship. Andi is also doing healthy living programs for PEIA participants and teaching Smart Money; new bi-weekly pay program for the State Auditor’s office.

Jodi Richmond presented four programs on agricultural production, wildlife management and financial literacy at the National Extension Risk Management Conference, National Association County Agricultural Agents Conference, and the National Association of Family and Consumer Sciences Conference in 2015, two of which won awards. School gardening curriculum she developed is being used by other agents in a total of 25 schools across WV.

Brenda Pruett presented best practices learned regarding working with Children Youth and Families in after-school settings in Mercer County and other WV counties at the National Association Of AfterSchool and the National 4-H Agents’ Association Conference.

4-H and Youth Development

In 2015, we celebrated 100 years of 4-H camping!

- 136 youth attended county 4-H camp.

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- 44 Mercer County 4-H members attended a state 4-H camp.
- 4-H youth documented over 1,000 of volunteer hours which included the making of over 1,000 pepperoni rolls to support childhood cancer efforts.
- 164 4-Hers in Mercer county gained citizenship/leadership skills.
- 778 youth were active members of a 4-H group receiving over six hours of educational programming.
- Over 500 youth were involved in STEM activities including 14 youth who meet weekly to learn more about robotics.

4-H Impacts

A recent Tuft's University research study found that 4-H'ers:

- achieve higher grades in school.
- are more likely to attend college.
- are more likely to pursue careers in science, engineering, or computer technology.
- are more likely than their peers to positively contribute to communities.
- are less likely to participate in risky behavior such as drug and cigarette use and sexual promiscuity.
- are less likely to drop out of school.

Agriculture and Natural Resources

- 2426 youth and 328 adult contacts in Ag literacy and gardening programs including 13 strawberry beds and 6 school gardens; over \$10,000 has been raised to support these programs in the last three years; curriculum developed for the strawberry program is being used by other agents in a total of 25 schools in West Virginia.
- Mercer County Tailgate Market provided additional farm income totaling \$49,356.77 to 32 families and provided \$3000 worth of free fresh fruits and vegetables to seniors through the Senior Food Voucher program.
- Risk Management Dinner meetings and other livestock programs provided educational information to 177 adults in 2015.
- Regional Women in Agriculture and Agritourism programs have provided financial, marketing and risk management information to dozens of small scale producers in our area; these programs were also presented on the national level in 2015.

Agriculture and Natural Resources Outputs

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School garden grants attempt to encourage the use of gardens as outdoor labs for experiential learning, making the projects fun and interactive for students and teachers while providing physical activity as well. The supporting curriculum introduces fresh fruits and vegetables to students as healthy snack options. Studies indicate the more often a child is exposed to a new food, the more accepting of it they become.

\$10,000 of grant money raised for school gardening programs in 2014-2015 and an additional \$2800 for livestock programming.

Participation in specific agriculture and natural resources programs in our county:

- 31 private applicators receive pesticide credits through our office.
- 403 livestock producers receive information about our programs.
- 18 in Women in Agriculture have participated in our 6 week Annie's Project.
- 62 certified Master Gardeners in Mercer County.
- 32 farmers/vendors involved in farmers markets.
- 31 Beef Quality Assurance trained producers.
- 2426 youth and 328 adult contacts in Ag literacy and gardening programs including 13 strawberry beds and 6 school gardens.

Examples of changes behavior due to ANR programming

Risk Management Dinner Meeting follow-up:

- Of survey respondents:
 - 80% feel they have increased their knowledge due to the dinner meetings.
 - 71% have made a change in farming practice due to the dinner meetings.
 - 60% have increased their farm.
 - 28% have decreased their expenses.
- Most common changes in practice included changes in grazing management, weed control, fertilizer and lime application, fencing, and utilizing estate planning.

School Garden follow-up (students):

- 86% of students reported they tried a new food due to the activities.
- 75% reported they tried a new fruit or vegetable they liked.
- 55% reported they would try a new vegetable when offered at friend's house (20% increase in willingness to try new items on the pre-test).

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

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 Mercer County to promote Quality Assurance and other marketing options thus improving the county's economy from agriculture. Educational programs offered through our office target producers of a variety of livestock species and enterprise types.

If vegetable growers are able to prevent diseases in their produce, they can increase yield of cucurbits, tomatoes and potatoes in the county. Increased revenues improve the incomes of growers and the West Virginia economy grows through higher taxes. Additional health benefits are also accrued as citizens eat more fruits and vegetables that are grown locally. Our Mercer County Tailgate Market provides additional income to over two dozen local farm families as well as providing fresh fruits and vegetables to the citizens of our community.

Our Women in Agriculture program provides education to female producers covering five areas of risk: production, legal, financial, marketing, and personnel. These agribusiness women can participate in a six week intensive course (Annie's Project) as well as our state Women in Ag conference to gain advice on a variety of topics as well as practical hands-on experience working on budgets with your own operation.

As farmers fine tune their management of feed production, crop and livestock nutritional management, and livestock marketing and cow efficiency, they will reduce expenses related to producing fed-cattle and be able to reap larger financial gains from the sale of cattle. This increased revenue will result in farmers increasing their incomes and contributing to the general economy.

Families and Health

- 635 youth participated in the family nutrition program.
- 147 adults participated in the family nutrition program.
- 61 participants in food safety programs such as food preservation.
- 381 participants in healthy lifestyle programs such as obesity prevention programs.
- 143 participants in parenting programs.
- 653 participants in adult relationship programs.
- 46 volunteers participated in family and health programs.

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- 100% of youth improved their ability to choose foods according to federal dietary recommendation.
- 50% of youth use safe food handling practices more often.
- 72% of youth improved their physical activity practices.

Participation in specific programs in family and health:

- 782 in the Family Nutrition program.
- 115 in the Five Love Language Program.
- 61 in Home Canning.
- 40 in CEOS.

Examples of changes in participants (citizens, business, organizations, communities, conditions)

- 567 youths in the Family Nutrition Program improved their ability to choose foods according to Federal Dietary Recommendations.
- 308 youths in the Family Nutrition Program improved their use of safe food handling practices.
- 231 youths in the Family Nutrition Program improved their physical activity practices.
- 147 adults in the Family Nutrition Program improved their ability to choose foods according to Federal Dietary Recommendations, improved their use of safe food handling practices and improved their physical activity practices.
- 61 participants in food safety programs increased their knowledge of using current and research-based processes in food preservation.
- 115 participants in Love Languages of Children parenting class learned new skills such as new ways to interact with their children, empathy for their children's feelings, leading by example, being a more caring, and loving parent.
- 335 adults learned the strengths and weaknesses of their personality type through True Colors Personality program. They learned why they get along with certain people and why they tend to argue with others. They learned to respect diversity and to see strengths in others. This program is used for teambuilding and workplace appreciation as well as parenting and career development.
- 35 adults learned the importance of appreciating others at work and teambuilding through the Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace program.
- 181 state employees learned how the new bi-weekly payroll program will affect their monthly income and tips to plan and budget their money when this change occurs.

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F&H Public Value Messages – Value to people not in the program

According to a report by the West Virginia Governor's office in 2013, if West Virginia is to successfully reverse high health care costs and poor outcomes, it is going to require specific changes in the healthcare system that address high-cost health conditions and improves the overall health and healthcare of West Virginia families. Our county's Family Nutrition Program plays an important part in improving overall health by training youth to make healthy food and activity choices early in their lives which will lead to better health outcomes over time for them and their families.

Research has shown that children who are raised in families who eat one meal together several times a week, are physically and mentally healthier, perform better in school, and are less likely to engage in risky youthful behaviors. The Strong Families Eat Together program in our county helps to maintain family vitality and improve positive outcomes for families and for communities.

Properly preserved fruits and vegetables by citizens in our county will increase the consumption of healthy foods which will lead to an improvement in general health and decrease the need for medical interventions.

Programs and activities offered by the West Virginia University Extension Service are available to all persons without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, veteran status, political beliefs, sexual orientation, national origin, and marital or family status. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Director, Cooperative Extension Service.

The WVU Board of Governors is the governing body of WVU. The Higher Education Policy Commission in West Virginia is responsible for developing, establishing, and overseeing the implementation of a public policy agenda for