

2020 Report to the People

2020 brought many challenges and opportunities along the way. N.C. Cooperative Extension, Davie County Center, adapted to these challenges and continued to serve the community, deliver educational programming and meet the needs of customers. We extend our thanks to volunteers and community members for their support during this time. Please enjoy a sample of 2020 success stories and highlights below.

Commercial Vegetable Production Series

In Spring 2020, the Davie Horticulture Agent planned a commercial vegetable production series. The series had to be cancelled after the first class due to COVID-19, yet the need still existed for this education for farmers and prospective farmers.

The vegetable production series was moved online and presented in Fall 2020 over Zoom. A fourth seminar, Growing Herbs for Market, was added to the three seminars - Market Gardening, Greens Production, and Season Extension - originally planned for the spring. Registration was done through Eventbrite and marketing was done through Eventbrite, Extension websites, local news outlets, and email lists.

The agent taught 79 farmers and prospective farmers about commercial vegetable production. Along with the Zoom seminars, participants were provided with resource lists and publications for each topic. Participants were not only from Davie County, but from a number of counties within North Carolina. Some participants were from areas outside North Carolina. Moving the series to Zoom allowed the agents to reach participants who would never have been able to travel to an in-person workshop.

Voluntary Agricultural District Program

Preservation of farmland is very important to landowners. Davie County has experienced a large population growth, especially on the northeastern side of the county. Landowners are concerned with new construction that is being developed next to their farmland. Many have contacted Davie County Cooperative Extension with interest in enrolling in the Voluntary Agricultural District program.

The Davie County Agricultural Advisory Board meets quarterly to address farm preservation concerns and approve applications for the program. During 2020, there was a sizable increase in the number of acres of farmland enrolled into the program, with nine new landowners enrolling 970 acres. Two of the nine landowners enrolled in the Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District program, which is non-revocable under any circumstance.

2020 Highlights

Trained **824** participants in **44** educational programs.

Secured **\$11,967** in grant funds and donations to support programs.

Assisted, educated and informed **3,928** Direct Contacts and **255,623** Indirect Contacts.

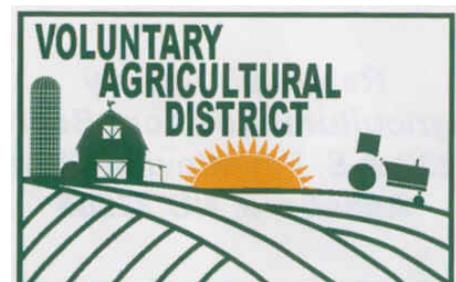
Virtual programming

became the new norm.



Buzz on Mason Bees

 Davie County 4-H
April 22 at 2:00 PM · 



New Farmers Need Help

Most years, people move to the rural areas of Davie County to live the "good country life". This year the COVID-19 pandemic created a "food shortage" scare and individuals wanted to raise their own meat and eggs. Some saw an opportunity to even market products to others searching for quality homegrown products. Many have little to no agricultural experience and are vulnerable to bad advice and scams from individuals who might take advantage of their lack of experience. This leads to disappointing results and even loss of hard-earned savings. Helping individuals get started on the right foot is expertise Extension offers.

Utilizing newspaper articles, Facebook, websites, webinars, word of mouth and more, Extension invited these new "agriculture enthusiasts" to contact Extension to receive unbiased research-based information to help them establish an operation right for them. Many new residents contacted Extension and were provided information, webinars, websites and more on different options and scenarios concerning the type of operation, start-up practices, management practices, marketing options, records, as well as, other resources to help them be successful.

Providing unbiased accurate information helped many of these producers get off to a positive start. In 2020, there were eight new



backyard poultry flocks, two new sheep operations and one person who realized he wasn't ready to invest in a pastured pork operation. Several individuals stated they needed more time and information before investing in their enterprise, saving them money, as well as, stress and headaches. Additional information and assistance helps the producer improve the enterprise, as well as, grow more independent while gaining knowledge and confidence for future productive seasons. This results in producers being satisfied and exhibiting a better quality of life.

Magic of Electricity

Central Davie Academy teaches at-risk youth within Davie County that may be struggling academically or emotionally. This prevents them from succeeding in a regular public school setting. Due to their nature, they have a limited staff and small



class sizes; however, that also entails a limited budget to allow youth to conduct scientific experiments. Currently the school has 13 students (7 Middle school and 6 High School), but will most likely have 30 students by the end of the year.

Davie County 4-H wanted to help these youth learn more about STEM through hands-on learning. We partnered with the school to submit a grant through Energy United to help purchase National 4-H's Magic of Electricity Curriculum. This way, students at the school could use hands-on learning to safely explore concepts found in the electricity and magnetism curriculum.

Energy United granted us \$413.95 to purchase two interactive kits from National 4-H. The school will use these kits to teach both Middle and High School students about electricity and magnetism. This also allows Davie County 4-H to bring their current Magic of Electricity kits to another school to expand our school enrichment program. We are still in the process of examining how well student knowledge on electrical concepts has expanded, but from the initial encounter, students were engaged and excited to learn through doing!

Raised Bed Mulch Layer Rental Program

Davie County is mostly rural with a population of 41,420. Many citizens in the county have large plots of land for gardening. We also have several industrial hemp and vegetable producers in the area. Equipment investments can be a big expense for those who are starting out or for someone who may only need a specific piece of equipment once a year. After numerous requests from citizens and producers in the county, we decided to start a raised bed mulch layer rental program.

The agent began to work with Davie County Soil and Water (DCSW) to discuss funding for the mulch layer and a trailer. After further discussion, DCSW funded the purchase and worked alongside Cooperative Extension to develop and implement this program. The mulch layer was purchased. A local trailer company in the county gave us a great deal on a new trailer to transport the equipment. DCSW made modifications to the trailer to allow an easy loading and unloading process.

Allowing producers and county citizens to lease this equipment saves them about \$3000. The money being saved can be put forth to other production expenses.



4-H Homesteading Club

COVID-19 interrupted many businesses and activities, including Davie County 4-H. However, in the midst of the pandemic, we saw a resurgence of life-skills based hobbies. However, we also saw many people having a hard time doing these hobbies based on the limited knowledge they had. There was also a surge of need in our community for food.

Several of our 4-H Volunteers, in response to this, saw an opportunity to create a Life Skills Club called Thimbles n' Thyme Homesteading 4-H Club. The goal is to teach youth about life skills including gardening, sewing, canning, baking, and wood working. At the same time, a local bakery owner and community historian, reached out to Davie County 4-H, wanting to start a community garden.

The Thimbles n' Thyme Homesteading 4-H Club not only became a recognized 4-H club but also started breaking ground and planning out four raised beds to start the Farmington Community 4-H Garden. The beds will grow fresh produce and herbs for families in need and will be tended by the Thimbles n' Thyme Homesteading Club.

Grant for Mobile Farmers Market Startup

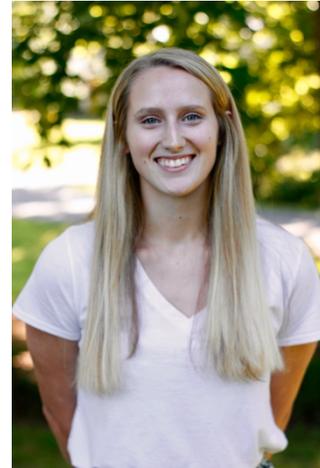
Davie County has three farmers markets, and none of them accept food stamps (SNAP). The county's urban food desert is located in the heart of Mocksville; however, residents in the northern, western and southern regions of the county have very limited access to fresh foods, served by Dollar General and convenience stores. Available public transportation is limited to central Mocksville. 2016 U.S. Census data indicates that the poverty rate in Mocksville is 17.7%, compared to 16.9% for NC and 15.1% for the US. 26.8% of children in Mocksville live in poverty (23.9% in NC, 21.2% in the US). In Cooleemee, 26.4% overall, 44.8% of children and 23% of seniors live in poverty (9.7% of seniors in N.C., 9.4% in the U.S.).

Countless studies attest to the importance of fresh fruits and vegetables in the diet. Poor quality diets contribute significantly to the chronic health conditions seen today, such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease, that are prevalent in Davie County.

N.C. Cooperative Extension, Davie County Center, received a Carolina Farm Credit Corporate Mission Fund Grant for a mobile farmers market startup project. The mobile market will accept SNAP and offers fresh, local foods to limited resource populations in underserved areas of Davie County. \$4,800 was awarded to purchase a commercial refrigerator and freezer to store and aggregate fresh produce, as well as other products, from area farmers. In addition to providing fresh foods to residents, the project will also provide a new market for farmers where unsold products can be held over from traditional markets and sold through the mobile market.



2020 Summer Intern: Ms. Rose Vaughn



The Davie Extension Center, was very fortunate to host an amazing intern through the N.C. Cooperative Extension Summer Internship Program. With most offices closed due to the pandemic at this time, not all interns originally selected for the program were being placed. The Davie office agreed to host an intern to help fill this need.

We were delighted to host Ms. Rose Vaughn from Chatham County, a senior studying Animal Science at NC State University.

Rose assisted with and delivered virtual 4-H programming, attended farm visits with agents, published news articles and completed many projects, such as developing an online needs assessment, creating 4-H take home kits and video production. We wish this awesome young lady the best in her very bright future!

During the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Extension distributed:

4,400 reusable face masks to Davie farmers, farmworkers and families;

900 food safety and recipe kits and **525** home garden kits to Davie families served at meal distribution sites and local food pantries; and

300 4-H STEAM and agricultural at home learning kits to Davie County youth.

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