A Message from the Director

On behalf of the Edgecombe Extension Center staff of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, I am pleased to share some of the accomplishments and impacts from last year’s educational programs. Our staff is committed to creating meaningful change in the lives of our county’s residents.

Empowering People—Providing Solutions

Significant Successes and Events of 2008

- $113,848 of private funding/contributions were given to help with our programming and delivery.
- Total impact of our Extension programming efforts to Edgecombe residents was $6,256,119.
- Extension provided face-to-face contacts with 21,173 people.
- Our Extension Center collaborated/networked with 76 organizations, committees, and boards.
- Epsilon Sigma Phi, an honorary Extension fraternity, recognized Edgecombe Extension Center with their statewide County Performance Award.
- 936 volunteers assisted our Extension Center in delivering educational programs.
- Our volunteers amassed 11,589 hours of service, which was valued at $226,509.
- Our staff conducted 284 meetings, workshops, demonstrations and field days to reach county citizens.
- Total meeting attendance was 11,677.
- Ralph Blalock received the first-ever Dalton Proctor Livestock Achievement in Excellence Award for 30 years of outstanding service to 4-H’ers in livestock programs presented at the North Carolina Association of Extension 4-H Agents statewide meeting.
- 58 articles appeared in our local newspaper and 19 newsletters were developed.
- Art Bradley, Extension Agent, completed a four-week course for New & Aspiring County Extension Directors. He was appointed as County Extension Director in Edgecombe County on January 1, 2009.
• Rell Killebrew received the Outstanding Service Award from the North Carolina Association of Extension Program Assistants, Associates & Technicians for her dedication to enhancing the lives of our county’s youth through innovative 4-H learning experiences.

By investing $363,521 per year in Cooperative Extension, Edgecombe County leverages $666,734 in State and Federal dollars for salary and support.

HIGHLIGHTED SUCCESSES

Fuel and fertilizer prices skyrocketed in 2008, prompting farmers to seek more ways to reduce expenses. Through the educational efforts of the Edgecombe Extension Center, tobacco growers have become more efficient in applying fertilizer nutrients in an economical method. Fifty-five percent of the acreage now receives the side-dress application of nitrogen fertilizer from a liquid nitrogen source that is less expensive. These growers were able to save $173,977 by changing their application method.

Today’s youth have a wide variety of activities that draw their interests. Many of these activities provide a positive influence while others may not. The Edgecombe County 4-H animal science program continues to deliver a strong program for developing youth. Fifty-nine youth ages 9-19 accepted the responsibility of raising beef, sheep, meat goats or swine as well as additional sixty-five youth ages 5-8 that cared for short-term meat goat projects in 2008. Skills acquired through this learning experience were written and verbal communications, knowledge of how to care for the livestock, and an understanding of the financial side of raising animals. The success of this program is attributable to the teamwork and support of County and State Extension educators, Edgecombe County Farm Bureau, Edgecombe County Mutual Livestock Association, the East Carolina Arena Board, Edgecombe County and local businesses. The program generates $91,000 to youth participants that many of them will use later to pursue higher education.

The Edgecombe Extension Center was contacted by homeowners in the Whitakers area to help them identify a sudden insect problem that seemed to be related to poultry litter. The Livestock Extension Agent collected samples of the insects that were identified by N.C. State University specialists as Darkling Beetles which came from poultry litter applied to crops fields in that area. The N.C. State University Extension Entomology Specialist was requested to help develop a management and control plan. Through a joint effort of the homeowners, the farmers, and the poultry company, a plan was developed to help prevent this problem from occurring in the future. The ability to bring N.C. State University resources to the county through the Entomology Extension Specialist was a key component in dealing with this stressful situation for homeowners because he was able to understand their concerns and answer questions professionally with research-based information.

Community gardens can provide a means to re-establish a community identity and provide increased interactions among residents in addition to increasing the...
consumption of healthier food choices. Our Extension Center worked with two newly established community gardens in 2008. One community garden focused on providing an activity for the older youth of their church, ages 7 to 16, in which the church designated a portion of their land for the garden. Six youth completed the project in which they shared the produce from the garden with local families and elderly members of the church. A second community garden was organized with eight families who joined to conduct an organic community garden in which the families were allocated rows within the garden. The Edgecombe Extension Center provided technical assistance and support in the operation of these community gardens.

When a woman goes to prison, there are often children left behind. Incarcerated parents often have concerns about the way they have interacted with their children in the past and are eager to improve their parenting skills. Edgecombe Cooperative Extension conducted a series of five parenting classes for 72 women. The participants were parents or grandparents of 113 children under the age of eighteen. A survey of the participants revealed that 96% believe the classes will help them change or improve their parenting skills. When asked what they plan to do differently as a parent, the following responses indicated positive results. “Listen and communicate rather than fuss. Discipline in a way that will teach. Set a good example. Give my children more words of encouragement. Be more patient. Spend more time with them.”

For more than three decades, EFNEP has been helping limited resource youth and families with children learn how to eat healthier meals and snacks, stretch their food dollars and reduce the risk of food-borne illnesses. Additionally, in collaboration with many organizations through the Eat Smart and Move More initiative, NC EFNEP aims to reduce the rising tide of obesity by teaching youth and families practical skills resulting in changed behaviors that help them to eat smart, move more and achieve a healthy weight.

Regina Moseley joined our staff in October 2008 and has quickly organized effective learning groups for her EFNEP Program.
FACTS ABOUT COOPERATIVE EXTENSION IN EDGECOMBE COUNTY

1. Extension is a partnership among Edgecombe County Government, NC State and A&T State Universities and the U.S. Department of Agriculture—responsibilities of each are specifically outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding.

2. The primary mission is research-based education.

3. Programs address locally identified needs by:
   - Enhancing agricultural, forest and food systems
   - Building quality communities
   - Conserving and improving the environment and natural resources
   - Strengthening and sustaining families
   - Developing responsible youth

4. Programs are pro-active, based on a specific plan of work for Edgecombe County that was designed by members of the Advisory Leadership System. Volunteers implement many of the programs.

5. County government is a major contributor to the partnership. In North Carolina counties supply a fourth of the total Extension budget.

6. Cooperative Extension programs are not mandated; however, some of the programs Extension provides are mandated for participants. (Pesticide recertification credits, nutrient management certification, etc.)

7. Clientele are located in all communities in the county. They include farmers, landowners, homemakers, gardeners, youth, organizations, communities, municipal governments and county government.

8. Programs are income generating, promote environmental stewardship and improve the quality of life of Edgecombe County citizens.

9. Edgecombe County Staff members are highly motivated professionals.