Changing Lives

IN HOPKINS COUNTY

Extension provides practical education you can trust by helping individuals, families, businesses, and communities solve problems, develop skills, and build a better future.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Education

The Hopkins County Cooperative Extension Office has a new SNAP nutrition educator, Melissa Webb, helping adults plan for a better future.

One SNAP program is a partnership with Elizabeth's House residents, to educate, and promote a healthy lifestyle. The participants learn about nutrition, budgeting, planning meals, grocery shopping, and basic cooking skills. This program is continually progressing and participants state that before they would just worry about the day to day, and now they are working with their families to plan out meals and save money for the future.

In the past year, more than 400 individuals have taken advantage of SNAP education programming, and 334 children and adults have graduated from the program. All graduates indicate an increase in consumption of fruits and vegetables, food safety knowledge, and aptitude for consuming foods prepared at home rather than by a restaurant or store.

Family and Consumer Sciences

Partnership with Recovery Program Promotes Positive Parenting

Healthy couple and parenting relationships and resulting family stability benefit the well-being of adults and children. Children who live absent from their biological fathers are two to three times

Program Efforts

• 317 individuals completed soil tests as needed.
• 1,915 service hours were completed by Extension Master Gardener volunteers in the county.
• 247 individuals practiced personal and interpersonal leadership skills in clubs, schools and community outreach.
• 1,317 youth applied the skills learned in 4-H and in other activities at home, school or in the community.
• 312 individuals reported eating more healthy foods.
• 996 youth reported feeling good about themselves.
• 260 participants gained access to Extension programming at a local farmers market.
• 62 producers reported they researched multiple options before selecting and applying pesticides.
• 842 youth said they have confidence speaking in front of groups.
• 1,990 children in grades 3-5 reported the intention to ask their family to buy their favorite fruit or vegetables.
more likely to be poor, to experience educational, health, emotional and behavioral problems than their peers who live with their married, biological (or adoptive) parents.

In an effort to increase parenting skills and provide educational resources, Hopkins County Family and Consumer Sciences Agent Katherine Jury partnered with the Hopkins County Jail and Hopkins County Substance Abuse Program (HC-SAP) to provide the Keys to Great Parenting and Nurturing Parenting programs to more than 160 participants in the HC-SAP from Spring 2016 through Fall 2017. As a result of the Keys to Great Parenting and Nurturing Parenting programs, 96 percent of participants reported improved personal knowledge (such as enhanced knowledge of child's developmental levels relative to averages, developmentally appropriate activities for different ages, health habits for themselves and their children), and 100 percent of participants reported improved personal skills that stimulate children's optimum development (such as communication and literacy skills; healthy eating practices; conflict management techniques).

Three months after completion of the Keys to Great Parenting and Nurturing Parenting programs, 93 percent of participants reported using child-rearing skills and parental self-care, and developmentally appropriate activities for their children; practicing parenting skills and conflict management techniques to strengthen and sustain family relationships.

On the post-test evaluation, one participant reported, “I’ve learned better ways to bond with, discipline, and teach my child. These skills are helping me become the kind of parent I want to be and the kind of parent that I wish I had.”

American Private Enterprise Program

Katherine Jury, County Extension Agent for Family and Consumer Sciences, partnered with the Hopkins County School System, Hopkins County Regional Chamber of Commerce, and First United Bank to bring the American Private Enterprise System to a selected group of 40 high school students in Hopkins County. The program helps prepare students for an active role in business through direct involvement with local business and professional leaders—offering and encouraging an exchange of ideas between the groups. In doing so, students received hands-on experience with career opportunities in business and provided leadership training as participants learned about applied American business practices. Five local students qualified for the state competition at the University of Kentucky in June, and three won State Awards with associated cash prizes and $1,200 scholarships.

Horticulture

Spring and Fall Plant Swaps

Pennroyal Master Gardener volunteer, Scott Deahl, and Erika Wood, County Extension Agent for Horticulture, hang the Plant Swap banner at the Hopkins County Farmers Market.

Spring and fall plant swaps were offered in 2017 for the first time at the Hopkins County Farmers Market. The purpose of the plant swaps was to offer the community a way to learn about different kinds of landscape and indoor plants by having the opportunity to swap plants with one another. The idea behind the plant swap is to “give a plant, take a plant.” Participants in the plant swap would bring plants to the swap that they wished to donate and take home a plant brought by another participant. The plant swap was led by Master Gardener volunteers, many of whom donated plants for the event so that all visitors would have the chance to take a plant home.

Different varieties of plants were offered, including perennials, annuals, vegetables, houseplants, herbs, seeds, and bulbs. All plants were labeled and categorized for the event and Master Gardener volunteers were available to answer any questions regarding the care and maintenance of the plants offered. A total of 36 people participated in the spring plant swap and 46 people participated in the fall plant swap, which is an increase of 22 percent. Due to the increased interest in the community for the event, the Pennroyal Master Gardeners plan on holding another plant swap in the spring of 2018.
Expansion of Shared-Use Equipment Opportunities for Local Producers

Input prices and the cost of capital expenditures continue to raise annually. This fact is continually realized by producers in Hopkins County. With that said, cooperative efforts have been made to provide shared-use equipment and educational opportunities with contributing funds provided by Hopkins County Farm Bureau and Calhoun Feed Service and educational programming by the Hopkins County Cooperative Extension Service.

With a second year of implementation underway the equipment pool was expanded with the inclusion of an eight-ton capacity lime spreader. Producers have realized quickly the return-on-investment in regards to proper lime use and pH. With soil testing services provided by the Hopkins County Cooperative Extension Service, clientele in Hopkins County are able to apply proper soil amendments that otherwise would not be available due to the access to equipment and lack of services.

Incorporation of Poultry Litter Decision Tool for Grain Operations

Poultry litter and the effective use economically and environmentally can have positive results for producers in Hopkins County. The results from use on grain farms can also be realized if producers raise poultry and grain crops collectively. According to the USDA Agriculture Census of 2012, Kentucky has experienced a 28 percent increase in the number of poultry farms in the state and Hopkins County respectively saw an increase of 31 percent.

In addition to realized poultry sales, the economic value of poultry litter is another source of both income and soil amendments for producers. With the creation of the Economic Value of Poultry Litter Tool by extension specialists Jordan Shockley, Edwin Ritchey and Josh McGrath, producers have the capability to evaluate the economic return of litter use on their farm.

After conducting a grain meeting explaining the tool, the Hopkins County Cooperative Extension Office received more than 12 inquiries regarding the tool and the testing of nutrient contents in poultry litter. Having conducted one-on-one consultation with producers, growers with six houses were calculated to save $19,000 dollars if he or she were to use poultry litter generated by their own poultry houses.

Agriculure and Natural Resources

Spring Lawn and Garden Fair

The Spring Lawn and Garden Fair is an annual program conducted by the Pennyroyal Master Gardener Association. The fair takes place at the Hopkins County Cooperative Extension Service and offers a variety of activities, including educational talks and demonstrations relating to horticulture, lawn and garden vendors, plant sales, and activities for children. The purpose of the fair is to educate local residents about different topics relating to horticulture, as well as raise awareness of the Master Gardener program and Cooperative Extension Service.

The Fifth Annual Spring Lawn and Garden Fair was held April 29, 2017 and was well attended by 341 people (not including volunteers or vendors), which is an increase of 22 percent from the previous year. Nearly 50 Pennyroyal Master Gardener volunteers (40 percent increase from 2016), 23 lawn and garden vendors (40 percent increase from 2016), and numerous adult volunteers were present at the fair. Five educational talks were offered at the fair and included the following topics: Herbs 101, Weed Identification, Landscaping with Native Plants, Small Space Gardening, and Butterfly Gardens. Visitors were also able to experience several lawn and garden demonstrations, such as how to properly prune and mulch trees and keyhole gardening.

A spring lawn and garden fair survey was handed out to the people in attendance at registration. Of the people who completed the survey, 94 percent expressed that they are or may be interested in learning more about maintaining their lawn, landscape, or vegetable garden and 92 percent expressed that they would plan on attending the Spring Fair again.

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Expansion of Shared-Use Equipment Opportunities for Local Producers

Beef production is a major agricultural commodity in the county and improving both pasture and hay production will allow the overall quality of the county cattle herd to increase and appreciate in value. These services and opportunities have been provided to all county producers regardless of membership status through cooperative efforts between the Hopkins County Cooperative Extension Service, the Kentucky Agriculture Development Fund and Calhoun Feeds in Madisonville.
4-H Youth Development

4-H Camp: Summer Camp Reaches Record Numbers

A group of leaders and 4-Hers posing after an exciting afternoon of field olympics and other activities.

The Hopkins County 4-H Camp program continues to grow throughout the years. In 2016, there were 139 campers and 27 teen and adult leaders. In 2017, there were 178 campers and 38 teen and adult leaders. This made Hopkins County the largest county group in all of the 37 western Kentucky counties that use the camp facility.

There are many benefits for youth attending the week-long 4-H camp. Some are gaining communication skills, learning things like woodworking projects or cupcake making, making new friends, learning to make decisions, work in a group, and to appreciate the outdoors and what they have at home. Some get to have an experience of a lifetime that they would never get to have at home and it also gets them away from video games and able to communicate with other individuals. Camp also provides the youth with a safe, positive, supervised atmosphere that helps with their self-growth.

The camp is not just beneficial for the youth, but for the teens and adults that volunteer as well. They have the opportunity to develop their leadership skills, friendships, and gain internal satisfaction of accomplishments. According to the Independent Sector, volunteer time is valued at $21.38 per hour in Kentucky. The time for Hopkins County leaders for the camp week would be calculated to a total value of $81,244.

The Hopkins County 4-H Council and donations offer much needed assistance with partial scholarships for camp. This year, 70 partial scholarships were given out to help underprivileged campers with financial assistance for camp.

4-H Nature Day Program

The Hopkins County 4-H program provided a nature day event during Spring Break at Mahr Park. The day consisted of working with the Department of Forestry, and Erika Wood, County Extension Agent for Horticulture, and Curtis Dame, County Extension Agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources. The Department of Forestry helped the youth learn to identify different trees and plants and the horticulture agent taught the youth the parts of a plant and how to grow one on their own. Curtis Dame presented a lesson on the many soils that earth has and how to test its nutrient levels. The 4-H department did a reptile and entomology lesson with the youth.

There was a total of 26 youth present for the day. This was an opportunity for them to gain knowledge on the outdoors and experience nature while on Spring Break. Upon evaluation, 17 youth said that after the day lesson they could identify a natural resource in their community and 24 youth gained an understanding of the ecosystems in nature. The evaluation also showed that 14 youth chose the reptile, bug lesson and hike as their favorite part of the day. This proved to be a successful program, considering the majority of participants responded that they would love to do a program like this again.