How May We Help You?

The Hopkins County Cooperative Extension Office has three relatively new faces as Staff Assistants. Kimberly Faulk began as a part-time assistant in July 2015 and became full-time in January 2016. Brandy Garcia has been in her full-time position since April 2016 and Tammy McGregor recently joined as a part-time employee.

Kimberly Faulk is a graduate of Murray State University. She resides in Madisonville with her husband and three children.

Brandy Garcia is pursuing a bachelor’s degree at Murray State University. She lives in Central City and has one daughter.

Tammy McGregor worked at U.S. Bank for 14 years. She has been married for 16 years and has two daughters.

Danny Peyton Outdoor Education Center and Farmer’s Market Groundbreaking Ceremony

In September, the Hopkins County Cooperative Extension Service District Board hosted a groundbreaking ceremony for the Danny Peyton Outdoor Education Center and Farmer’s Market located on the premises of the Cooperative Extension Service’s land annex at Mahr Park.

This project represents a unique community partnership and a culmination of six years of planning to create a facility which will serve as an anchor for educational programs, commerce, and communal activities for residents of Hopkins County and the sur-

Program Efforts

- 402 individuals completed soil tests as needed this past year.
- 2,778 service hours were completed by Extension Master Gardener volunteers in the county.
- 663 individuals reported improved lifestyles through a focus on proper nutrition, disease and injury reduction and comprehensive health maintenance.
- 2,984 individuals (parents or caregivers) reporting improved personal skills (such as increased personal strengths, interpersonal communication and life skills to strengthen families).
- 908 participants gained access to Extension programming at a local farmers market.
- 124 Number of producers who plan to improve spray application record-keeping (including posting of signage) as a result of participating in Kentucky Pesticide Applicator Training.
- 228 youth reported being a better leader (due to skills improved through Extension programming).
Recognizing the need to address the significant physical constraints of the current locations of both the Hopkins County Extension Office and the Hopkins County Farmer’s Market, the Hopkins County Cooperative Extension Council established a capital construction committee of community stakeholders to address the issues. Since 2012, the committee has worked with the Extension District Board to find a solution. Over time, it became evident that inadequate facilities existed to house various programs targeted at increasing access to agriculture education and locally grown agricultural products.

The Outdoor Education Center will house numerous programs sponsored by the Hopkins County Cooperative Extension Service including, but not limited to, 4-H Youth Development day camps, Horticulture and Master Gardener programs, Agriculture and Natural Resource Educational demonstrations, and Family and Consumer Science classes.

In addition, Hopkins County Farmer’s Market will be located there, which will provide more space for vendors to set up on market days, adequate restroom facilities and parking, and access to electricity, internet, and a caterer’s kitchen for food preparation and nutritional programming.

4-H Youth Development

Developing Agriculture Education through 4-H Livestock

Agriculture and livestock is a growing industry in the United States. Kentucky Cattlemen’s Association shows that in 2009 there were around 38,000 cattle farms in Kentucky. Hopkins County 4-H Livestock Club is able to provide an opportunity for youth to learn more about livestock in Kentucky.

Hopkins County has five outstanding Certified Volunteers who provide leadership and the opportunity for youth to learn about the livestock industry. They also offer lessons on livestock judging, cuts of meats, breeds, and nutrition that total six educational hours. They provide hands-on learning experiences for the youth, such as bringing goats or poultry to the Extension Office.

Hopkins County 4-H Livestock Club has knowledgeable members who have competed in Livestock Skill-a-thon, Livestock Judging, County Fair Shows and Kentucky State Fair. The program continues to grow each year, with more youth, activities, and learning experiences. The 4-H Livestock Club was recently represented by youth, Cash Bowles, Parker Bowles, Bo Slaton, Emma Hampton and Elly Hampton, at the State 4-H Livestock Judging event. The Clover Team placed 10th out of 19 teams and the Intermediate Team placed sixth out of 19 teams overall. Bo Slaton placed 12th in Clover Individual overall. Emma Hampton placed eighth in swine and 12th for Intermediate Individual overall. Elly Hampton placed fifth in swine, eighth in questions and 10th Clover Individual overall.

The Judging event tests their knowledge of each breed and how well they would place them at a show. The fact that they placed so well in the competitive event proves that their club educational meetings have been successful.

Building Stronger Leaders through 4-H Camp

“To Make the Best Better” is the motto for the 4-H program and is one aspect 4-H Camp provides the campers, teen and adult leaders. 4-H Camp provides a variety of educational activities for all participants, from outdoor learning, high ropes, and woodworking to firearm safety. Other benefits provided by the week-long camp include communication and leadership skills, working in groups, and self-confidence in a safe, positive environment.

For the 2018 4-H Camping program year, Hopkins County had 187 campers and 38 teen and adult leaders. Each leader, teen and adult, had to participate in a leadership training where they were able to learn valuable tools for a successful camping week. According to the Independent Sector, volunteer time is valued at $21.17 per hour in Kentucky, which comes to a total value of $80,446. Hopkins County 4-H Council was able to provide partial scholarships to 60 underprivileged campers totaling $6,500.

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Expansion of On-Farm Research Drives Evaluation of Farm Inputs

Since 2013 on-farm research in Hopkins County has been a well-received program provided by Extension personnel.

With that said, efforts have been made to answer producer questions related to products that have been highly touted, but lack data to prove that claims of profit increases are actually tested and sound. Expansion of these efforts has been driven by producer committees that have selected which products would be tested. In the spring of 2018, data analysis showed significant results on a majority of the plots in the study regarding in-furrow products on soybeans, with one participating producer actually setting a state double-crop soybean record for 2017.

The producer has since been encouraged to expand such tests on his farm with input from Extension agents.
in Hopkins, Webster and McLean counties who helped to coordinate the Tri-County Grain Improvement Program.

**Hay Equipment Demonstration Day**

Hay Equipment has and will continue to be a vital aspect of a profitable and efficient livestock operation. In Hopkins County producers have sought to increase hay production and, in doing so, evaluate various equipment options available. In recognizing this need, county extension agents from Muhlenberg, Webster, Caldwell, McLean and Hopkins worked together to hold the first Hay Equipment Demonstration Day in Madisonville, Kentucky.

The event, attended by 58 producers and dealers, included demonstrations of hay equipment and presentations from UK Extension forage and biosystems engineering regarding maximizing forage quantity and quality. Attendees commented on how well the event was organized, as well as the need for continued events of this type with one attendee quoted as saying, "Next time cut twice as much hay so we can demonstrate twice the amount of equipment.”

**Bedding Plant Trial Gardens**

Each year, several counties across the state participate in the bedding plant trials. These trials consist of new varieties of flowering annuals that have just been released onto the horticulture market. The purpose of the trials is to see how well these new varieties of plants perform in a garden or landscape setting.

For the trial garden, there are usually 20 different varieties of annual bedding plants with 10 plants per variety, for a total of 200 plants. The Hopkins County trial garden is located at the Hopkins County Extension Service and is roughly a 16’ by 27’ garden plot. Within this plot, 10 plants are placed per variety in a rough square or rectangle. The placing of the plants typically depends on how the plant grows, whether it will clump or spread on the ground.

The Pennyroyal Master Gardeners run the Hopkins County trial garden every year and form a committee to care for and evaluate the garden. Once the plants arrive from the greenhouse grower, they are planted and watered sufficiently until established. The master gardener committee typically mulches the garden bed and keeps up with the weeding. They will deadhead spent flowers on plants as needed. Once a month from June to October, the master gardener volunteers evaluate each variety of plant on an evaluation form using a 0 to 5 rating scale with 0 meaning that the plants are completely dead and 5 meaning that the plants are healthy with no pest or disease issue and have full color/foliage.

At the end of October, evaluation forms are sent to the University of Kentucky Research and Education Center in Princeton, where they are analyzed. Data collected from the evaluations is published into a report, which provides helpful information to Kentucky gardeners wishing to grow these varieties in their gardens and landscapes.

**Horticulture**

**Kid’s Gardening Workshop**

The Hopkins County Horticulture Agent and Pennyroyal Master Gardeners held a kid’s gardening workshop this past summer at the Hopkins County Extension Office. Thirteen children between the ages of 8 to 12 participated in the program. The children who participated learned about a wide range of gardening topics and engaged in several hands-on activities.

During the workshop, the children were taught about the parts of the plants, pollinators and their lifecycles, and how to properly pot a flowering plant. Another part of the workshop included the children being able to go to a kid’s demonstration garden. They participated in several different activities including identifying and smelling herbs, planting succulents, and planting pepper and tomato plants in a raised bed.

The children were asked what their favorite and least favorite herbs were from the garden, and the majority of them stated that peppermint was their favorite herb and basil was their least favorite herb. At the end of the workshop, the children were able to take their pollinator lifecycle activity, potted plant, and other projects home with them. The children were asked if they learned more about gardening after participating in the workshop, and all of them said “yes.”

**Family and Consumer Sciences**

**Reaching Families with Relational Resources**

In an effort to increase parenting skills and provide educational resources, the Hopkins County F.C.S. Agent, Hopkins County School Family Resource Youth Service coordinators and Madisonville-Hopkins County Public Library collaborated to provide the Nurturing Parenting program to more than 50 families who access services from Family Resource Centers. As a result of the program, 95% of participants reported improved personal
Healthy Me, Healthy You

According to the Robert Wood Johnson County Health Rankings, in Hopkins County, respondents reported an average of 4.5 unhealthy days per month in the last year. For children, being ill leads to absenteeism from school and missing important educational information.

In an effort to combat the high incidence of illness and absenteeism in Hopkins County Schools, the Hopkins County Agent for Family and Consumer Sciences approached the Family Resource and Youth Services Coordinators at two local elementary schools. They formed a partnership, along with Physical Education teachers, to educate students on proper hand washing and personal hygiene practices. The Extension Agent has since led “Healthy Me, Healthy You” programs at both elementary schools twice a year, for all students, for the past four years.

“Reese had the most amazing time (at 4-H Camp)! She has talked and talked and talked about all of the songs, games and activities she was a part of! Thanks to each of you for your hard work, dedication, and incredible passion to patiently work with children! You are all appreciated more than you will ever know! Thank you!” ~ Heather Lynn via Facebook

Students practiced using the six steps of hand washing and acted out scenarios to show how they could prevent the spread of germs in those situations. After the program, 92% of students demonstrated their ability to list at least three times when they should wash their hands, 94% correctly identified all six steps of hand washing, and 96% of students correctly explained why hand washing is important. Since the program was initially implemented in 2014, absenteeism at Pride Elementary School due to illness during peak cold and flu season has decreased consistently every year. Local health administrators credit students’ increased personal hygiene and hand washing to prevent the spread of germs for the decrease.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Education

According to the US Census Bureau, in Hopkins County there are more than 2,900 people over the age of 60 and more than 1,300 live alone. This can create challenges for individuals in regards to overall health, primarily physical and mental health, and nutritional needs.

The Nutrition Education Program in Hopkins County led a class that focused on healthy eating, budgeting and food safety in partnership with the Dawson Springs Senior Center. Throughout the lessons, 85% of the clients showed positive improvement in their overall diet, in which they are either consuming more fruits and/or vegetables or consuming more dairy or limiting added fats, sugars and sodium. Sixty percent are avoiding adding salt to their cooking and are reading food labels. These improvements are great successes, but the relationships that have formed is a much larger reason to celebrate. Clients come to hear new information about eating healthy, but also for the social aspects.

One client states, “This program gives me something to look forward to.” This program has given them an opportunity create new relationships with others who share a common interest - taking care of themselves for years to come.