Master Gardeners Enrich Their Community

In 2010, the Dillon County Master Gardeners organized as a non-profit to provide educational activities for local citizens. With the assistance of Area Horticulture Agent Grady Sampson, a Community Garden was developed at the City of Dillon’s new Wellness Center to provide healthy, fresh produce for the Helping Hands Food Pantry. The association has also provided training for local youth served by the S.C. Department of Juvenile Justice. In addition, more than 40 homeowners, county employees and city workers participated in “The Three Ps “ workshop. Amanda McNulty, co-host of “Making It Grow!” and Grady Sampson provided their Planting, Pruning and Propagating expertise.

FCL Provides Wealth of Their Wisdom

The Dillon County Family and Community Leaders (FCL) now have four clubs (formerly known as Home Demonstration Clubs) with a total of 39 members. Each club meets monthly with timely and enlightening lessons given by members. The South Carolina Family & Community Leaders (SCFCL) is a volunteer organization composed of over 2000 members statewide, extending the resources of the land grant universities to the people of South Carolina. Their mission is to improve the quality of life for individuals, families, and communities through fellowship, education, and service. The Dillon County FCL club officers (above) gratefully acknowledge the long-time service and contribution of Susan McIntyre, administrative assistant (now retired) in the Dillon County Extension office.
4-H Shooting Sports Program Teaches Responsibility

The South Carolina 4-H Youth Development program is part of a national system that teaches youth leadership, citizenship and life skills. 4-H uses a learn-by-doing approach, the involvement of caring adults, and the knowledge and resources of Clemson University and the nation’s Land Grant University system to empower youth to become healthy, productive and contributing members of society. Through the 4-H Shooting sports program, youth learn basic safety information, various shooting disciplines such as archery, BB gun, muzzle loading, piston, rifle and shotgun, while developing confidence and concentration. Dillon County’s 4-H Shooting Sports program has two shot gun programs – trap and skeet training with two divisions: Junior and Senior. The county program is directed by Mr. Bill Aston of Latta with assistance from the Latta Gun Club.

Joint Effort Improves Landowners’ Forest Management Skills

Recognizing that Dillon County has a need for education on management of forest resources, a group of several landowners gathered at the local Fire Department on an October night to discuss forming a non-profit to provide research-based education and training. Lynn Leclair, a stewardship forester with the S.C. Forestry Commission, said a landowners association can be a valuable source of information about resources and programs available. She said that many landowners are interested in timber development, wildlife habitat, aesthetics, and developing forest management plans. According to George Fontaine, a landowners association can provide a great learning opportunity and the chance to meet other landowners and foresters, to see good management practices, and to see what other people are doing with their land, while involving the next generation of landowners in decision-making. He spoke about the S.C. Forestry Association, their accomplishments, services and programs. Roger Cooper of the Dillon County Natural Resources Conservation Service spoke briefly about EQIP, the conservation stewardship program, and wildlife habitat program and encouraged those present to participate in NRCS programs. Dickie Sherman, a member of the Dillon County Forestry Commission, led the meeting to form the Dillon County Forestry Association. Sherman would like the group to go on field trips, get sponsors for meals and bring in speakers depending on the wishes of the group. Initially, dues will be $5 and meetings will be quarterly. The group elected officers and directors. Several workshops have already been taught by forestry experts from the surrounding area.

Tomato Contest Brings Out the Best

More than twenty Dillon County farmers and gardeners enter the annual tomato contest. An awards banquet dinner was held to determine which grower had the best tasting raw tomato and which recipe tasted best using raw and cooked tomatoes. The top six tomato growers included Haywood Proctor, Pam Sullivan, Will Rowell, Tom Rowland (below left), Bud Bethea, and our 2010 first place winner, Junior Berry (below right).
Extension Specialist Helps Peanut Farmers’ Profitability

Dillon County peanut producers benefited from a visit by Clemson University's peanut specialist, Dr. Jay Chapin, as well as Clemson Extension area agronomy agent Trish DeHond on Thursday, July 1, 2010. Weed management, nutrient status, and disease and insect control were discussed with growers in several locations in Latta, Dillon and Minturn. Chapin was impressed by the peanuts (and growers) in Dillon County; a high yield is expected. Chapin (left), Alan Gaddy and DeHond (right) check roots for nodules containing nitrogen-fixing bacteria in a peanut field at Gaddy's Crossroads.  Photo by Jim Atkins, Palmetto Ag.

Pest Management Guidelines Distributed

Trish DeHond
Area Agronomy Agent
Darlington, Dillon and Marlboro Counties

Due to financial constraints, Clemson Extension was only able to publish a limited number of the 2010 Pest Management Handbook for Field Crops, which were provided at no cost by Clemson University’s Pesticide Information Program and Edisto Research and Education Center. The handbook covers primarily row crops such as corn, cotton, peanut, small grains, soybeans & tobacco as well as some information on forages, aquatic weeds, stored grains, adjuvants, and pesticide safety. All available 2010 copies were distributed by agronomy agent Trish DeHond to the agricultural chemical dealers and farm service centers in the three county area, as well as to the three county extension offices. In January, the 2011 edition will be available at a cost of $25 per copy. The current handbook is also available online at http://www.clemson.edu/extension/rowcrops/pest/index.html

Farm-City Partnership Improves Quality of Life

Dillon County Farm-City Week is a local community program that cultivates a better understanding between rural and urban residents. Held nation-wide grassroots Farm-City events offer the opportunity to share in the unique bond that unites our food producing and manufacturing families. Dillon County Extension partnered with the Dillon County Chamber of Commerce, Dillon Kiwanis Club, Dillon County Soil and Water Conservation District to organize the annual Farm-City tour, luncheon and awards banquet, with support from local sponsors. The November 23, 2009 educational tour stopped at Helping Hands Food Pantry, SAS Inc., Carl’s IGA, Wal-Mart, C&R Tractors (shown above), and Al Williams Organic Farm.
Palmetto Leadership Strengthens Rural Areas

Because opportunities for education and employment are limited, rural communities may be overlooked, under-funded, and under-valued. Rural communities contain most of our natural resources, are full of talented people and are comparatively strong in cultural values, family ties, and self-reliance. In order to build on these strengths, meet current economic challenges, and take advantage of new opportunities, Clemson Institute for Economic and Community Development and the Dillon County Chamber of Commerce partnered to conduct the 2009-2010 Palmetto Leadership Dillon County class. The goal was to identify leaders and potential leaders in Dillon County and expand their knowledge and skills to become more effective at creating positive change in their communities. Nineteen applicants representing various geographical areas, backgrounds, occupations, races, genders, and age groups were accepted into the class.

Expert speakers from all over the state presented topics such as leadership skill development, while addressing community issues and assets such as education, health care, government, tourism, economic development and quality of life. Classes included a combination of lectures, audio-visual media, small group and panel discussions, individual and group assignments, projects, and informational tours, with written evaluations conducted after each monthly session. The leadership graduates have overwhelmingly demonstrated an increased knowledge of issues and skill development and a “learning network” of community leaders was established. These 19 proud community leaders (shown left) now effectively work together, access resources, build partnerships and respond to issues and opportunities in Dillon County.