Sumter 4-H’er Recognized Nationally

4-H has experienced some new and exciting ventures this year. To start, the State 4-H Teen Council Program was lead by Christopher Sumpter, a Sumter County teen. In addition to serving as President of the State 4-H Teen Council, Christopher was awarded a trip to the National 4-H Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, and he was selected to serve on the National 4-H Design Team, which plans the National Conference. He is the second South Carolinian to hold this position. In addition to this office, he also served on the National Leadership Team. Chris is the first South Carolinian to achieve this honor.

Sumter Youth Place Third in “Iron Chef” Competition

Three youth from Sumter County competed in the “Healthy Lifestyle Competition.” Madison McTeer, Alton Jones, and Mandashia Isaac placed 3rd in the Cloverleaf (ages 9-11) division in the “Iron Chef” Competition. The SC 4-H Healthy Lifestyles Challenge, modeled after the Food Network’s “Iron Chef,” brought teens from across SC for a cook-off challenge at the SC State Fair. The event was held Saturday, October 23 — “SC 4-H Day.” The purpose of the SC 4-H Healthy Lifestyles Challenge was to allow 4-H members to demonstrate their culinary and food safety skills. Judges and observers were able to witness not only how well these young people can cook but how much they know about overall health, nutrition and wellness — skills to take them through life,” said Pam Arden, Ed.D., SC 4-H State Leader.
On-Farm Testing of Varieties Important to Area Growers

When a corn grower invests $400 per acre for out-of-pocket costs to grow an acre of corn, after the fertilizer investment, the second highest input in that cost is purchasing the seed. Once the seed is in the ground, his choices are over in respect to the right variety. Across the state, Extension agents establish on-farm variety tests with grower cooperators who are looking for facts. These tests offer comparisons of varieties which the seed companies offer for sale in the respective areas. The plots grown in our tri-county area are harvested and the data summarized with data from other county Extension tests. This information is placed on a website which growers can access or mailed direct to them. This on-going project benefits both farmers as well as agricultural seed dealers. The grower can see how a specific variety performed in all participating counties and how the yield averaged across the board. These county trials combined with data from the experiment stations give growers greater insight into what to expect from the varieties being promoted by the seed vendors.

Private Applicator Training Offered Locally

Clemson Extension offers training to anyone needing a license to use or supervise the use of agricultural pesticides labeled for “restricted use only.” This license is intended for commercial farmers, foresters or nursery operators only. Training was offered in early February, 2010, to a group of folks in the tri-county area. Anyone completing the full day training and making a minimum grade of 80 on the final exam (graded by the Department of Pesticide Regulation) is eligible for the license issued by the regulatory agency. The licensee must then earn five hours of recertification credit on that license to maintain eligibility for another five year block. This is an ongoing training provided by Clemson Extension in the county office that gives private applicators an opportunity to stay abreast of any pesticide issues that could affect them, their business, or the environment around them.

Rust Monitoring Project

Since the threat of Asian Soybean Rust arrived in the state several years back, Extension agents have been asked to help monitor the soybean crop in the counties on an annual basis, particularly in areas exhibiting humid conditions. We randomly select fields of differing maturity beans and monitor those fields from early bloom until the pod fill stage, the most susceptible growth stages for impact from the disease. With the price of soybeans hovering over $11 per acre and a normal yearly average of 25 to 30 bushels per acre, the potential impact on farms could be devastating if the disease were to go unchecked.

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Agricultural Impacts

Lee/Kershaw/Sumter Counties: 2009-10

Randy Cubbage, Agent

Weed Control Still a Significant Cost in Producing Corn and Soybeans

One of the main costs of producing either corn or soybeans relates to weed control -- specifically resistant pigweed. The average cost of herbicides used to minimize yield losses in both of these crops ranges from $35-$50 per acre, mainly to control the Palmer amaranth species of pigweed. An ongoing project, in cooperation with our state weed specialist, is collecting seeds from these weed plants near harvest time. We agents harvest seed from fields randomly selected fields that look suspicious to the problem of resistance to herbicides. Our specialist establishes tests over the winter to grow out new weeds from these seeds and treats them with herbicides representing the various families of weed killers registered for use on corn and soybean crops. This is to check for resistance to other herbicides formulations. More resistance continues to be documented each season as seed samples from new fields are sent to the Edisto Research & Education Center near Blackville for testing.
Lee Van Vlake serves as the livestock specialist for eleven counties. He planned, coordinated, and implemented 10 beef cattle programs in the Pee Dee Region. Over 350 producers participated in these programs. These programs included information on forages, general management practices, marketing, proper culling, fencing, and other practices associated with beef cattle management. Van Vlake assisted the Central Cattlemen’s Association on programming and implementing meetings. Members are from Sumter, Lee, and Clarendon Counties. He makes many farm visits on a weekly basis to assist and educate livestock clientele in the Pee Dee Region. Farm visits include education on forages, marketing, herd health, reproduction, bull selection, heifer selection, pasture management, fencing, facilities, equine management, goat production and many other facets of animal agriculture.

Fire Ant Demonstration Plots Program
In addition, this agent works with the Fire Ant Demonstration Plots Program. The focus of Fire Ant Demonstration Plots is to research how well fire ant baits work in a pasture or hayfield situation. Once these products are tested and researched, instructional programs are presented to livestock producers on selecting products and time of application.

Confined Animal Manure Program
As the Area Livestock Agent, Van Valke also works with the Confined Animal Manure Mangers. An owner or operator of an animal confinement facility must pass an examination to become a Certified Animal Waste Applicator. To help local farmers’ meet this requirement, Van Valke planned, coordinated, and implemented 9 CAMM trainings throughout the Pee Dee Region. The trainings were held in Sumter, Florence, Dillon, Kershaw, Lee, and Darlington Counties.
Horticulture Agent- Amanda McNulty

Amanda McNulty uses her public speaking skills to share Clemson’s research-based information in a lively and entertaining manner at civic and social organizations throughout the area. She also serves as co-host on ETV’s “Making It Grow” gardening program which reaches 130,000 viewers and which this past year garnered yet another Emmy award. She uses these events to promote Swan Lake Gardens and other Sumter features as a family or garden-club destination (including descriptions of the many fine restaurants visitors can enjoy).

McNulty writes columns for both the Sumter Item and the State newspaper, reaching over 180,000 readers through these outlets. Her radio spots, with gardening tidbits, are heard by listeners across the state on ETV Radio.

We strive to ensure that our Extension office serves as a welcoming and vibrant center of horticultural knowledge in the Sumter community.

Gardening is Alive in Sumter

Gardening is alive and well in Sumter County. Agent McNulty trained eighteen new master gardeners who joined the over 200 active members who serve the Sumter community. Major master gardener projects include maintaining and expanding the three specialty gardens at Swan Lake Iris Gardens. The Braille, Chocolate and Butterfly Gardens attract thousands of visitors each year who enjoy the familiar and unusual plants found there and the insects they attract.

In the heart of our downtown business district, these stalwart gardeners tend Volunteer Park which provides a lovely frame for our Chamber of Commerce office and its visitors. Most important, perhaps is the time they spend in the Sumter Extension office, answering questions from clients and callers. In the past fiscal year, Sumter County Master Gardeners gave 3,377 hours to the community, which included providing information or assistance to 18,000 persons.

The Carolina Clear Storm Water program is showcased in Sumter by a demonstration water garden which captures runoff from the County fueling station. The water flows into a man-made swale where native plants and soil cleanse the runoff of pollutants before it returns to the water table. Homeowners have been excited about building their own rain barrels at two workshops coordinated by Clemson Extension, Carolina Clear, and Sumter County Public Works.

The fifth annual cleanup at Manchester State Forest resulted in over 15 tons of debris being collected in the “Squadron Showdown” featuring airmen from Shaw Air Force Base. Clemson Extension, along with Sumter County and the SC Department of Forestry, organize this highly successful event and reward our participants with a celebratory cookout.

With $5000 in grant funds awarded from Palmetto Pride, Clemson Extension, Sumter County, purchased landscape material for Swan Lake Iris Gardens, several community recycling-convenience centers, and replaced trees at the County Government complex. Our focus has been on installing native plants and grasses to demonstrate maintenance and wildlife friendly landscapes.

$5000 Palmetto Pride Grant Helps Beautify Swan Lake Gardens

With $5000 in grant funds awarded from Palmetto Pride, Clemson Extension, Sumter County, purchased landscape material for Swan Lake Iris Gardens, several community recycling-convenience centers, and replaced trees at the County Government complex. Our focus has been on installing native plants and grasses to demonstrate maintenance and wildlife friendly landscapes.
What’s New in EFNEP?

What’s new with EFNEP (Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program) in Sumter County? Nutrition Educator Debheror Walker works diligently to maintain the quality of programming that Clemson Extension as a whole delivers. As an EFNEP coordinator, Walker directs clients into other Extension program areas and also designs volunteer opportunities for those individuals. “These activities not only help me, as a staff member, but also helps my clients to develop their organizational and communication skills as they give back to their communities,” Debheror Walker says. “Two members of my adult education classes demonstrated that volunteerism with a support from a special EFNEP grant project.”

Students in her adult education class who were short of required hours, were given the opportunity to make up that time working with Walker at an educational event. Two members immediately volunteered. Client A and Client B were at the community center in Rembert bright and early one Saturday morning to help off load vehicles, set up, and man eight games. This special statewide grant, provided by the Southeast Product Council, requires that each NEA (Nutrition Educator Assistant) puts on a “Veg Olympics” event which incorporates physical activities using fruits and vegetables. Examples are Coconut bowling, Cucumber Toss, Orange Bobbing, and the old-fashioned Potato Sack Race. The Rembert Community Center invited EFNEP to participate in this community wide event. Walker praised her young adult volunteers for their attention to instructions and supervision of the youth playing these games. Nutrition Educators strive to instill a desire for community involvement as well as healthy nutrition choices in their clients. Debheror Walker stresses her motto of “Don’t just look for what YOU can GET but also look for what you can GIVE.”

Sumter EFNEP coordinated training classes with Sumter Housing Authority residents, Rubeye J. Johnson Head Start, the Boys & Girls Club, Lakewood & Crestwood High Schools~Teen Parents class, and Camp Bob Cooper, and 4-H cooking school. Also, after school classes were presented at the Rafting Creek and Birnie Hope Community Centers along with exhibits at the Wateree Community Action National Fair and Sumter County Fair. Walker was a planning committee member for EFNEP’s 40th Anniversary celebration held in Columbia. She won “State Team Award” along with co-worker Marylene Walker, for their accomplishments in a special recertification class conducted at the University of South Carolina, Sumter, for District # 17 PERK after-school teachers.

4-H Keeps It Real

The Sumter County 4-H program strives to keep innovative and educational programs available to the youth in Sumter County.

4-H Scrapbooking Class

4-H Cooking Class

Terri Sumpter, 4-H Agent was recognized at the National 4-H Association Conference in Phoenix, Arizona with the Meritorious Service Award in recognition of an outstanding career of leadership and professional service to the 4-H Program.
The Heart of It All

Our office, with agents wearing multiple hats and serving multiple counties, can be a little discombobulating at times. But we stay centered, sane, and effective due to the support that comes from our Administrative Assistant, aka, head honcho, Pat McDaniel. She answers the phones (we are one of the last places where a real person says, “Hello”), assures that our finances are in order, and keeps tabs on the day to day organization of programs, meetings, schedules, and equipment. A certified Master Gardener, she can help callers and walk-in clients with many questions and knows where to direct them when she can’t.

In addition to supporting the four Extension agents, Pat McDaniel extends her managerial expertise to Rowland Alston of Making It Grow, Steve Sanderson, Ag Education associate, the Sumter Cattlemen’s Association, the Family and Community Leaders, and occasionally lends a hand to the Sumter Master Gardeners’ Association. And manages to smile through it all.

“Making It Grow,” ETV’s home gardening show, receives administrative support from the Sumter Extension Office. This weekly program which answers call-in questions reaches over 130,000 viewers and has won multiple Emmy Awards. Rowland Alston is the host of “Making It Grow,” and Sumter Agent Amanda McNulty serves as co-host. The show is aired live from Sumter’s WRJA Studio. Team “Making It Grow” travels the Palmetto State, recording the fascinating places and people who live here. In partnership with the SC Department of Agriculture, a new feature highlights certified SC growers and producers.

The Chat Room, hosted by Debbie Hayes, is a favorite spot for gardeners to exchange helpful tips. Visit www.mig.org for more information.

Agricultural Education in Sumter County

Sumter Extension provides space and support to Steve Sanderson, Associate State Director of Agricultural Education programs in the Pee Dee and Lower State regions.

All public schools in Sumter County are eligible for the Agricultural Education curricula. Lakewood and Crestwood High Schools and the Sumter County Career Center have active, on-going programs, focusing on environmental and natural resources management and/or horticulture.

The FFA (originally Future Farmers of America) is an integral part of all agricultural education programs in Sumter County. This student leadership component offers members opportunities to participate in local, state, and national activities. The current State FFA Vice President is Holly Benenhaley from Lakewood High School.

Sumter County also has one of the state’s most active Young Farmer and Agribusiness Association chapters, having been recognized as the State Chapter of the Year and home of three past state presidents and five past regional vice presidents. Additionally, Sumter is the proud home of two State Farmer of the Year winners. The chapter consistently wins numerous awards each year and, as a result, was named the Southeast Region Adult Education Program of the Year by the National Association of Agricultural Educators, added to its recognition as the SC program of the year by the state-wide association.
Since 2008 SC Operation Military Kids has supported seven Family Resiliency Retreats. These retreats are designed specifically for military families that have or have had a family member deployed. Family Retreats have hosted grandparents raising grandchildren while their single parent son or daughter is deployed. OIF and OEF military members and their families and Wounded Warriors and their families. Retreats are typically held in a tranquil mountain or refreshing beach setting. Though some resiliency skills trainings are held, families are given plenty of opportunity to participate in “family” activities of their choosing….like making ice cream sundaes.

“I started fishing at 2:00 pm and fished until 3:00 am. I taught my special needs son to fish; he caught his first fish. I did not take any of the 23 meds I have until I got up this morning - and I slept straight through. This is the first time I have slept through the night since I got back from Afghanistan,” stated one Wounded Warrior at an OMK Family Resiliency Retreat.
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EFNEP Nutrition Educator-Debheror Walker Wins Award

Debheror Walker, EFNEP Nutrition Educator, and Marylene Walker received second place for the Cooperative Extension Service Team Award. Debheror and Marylene received honors for the “Cheer for Health! Step up to a Healthier You” program. They will receive $500 in program money to continue the program.

4-H Sewing Project