Youth learn ing how to select vegetables.

We used funding from South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control to implement a pilot program of cooking classes for youth. The classes promoted healthy eating and nutrition. The youth shopped at the Colleton Farmers Market for fresh vegetables and then learned to prepare the vegetables at the attached Commercial Kitchen. A chef taught the students about food safety and led them through the steps of preparation such as washing and cutting the vegetables, and adding ingredients to prepare recipes such as Watermelon and Cucumber Salad. The youth participants took home samples of the recipes, a lettuce knife for cutting vegetables at home, and a gift certificate for purchasing vegetables from the Farmers Market. Staff from the Colleton Commercial Kitchen donated their time to teach the youth.
Local Youth Attend 4-H Congress  
By Dawn Stuckey

4-H and Youth Development agents work closely with state extension specialists and researchers located on campus and at the various research and education centers located across the state. They provide expertise in topics including animal science and agriculture, natural resources and the environment, gardening, leadership and citizenship, personal growth and development, science, and engineering and technology, including robotics.

The South Carolina State 4-H Congress and Awards Banquet mark the end of the 4-H year. Student members from across the state assemble together for four days of celebration, recognition of their efforts in the 4-H program, and to show the world that 4-H is not a Pastime, but a Passion! Colleton County resident Geneffer Sweatman was among those teenagers. During this year’s Congress, Geneffer was elected to serve on the South Carolina State 4-H Teen Council as Public Relations Coordinator. Because of her hard work and dedication to 4-H, Geneffer was awarded a small scholarship from ArborOne Farm Credit and sponsorship from the 4-H Fund to represent South Carolina at the National 4-H Congress. Geneffer is the daughter of Christy & Chris Sweatman of Smoaks, SC.

Master Gardener Association active in Colleton County  
By Laura Lee Rose

The Clemson Extension Master Gardener Program trains, selects, and utilizes knowledgeable volunteers to facilitate the educational work of the local Consumer Horticulture Agent, by delivering researched-based information to citizens of the state. The title Master Gardener is given to a person who completes the Clemson Extension Training plus 40 hours of volunteer service in the county. Colleton Master Gardeners serve on advisory boards, community outreach, and service organizations. Our Master Gardener volunteers partnered with community gardens, beautification projects and historic preservation. Master Gardeners reported 300 hours of educational and community service and served over 1,600 clients or contacts. The economic value to local residents is $5,560 in volunteer service.

Brown Bag Lunches offer Gardening Tips  
By Laura Lee Rose

Our monthly Brown Bag Lunch is a popular program at the Colleton Extension Office. Residents are encouraged to bring a lunch and discuss gardening topics. There is an announced program which lasts an hour with demonstrations, fact sheets, planting schedules or related handouts. There is no charge for the class; attendance and participation are consistent and lively with about 10-12 at each meeting. Topics focused on gardening: winter garden chores, pruning tools and techniques, getting ready for spring, warm season vegetables, ten tips for healthy lawn, shade garden, plant pest problems, and soils.

The Colleton Extension Office serves over 150 residents by providing soil, irrigation water, and plant problem sampling each year to county residents. Our friendly staff and volunteers answer home and garden questions, research solutions, and give timely feedback to over 500 phone calls, emails, and office visits a year. County Extension Agents serve on local advisory boards and assist schools, gardens, libraries, and other county agencies, by offering technical guidance, relevant educational programs, newspaper articles, and demonstrations.

In celebration of Arbor Day, we distributed 300 native trees to residents of Colleton County. The trees were purchased from the South Carolina Forestry Commission and donated to residents and City of Walterboro.
Farm Safety Programs Increase Awareness of Potential Dangers on the Farm

By Marion Barnes

Farming remains one of the most hazardous industries in the United States with one of the highest fatality rates per 100,000 workers in the nation and surpasses all other industries including mining, construction and manufacturing. Farmers and their families are exposed to hazards inherent to farming situations such as tractors, machinery, livestock and pesticides. These hazards can have a specific impact on the safety and health of the farm family.

Farmers and farm workers experience one of the highest rates of hearing loss among all occupations due to the noisy environments in which they work and live. While noise induced hearing loss (NIHL) is not fatal, it can seriously degrade the quality of life of those affected. The sad part is that noise induced hearing loss (NIHL) is permanent and irreversible but it is preventable.

Two farm safety presentations titled, Noise Induced Hearing Loss- It’s Preventable, were given by Senior County Extension Agent Marion Barnes to the Low Country Cattlemen’s and the Salkehatchie Cattlemen’s Association’s during September. Learning objectives for these programs included how noise is measured, how noise can damage your hearing and steps to prevent noise induced hearing loss. Fifty-five producers from Colleton, Hampton, Allendale and surrounding counties attended these meetings. Those attending the presentations indicated an increase of awareness of the negative impacts that NIHL has on their lives and would take steps for preventing damage to their hearing when working in noisy environments in the future.

On April 9, 2016 a Hay Production Field Day was held at the Edisto Research and Education Center near Blackville, S.C. A presentation by Senior County Extension Agent Marion Barnes titled, Putting Up Hay the Safe Way was one of the many topics included at the field day. Farm safety practices while baling, transporting and storing hay were outlined during the presentation. Fifty-five producers were in attendance. Seventy percent rated the presentation as excellent.

In late May and early June, Tropical Storms Bonnie and Colin hit the SC low country dumping over a foot of rainfall in some areas of Colleton and Hampton counties in just a matter of days. This excessive amount of rainfall saturated soils, leaving cropland soaked and farmers unable to plant and tend their crops. Stuck and bogged-down equipment was a common site in these areas as farmers struggled to get back into their fields. Extracting farm equipment mired in mud can be a dangerous task if not preformed correctly. Seeing the need to educate producers on extracting stuck equipment safely, Clemson Extension distributed 50 copies of a farm safety publication from Purdue University titled, Extracting Stuck Equipment Safely: How to Avoid Costly & Painful Incidences to area farmers. This publication contains helpful information and advice for anyone attempting to extract farm equipment from the mud. Every producer who received a copy of this publication offered positive comments concerning the usefulness of the publication as well as the importance of farm safety on their operations.

Farm Aid for 2015 Flood

The SC legislation for Farm Aid provided a life-line for farmers, not a bail-out according to Commissioner Hugh Weathers. Applications confirmed earlier estimates of 75% crop loss as a result of the flood. Only 37% of those losses were covered by crop insurance. Statewide 1,244 farmers were approved for a total award of $35,512,560. Qualified farmers in Colleton County received a total of $566,179. Clemson Extension Agents worked closely with the SC Department of Agriculture and local and state farmers. Thank you to our Legislators for their dedication in assisting our agricultural industry.
Mobile Farmers Market Targets Underserved Communities

By Alta Mae Marvin

The goal for the Mobile Farmers Market is to increase the accessibility of fresh fruits and vegetables to underserved communities. The mobile market is offered on Wednesdays for 8 weeks during the summer at 7 of our subsidized housing complexes. Each week between 50 and 75 families visit the Mobile Market; we enjoy talking with children as they purchase fruits and some vegetables. We accept SNAP and hand out healthy recipes and nutrition information to anyone visiting the mobile market.

In addition to our Mobile Market, we offer a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) style market to African American Churches. Families pay $5 each week and we delivered the vegetables and fruits to the participating churches where the families pick up their basket of vegetables. The CSA market expanded from 5 weeks in 2015 to 8 weeks this year. We worked with 3 churches to reach over 40 families each week.