Dorchester County – Connecting Local Youth to 4-H

4-H Youth Development Programs are available year round. Youth can get involved in 4-H through community clubs, school programs, or as a family. 4-H is working hard to promote local and state 4-H activities and encourage youth and family participation.

In schools, 4-H staff utilized the Disney Conservation Funds Connecting Youth To Nature 4-H grant to visit 500 7th grade students during the 2015-16 school year. This was the first time many of the students had exposure to 4-H.

For a broad reach 4-H worked with the 2015 Coastal Carolina Fair to display youth exhibits, 4-H information, and to host 4-H competitions and activities. 4-H staff and volunteers attended an additional 4 other community events/festivals. 4-H Clubs have also been working hard promoting 4-H.

Last but not least, 4-H and the Water Resource team worked together to host a 4-H2O water exploration camp during the summer. Over 40 youth attended the camps and were exposed to 4-H as well as the natural world around them. Efforts continue to promote 4-H involvement.

Mission Statement
The mission of the Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service is to provide sound, scientifically based information to South Carolinians and help them use that information to improve the quality of their lives.
Forestry Economic Impact and the Tri-County Forestry Association

The forest industry has a total economic impact of $18.6 billion annually and exports a total $1.5 billion. Forestry is number one in the state’s manufacturing industry in jobs (90,320) and payroll ($4.5 billion). Timber is the number one harvested commodity crop at $759 million annually and the number one export by volume out of the Charleston port. In South Carolina, forested land accounts for 68% of the total land area which equates to 13.1 million acres of forest land.

The Tri-County Forestry Association is a group consisting of private landowners, consultants, non-profits, government agencies and other individuals that have interest in our natural resources. The group meets quarterly and provides educational content on many subjects related to forestry, wildlife and the environment. Legislative updates and new proposed laws and regulations are also discussed.

The Association covers Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester counties and is over 100 members strong. To join the Association contact Derrick Phinney at Clemson Extension dphinne@clemson.edu or 843-563-0135 x3.

Clemson Extension Master Gardeners at Home in Summerville

Through an innovative public-private partnership, Clemson Extension Master Gardeners have found a new office location in the Westrock development, Summers Corner. A “community in a garden”, Summers Corner is the only housing development in the state to adopt the Clemson Extension Carolina Yards program, incorporating environmentally friendly land practices into the planned landscape as well as HOA documents for residents. The new site allows Master Gardeners to serve members of the entire community throughout Dorchester County, providing gardening advice and collecting soil samples from a lovely garden setting. In the spring of 2016, the Master Gardeners installed a pollinator garden featuring native plants. In June, a kitchen garden with herbs and vegetables was designed and installed. On April 23, 2016, Team Making It Grow held an unplugged show onsite that was very well attended. Segments filmed during the day were later used in a show. Throughout the year, the Tri County Master Gardeners have participated in the on site farmers market and taught gardening classes at Summers Corner.

Cover Crop and Irrigation Management Field Day

In September 2015, Clemson Extension agent Rebecca Hellmuth collaborated with Jeff Lucas, District Conservationist with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), to hold a Cover Crop and Irrigation Management Field Day in Reevesville, SC. The field day gave growers an opportunity to learn how they can skip fertilizer treatments and rely on cover crops for the nutrients that would feed their cash crops. A mix of clover, vetch and radish was planted in September 2015, to serve as winter cover on about 100 acres of cornfield. In late March, the cover was killed and tilled into the soil, which added an estimated 90 pounds per acre of nitrogen to the test field. As part of a trial test with the NRCS, some fertilizer treatments were skipped in part of that field. In the end, yields were close to those where more fertilizer was applied. Cover crops offer several potential benefits. They add nutrients, suppress weed growth, reduce erosion and increase soil organic matter content, which helps soil retain water and nutrients.

A demonstration showing the movement of water and nutrients through soil was done by Hellmuth using a “blue dye test.” Blue dye was placed on the soil surface. The equivalent of one inch of water to simulate irrigation was applied. After digging down into the soil profile, the dye could be seen 15 inches deep. Building up organic matter by planting cover crops can help prevent that leaching and retain those nutrients and water in the soil’s root zone. NRCS agronomist Gordon Mikell said the roots of cover crops also may reduce soil compaction. Roots cannot penetrate soil compacted at 300 pounds per square inch, which is why many farmers till. “We think these covers can be our tillage tool,” Mikell said. Growers enjoyed a delicious lunch sponsored by the Dorchester Soil and Water Conservation District. Seventy-nine growers and industry representatives attended the field day.

Extension Office

The Clemson University Extension Service is proud to deliver research-based information in the fields of agriculture, forestry & natural resources, economic and community development, food safety and nutrition, 4-H and consumer horticulture in Dorchester County. The Dorchester County Extension Office has seven Extension Agents covering the county and specialists located at the RECs. Our Extension Agents work to address the diverse needs of our community engaging stakeholder groups ranging from farmers to home gardeners, K-12 youth to university students, land managers to landscape professionals and engineers.
The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program - EFNEP

EFNEP was established in South Carolina by the USDA in 1969 as a pilot project in response to the increasing recognition of poverty in America and the link between poverty and malnutrition. Over the past forty-seven years the main objectives of EFNEP have been to help limited resource families, especially those with young children, to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and changed behaviors necessary for nutritionally sound diets, and to contribute to their personal development and the improvement of total family diet and nutritional welfare. EFNEP has also conducted trainings for public school teachers, school food service workers, child care providers and various agencies and organizations that provide services to families with limited resources.

Food Safety and Nutrition

Food Safety and Nutrition Youth programs are offered through 4-H Youth Development Program. A local 4-H volunteer leader requested programs for children in St. George area. The response was a 10 hour Healthy Lifestyles Daycamp held in July at the Extension Office in St. George. Youth learned about nutrition while practicing cooking skills, teamwork, kitchen safety and more. The children were introduced to food preservation by canning salsa to submit as 4-H Fair exhibits. They prepared dishes using fresh fruits and vegetables and received cooking experiments and activities to practice at home. It is hoped that the children will eventually participate in the SC 4-H Healthy Lifestyles Challenge, a comprehensive food and nutrition contest held annually at the SC State Fair.

Requests for adult canning classes were received by the Food Safety agent. Participants are taught canning skills through a hands-on approach instead of lectures. A pressure canning class was held at the St. George Extension Office for persons who wanted to be able to safely can vegetables at home and learn how to use a pressure canner safely. A second class was held at Bethel AME Church, also in St. George for a ladies group. The church kitchen and fellowship hall provided a space suitable for preparation and processing a fruit jam.

Nutrition Education programs are provided to local Senior Citizens Centers by the Food Safety and Nutrition Agents statewide. The local agent meets regularly with the St. George and Summerville groups. Lesson topics have included Food Safety for Seniors, A Few Simple Things Seniors Can Do To Improve Health, Food Myths…Fruits and Veggies From A Can Are Bad For You, Freezing Vegetables, and a four lesson series titled Eat Smart, Live Strong which encourages seniors to include more physical activity and fruits and vegetables in their daily routine.

Water Resources

Clemson’s Carolina Clear program organized and administers the Ashley Cooper Stormwater Education Consortium (ACSEC). The ACSEC regional partnership includes Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester Counties, as well as the City of Charleston, City of Folly Beach, City of Goose Creek, City of Hanahan, City of Isle of Palms, Town of Lincolnville, City of North Charleston, Town of James Island, Town of Mount Pleasant, Town of Sullivan’s Island, and the Town of Summerville. The communities, working alongside Clemson Extension Services Carolina Clear program and more than twenty regional education providers, are working together to educate and involve Tri-County residents in protecting water quality. These activities also help communities meet NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) Phase II permit requirements for public education and public involvement.

ACSEC programming addresses pollution management through work with multiple audiences in our community, including residents and home gardeners, commercial restaurant owners, pond management and landscape professionals, youth and K-12 educators, and more.
South Carolina experienced historic rains and flooding during October of 2015. As a result of the torrential rains, many Lowcountry farmers lost most, if not all of their fall crops. Many of the crops died as being under water too long, while others died weeks later as a result of a compromised root system. Of the crops that did survive, farmers were not allowed to sell any crops due to food safety concerns. An estimated 70% of all crops were lost during the month of October with some farms losing everything they had planted at the time. A conservative estimate of 400 million dollars’ worth of crop loss was reported for the entire state of South Carolina by the SC Department of Agriculture. Lowcountry farmers experienced significant financial losses that jeopardized their farming operations. Clemson Extension responded by taking damage assessments in the weeks following the floods and documenting crop and financial losses. Clemson Extension urged lawmakers and policy makers to help secure funding to help out farmers during their financial crisis. When the SC Department of Agriculture announced that 40 million dollars (FarmAid) was available to growers statewide, Clemson Extension held a series of statewide workshops to train growers on how to apply for funding. Once the meetings were over local agents assisted farmers on-farm and in the Dorchester County Office for weeks to help farmers correctly fill out their paperwork. As a result, Dorchester County farmers re-cooped $851,000 in relief money to help their operations stay afloat. The $851,000 payout to local farmers was just 10% of the estimated loss in Dorchester County. To date, no local farms have been put out of business due to the October floods.