Union County 4-H’ers extended their “hands for larger service”, as the 4-H pledge states, beginning with a *Christmas in July* daycamp, July 6-7, 2016. For their community service project this year, our 4-H’ers reached out to make a difference in the lives of foster children in the Union County area. Union County Foster Parent’s Association president, Chris Vaughan, said that many times when children are removed from their homes to be placed in foster care, they literally have nothing but the clothes they are wearing. This is a time of anxiety and stress for a child, as they have recently been removed from their home, and are being moved to a new, unknown foster home. While we cannot change the circumstances these children have already experienced, we would like to at least provide a tangible source of comfort and hope for the journey ahead.

Working with the Union County Foster Parent’s Association and our local Department of Social Services, our 4-H’ers filled bookbags with items such as combs, brushes, toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap and other toiletry items. They also asked the community to donate some “comfort” items for each bag, such as pajamas, throws, small toys, games, color books, journals for older youth, reading books, flashlights, art supplies, nonperishable foods/snacks, diapers, bibs, wipes...just anything the foster child could call his own. The bookbag is theirs to keep, and take with them to their new foster home.

One of the local elementary schools donated forty new bookbags for the service project. Each bookbag was labeled boy/girl, and classified by age groups: birth to four, five to eight, nine to thirteen, and fourteen to eighteen. During the *Christmas in July* daycamp, 4-H’ers made and stuffed teddy bears to go in each bookbag. They placed a tag around each of the bears’ necks that reads *This Beary Special Friend was Made Just For You by Union County 4-H Members*. They also decorated Christmas ornaments, and painted sun catchers for each bag. Several local business donated gift cards, which enabled the 4-H’ers to purchase additional items for the children. Two social workers from DSS, and the president of the Union County Foster Parent’s Association came out to speak with our group during the daycamp. By the end of the summer, 25 bags were filled and delivered to the Union County Department of Social Services, ready to be given to foster children already placed in the county, as well as to ones just entering the system.

This service project is ongoing, with additional donations still coming in. Our goal is to fill the remaining bookbags by the end of the year, and deliver them to DSS and the Union County Foster Parent’s Association. In order to finish filling the bags, we asked everyone to bring at least one donation to our 4-H Awards Night Program on November 19th. The *Christmas in July* service project has been one of our most rewarding ever. Our 4-H’ers have been so excited to have had the opportunity to make a small difference in the life of another child.
On February 25, 2016, Cherokee, Spartanburg, and Union Counties held a joint meeting on coyote control. The meeting was held in Jonesville, SC, which was a central location between all three counties. Coyote management has become a hot topic across the state of South Carolina. They have a significant impact on wildlife and domestic animals. The workshop provided the basic information on coyote biology as well as demonstrations for trapping coyotes.

We partnered with the SC Department of Natural Resources and the Natural Resource Conservation Service to reach as many people as possible. We had a good turnout from all counties involved. Overall we had 52 people attend the meeting and actually had to close registration due to the limited size of the facility. Below are some of the results from a short evaluation conducted after the meeting.

What County do you live/hunt/manage land?
- Cherokee – 19% of Participants
- Spartanburg – 31% of Participants
- Union – 44% of participants
- No Answer – 6% of participants

Did you find tonight's Workshops beneficial?
- Yes – 100%
- No – 0%

Breakdown of Participants (They could circle more than one Category)
- Landowner/Manager – 81% of Participants
- Hunter – 50% of Participants
- Outdoor Enthusiast – 31% of participants
- No Answer – 6% of participants

Nutritional Education To Benefit Youth

On February 29, 2016, at the Union County Extension Office, a group of 18 ladies, that are members of Delta Kappa Gamma Sorority, were taught lessons from the EFNEP Curriculum “Eating Smart, Being Active”.

Those attending were both retired and current teachers. They needed to learn how to prepare healthy snacks for after school programs and church programs. They were concerned about preparing snacks with less sugar and fats. Lessons taught were “Make a Change”, “Plan, Shop, and Save”, “Fruits and Veggies”, and “Reducing Sugar and Fats In Our Diet”. There was lecture time, as well as hands-on demonstrations. The sugar tubes were used as a visual to show how much sugar can be found in certain foods and the different forms of sugar. These lessons will help them in selecting healthier snacks and lunches for the children they serve.

This was a great audience to teach. Their eagerness to learn more about how they can help make a difference with the children they serve was apparent. They took away knowledge in providing much healthier diets for them at the centers and schools.

This program lead to future programs in the schools and EFNEP working with them to help with better food choices and more awareness.

Union Co. Livestock Association—Veterinary Feed Directive

Clemson Cooperative Extension presented a program on November 17th, 2016, on the new Veterinary Feed Directive to area livestock producers in Union County. Approximately 30 producers gathered at Midway BBQ in Buffalo, SC as Dr. Patty Scharko, State Veterinarian with Clemson Livestock and Poultry Health, discussed how the new VFD will affect medicated feed purchases and antibiotic usage in their livestock. The new directive, which was originated by the FDA, significantly changes the availability and use of feed grade and water soluble antibiotics for livestock. This affects all species of livestock, including beef and dairy cows, goats, pigs, poultry, farmed fish, horses and honey bees. Dr. Scharko stressed several key points to the group: the new VFD rule places strong emphasis on the veterinarian-client-patient-relationship; VFDs will be for approved medications in approved doses only, eliminating extra-label drug use; and this new directive will not affect the producer’s ability to purchase and administer dewormers, injectable antibiotics, ionophores and coccidiostats. Producers at the meeting included beef and poultry producers, as well as some beekeepers. After the presentation, Dr. Scharko and Area Livestock Agent, Cassie Wycoff, were available to answer any questions.
This was the last year of the peach variety trial located at James Cooley’s Farm near Chesnee. Although cold damage was clearly evident this year, damage was not as severe as last year. In the picture below it shows one beautiful peach, but if you look closely other fruit were damaged and did not ripen properly. I have been very involved with the picking and evaluating of peach quality for many years and seeing it end is bitter sweet. I won’t miss the work part of it but the weekly taste testing part of it will be greatly missed. All the information learned was compiled and put into the new peach website (www.clemsonpeach.org). It helps growers select varieties that are available and that we now know will work for them. I continue to help new farms and existing select varieties that will work for them.

On a different note, I have also continued work on a stinkbug monitoring project in conjunction with USDA, ARS scientist Dr. Ted Cottrell. An intern, Mrs. Desirae Kissell is helping collect insect counts each week. Earlier this year we were able to determine when their populations began to rise using insect pheromones and trapping (see pic) and we were able to avoid the major damage we saw last year by applying a properly timed insecticide treatment. Her continued work will help us make timely decisions.

Lastly, in peaches we were able to evaluate new peach rootstocks on one farm and put in a new trial on another farm, each having different selections that are believed to help our growers with a devastating disease of Peach Oak Root Rot.

Strawberry wise, I have been included in a multi-state variety trial of two unreleased cultivars that are showing promise. Dr. Gina Fernandez, NCSU strawberry and blackberry breeder is the primary inspector on this grant that I and the upstate strawberry growers are interested in. This is an on-farm trial at Mr. James Cooley’s farm, Strawberry Hill USA. Yields, taste and quality of the fruit and plants will be measured.

I continued work on Spotted Wing Drosophila this year in blueberry and we now have 2 years of data and a better understanding of lower risk options that are now available. One in particular option uses red spheres with an attractant (sugar) and a pesticide in their caps to draw them in and kill them without using pesticides directly on the fruit. The idea is great in that it reduces pesticide use and it does better than the control but still doesn’t do as good a job as commercial pesticides registered for this use.

These are just a few of the projects I have enjoyed being a part of this past year. I am very thankful to the tax paying citizens of SC and to the growers in each of the upstate counties who allow me to use their farms as outdoor classrooms.
The local beekeeper’s association is still going strong in Union County. Their monthly meetings are held at the Clemson Extension Office, on the first Tuesday of each month. The meetings are well attended and membership numbers continue to grow.

The UCBA has had a number of guest speakers this past year. The various speakers have covered topics from hive splitting and mite control to commercial pollination. Two of this year’s meetings included field days at the bee yards of current members. One of those bee yards has a honey house, and members were able to tour that building.

This year the UCBA also purchased a vaporizer. The vaporizer uses oxalic acid to kill mites in the hive, without harming the bees, and it is available for check-out to club members.

Educating the public about honeybees and pollinators continues to be a priority with the association. They continue to visit local schools and community groups, and participate in farm shows and the local ag and art tours to spread the word.