

Report to the People

2023-2024 Program Year

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Happy results in a food preservation class.

Preserving the Harvest through Canning, Freezing, and Dehydrating

Helping individuals and families prepare healthier meals at home is a goal of Family and Consumers Sciences Extension. In addition to requesting classes to improve food preparation skills and knowledge, in recent years there has been an increase in requests for food preservation programs. Preserving foods by canning, freezing, and dehydrating may help reduce food costs and can be used to help prepare healthier foods at home. Boone County Cooperative Extension offers reliable, research-based information and recipes throughout the year along with annual food preservation classes. In 2023, 32 adults completed one or more of the food preservation sessions offered. Hands-on water bath canning, hands-on pressure canning, and lecture demonstration programs on freezing and dehydrating were offered. Mailed survey results completed at the close of a typical canning season showed that almost 400 pints of products were canned, frozen or dehydrated using information learned in the program. In addition participants indicated they were using research-based recipes and recommended methods. Extension will continue to be a reliable source of quality, research-based information, and recipes for home food preservation.



Preparing green beans to pressure can.

**Coming later this year
to Florence—
an additional Extension office!**

Cooperative Extension Service

Agriculture and Natural Resources
Family and Consumer Sciences
4-H Youth Development
Community and Economic Development

MARTIN-GATTON COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND ENVIRONMENT

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Lexington, KY 40506



Disabilities
accommodated
with prior notification.

The BARN: Farm Dinner Theater

The BARN: Farm Dinner Theater was developed as a strategy to address and explore the difficult topics of mental health and suicide within a rural community. UK Cooperative Extension agents from Northern Kentucky counties recruited youth and adult participants to experience the BARN Workshop and produce the Farm Dinner for their community.

Twenty eight participants attended the BARN workshop and collaborated with county agents and specialists to increase awareness and gain tools regarding mental well-being and suicide in their community. Participants learned to recognize and understand how to handle stress through activity- and discussion-based instruction. Additionally, each participant was able to identify mental health stigmas and discover personal skills. All 28 participants were trained in QPR (Question, Persuade, and Refer), an evidence-based suicide prevention program. Lastly, Workshop participants collaborated to create Farm Dinner Theater scripts to develop community awareness.

The workshop culminated in the participants delivering the BARN Farm Dinner Theater. There were 157 community members from Northern Kentucky area counties who attended, of which, 123 showed statistically significant increases in knowledge and understanding regarding self-care; mental well-being, the effects of stress; suicide as an important topic in their community; the need to talk about stress with family or friends; and reaching out to someone if feeling hopeless or having suicidal thoughts. Similarly, theater participants demonstrated statistically significant increases in behavioral intention regarding use of self-care to improve mental well-being; seeking resources to prevent suicide; talking and asking family and friends about their stress; telling someone if they're having suicidal thoughts; and using examples from the dinner theater to handle their stress.



Brighton Center Recovery Garden

In May of 2023, the Boone County Extension Office's horticulture department restarted a gardening program at the Brighton Center Recovery Center for Women. The Recovery Center had raised beds that were sitting empty prior to the start of the gardening program. The Extension Office's horticulture staff met with the women in recovery seven times. As part of the gardening program, twenty-two women helped plant, care for, and harvest various herbs and vegetable. Additionally, the women participated in trainings and topics including insect identification, flower arranging, seed starting, and plant/weed identification. The horticulture team also partnered with Extension Office's Nutrition and Education Program (NEP). NEP taught cooking and nutrition skills to the women once they reached later stages of recovery.

At the end of the program year, the horticulture team applied for and received a grant to improve the garden's infrastructure and buy tools. This grant will allow for the construction of a small fence to keep out rabbits, a real nuisance in 2023, and improve the soil's fertility through the addition of composts and proper topsoil.

Extension agents offered a program to address mental health and suicide.

Environmental Education

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the need for environmental careers are expected to grow over the next decade. Fostering a respect for nature in students K-12 may not only increase the desire to pursue such careers but according to the North American Association for Environmental Education (naaee), environmental education is shown to provide a wide variety of positive impacts on youth including:

- Improves knowledge in science, math, reading and writing
- Emotional and social skills (i.e. self-esteem, team work, leadership skills)
- Environmentally friendly behavior such as reducing water use, recycling, and community clean-ups
- Critical thinking, communication, problem solving
- Motivation to learn
- Civic interest and engagement

This past fall, Boone County Extension partnered with Boone County Schools to provide an unforgettable, hands-on experience to 1,136 Boone County students, teachers, and chaperones. These individuals were able to learn about their environment through guided, exploratory programs such as night hikes, pond ecosystems, KY wildlife, live animal encounters, and so much more. Students and chaperones learned about healthy ecosystems, adaptations, and how their behaviors impact their environment. Programs follow Next Generation Science Standards to enhance classroom learning and provide teachers and students with needed educational content.

Environmental Camp addressed more than environmental issues. Incorporated into the curriculum is team building exercises that created unity among the students that last throughout the school year. Students receive an experience they will never forget in addition to the retention of environmental topics needed for state testing and real-life experiences. Many students were able to explore their natural environment in ways they have never had the opportunity to do before. Teachers all agreed that Environmental Camp meets state standards and that student knowledge of environmental topics improve as a result of the field trip.



Boone County students attending Environmental Camp.



Backyard Poultry

Homeowners are still interested in learning about chickens and raising their own eggs in their backyards. It has become very popular and there are many questions asked throughout the year about getting started with chickens. We decided to put together a series of Backyard Poultry programs and have a backyard poultry program every 3 months, getting a little more details on production as we go. This first program was focused toward those homeowners that do not have chickens yet but are interested in getting started and just didn't know what they needed to do. There were a total of 15 people that attended the class and 12 of those did not have chickens or had ever raised chickens. Eggs was the main reason the participants wanted to raise their own chickens. Out of the 15 there, 13 of them said eggs, 1 said meat, and 1 said they wanted chickens for a 4-H project. Out of the 15, none of them had thought that dogs and cats could be a predator and kill their birds if not adequately penned. All of them said that since seeing the presentation that they were ready to get their backyard flocks started.

In the second program we discussed sanitation and disease. Many of the participate didn't realize the effect that poor sanitation could have on disease issues in their small flocks. Once the series of poultry programs is complete we should be able to present more information about participants.

Community Arts Natural Dye Garden

Given that the use of synthetic dyes in the creation of textiles requires significant amounts of water, chemicals, and energy, using natural dyes from flowers and plants is beneficial for both the environment and human health. Natural dyes can offer a wide range of unique and surprising colors without the use of harmful chemicals and wasteful processes.

During the spring of 2023, Community Arts partnered with the Horticulture program to establish a natural dye garden at the Boone County Nature Center Demonstration Gardens. This dedicated garden provided space to grow a variety of traditional dye plants: Japanese indigo, madder, weld, and more.

In the months that followed, we hosted art programs that gave participants an opportunity to explore the garden, collect fresh blooms and leaves, and create wearable and functional works of art using various dyeing techniques, such as flower pounding, eco-printing, and solar dyeing.

With natural dyes, we lessen our environmental impact through reducing waste, we keep textiles out of the landfill by giving new color to old clothing, and we have a bit of experimental fun! As we continue to grow and expand our natural dye garden, we look forward to further exploration in safer and more sustainable art practices.

Fun class using natural dyes.

The photo on the top of the front page showcases a class being taught in the dye garden at the Nature Center.





Sensory Day participants enjoy the Fair.

Sensory Day at the Boone County Fair

4-H works diligently to conduct nutrition, cooking, and life skills classes with special needs groups in Boone County, including Boone County High School, Walton Verona Schools, and Collins Elementary School. From this connection, a wonderful program has been created called Sensory Day at The Fair. Sensory Day is an annual event for special needs youth K-12 and their family. This year 62 youth participants and their families attended the Boone County 4-H Utopia Fair without the loud noises and crowds, giving them the extra attention needed and learning what 4-H has to offer. Working with family resource coordinators, and teachers, 4-H was able to share this program throughout the community to make sure everyone was included.

4-H partnered with many local organizations and other extension groups such as Boone County Extension Homemakers, Boone County Fair Board, CONVA, Kissell Entertainment, Diamond Ranch Pony Rides, and Knights of Columbus Holy Donuts. Working all together, this event received media attention from FOX 19.

The purpose of 4-H is to impact youth in the community, providing them with lifelong skills, and this program helped to bridge the gap. Extension is an equal-opportunity organization, and we strive to provide a sense of inclusivity and welcome anyone. The people who volunteered, the organizations that collaborated with us, and Boone County 4-H itself helped to foster this connection and plan to continue working together. Sensory Day is set to be an annual event and a vital part of the Boone County 4-H Utopia and Fair. Sensory Day not only had an impact on these youth but their parents, families and on our community.

This year's Sensory Day will be on Tuesday, June 25, 2024.

Employment 101

With the excess of social media sites and “network” gaming, teens of today have become used to everything being within easy reach. The concept of preparing, working toward, and attaining a goal is becoming a lost concept to most. To help the students realize a job is just not going to be handed to them and that the job hunting process requires preparation and dedication, the Boone County Cooperative Extension Service provides a program called Employment 101 to our Middle Schools. Students learn how to fill out a job application, create a resume, and how to prepare for and conduct themselves during a job interview. The program concludes with each student going through a short mock job interview to allow them to see what the interview process is all about before actually having their first job interview. Approximately 215 8th grade students complete this program on a yearly basis.

Boone County 4-H Farm Safety Day

The Boone County Cooperative Extension office partnered with Mr. Dale Dobson from the Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA) and Dr. Cheryl Witt PhD, RN from Raising Hope – Supporting Healthy Lives on Kentucky Farms campaign to provide a 4-H Farm Safety Day. The goal of this field day was educating youth on the dangers of farm/lawn equipment, large animals, and stress management.

According to the US Bureau of Labor and Statistics, agriculture is the most dangerous sector in the US with around 23.1 deaths per 100,000 workers. The U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission estimates more than 37,000 Americans suffer a power mower-related injury each year. This data shows a direct need for education in safety around farm/garden equipment even for the youth that live in an urban



Students learning mower safety.

setting, with 50% of the land in Boone County used for agriculture, residents will encounter agriculture equipment during their lives.

During the program Mr. Dale Dobson (KDA) discussed safety around small and large machinery and told stories to the youth of real accidents that had happened around farm/lawn equipment. Also a survivor of a mowing accident came in to tell his story to the youth. The 4-H agent gave a lesson on large animal safety and proper management techniques to prevent injury. Dr. Witt discussed stress management to attempt to combat the high stress of farm life and everyday tasks that these youth go through.



Tractor roll-over simulator.

This program not only taught youth about proper safety practices but also how to become better leaders and communicators at home and how to speak up when they see unsafe practices. Numerous parents and youth complimented the program and have requested more petroleum power programming in the county.

Boone County Extension Service

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