



## **Strafford County Cooperative Extension**

*Working to strengthen youth, families & communities, sustain natural resources and improve the economy*

Strafford County's UNH Cooperative Extension office is part of a network of county, state and regional outreach education offices that bring the University of New Hampshire resources directly to the people who live and work in Strafford County. Strafford County's Extension staff, along with more than 30 campus-based Extension specialists, provides county residents with research-based education and information, enhancing their ability to make informed decisions that improve their lives.

Our Strafford County educators share their knowledge and expertise with county residents through programming efforts focused on 4-H youth development, agriculture, family and consumer resources, and forestry and wildlife. These educators uniquely position themselves to tailor research-based educational programs to meet the needs of Strafford County individuals, families, communities, agricultural businesses and related natural resource firms. These professionals also forge important partnerships within the state and region, as well as nationally, that enhance their efforts.

### **What resources do Strafford County Extension Educators bring to local families, businesses and communities from UNH and the national network of Land Grant institutions?**

- For the \$199,613 investment Strafford County makes in UNH Cooperative Extension programs, (which includes salaries and benefits for two administrative assistants, employed by the county), an additional \$319,313 of state and federal funds are invested directly toward county staff, programming, administrative costs, and computer support for Strafford County.
- The average annual value of state specialists' efforts in each of New Hampshire's 10 counties is \$335,090. In 2008, Strafford County's investment leveraged a total of \$654,403 to support Extension programming throughout the county.
- The national Land Grant network provides access to innovative research, specialists in every area we address, curricula evaluated for impact and effectiveness, and grant funding to leverage local and state dollars.
- UNH Cooperative Extension offers Strafford County residents reliable, practical, and timely information relevant to their local situations. Extension places highly trained and competent professional educators in communities as a direct link to researchers.

**These are just a few examples of ways Strafford County Extension programs saved the county money, impacted people's lives, and increased economic viability, just in the past year:**

#### **Money Management and Earned Income Tax Credit:**

- 80 percent of Strafford County participants who attended money management programs reported they increased their money management skills and expected to decrease their debt. More than 70 percent of the participants also expected to increase their personal savings.
- UNH Cooperative Extension coordinates the N.H. Statewide Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Alliance. The Alliance's mission is to increase the number of taxpayers getting their returns prepared free with a focus of increasing the EITC for those eligible. For Tax Year 2007, the free tax preparation sites in Strafford County filed 514 returns, resulting in a saving for these taxpayers of \$77,100. In addition, these taxpayers received \$62,956 in EITC, \$32,764 in Child Tax Credit and \$315,674 in refunds

### **Nutrition Connections (nutrition education for low-income audiences):**

- In Strafford County during the 2008 programming year, 717 youth and 411 adults with 415 family members learned how to eat better for less, control weight, be more physically active, and reduce risk of chronic diseases & food-borne illness. Eighty three percent of the adult graduates increased their combined fruit and vegetable intake. Teachers reported more fruit, vegetable, and whole-grain snacks and less junk food brought from home.
- Multiple cost benefit analyses in several states document that for every dollar invested in programs such as Nutrition Connections, benefits can reach as high as \$10.64 from reduced health care costs. Another study showed that for every \$1 used to implement the program, \$2.48 is saved on food expenditures, reducing the need for emergency food assistance.

### **4-H Youth Development**

- 89 screened and trained 4-H volunteers were involved in mentoring 348 youth in small groups, where children learn important life skills in a safe, caring environment and gain skills to become active community leaders. These volunteers contributed an estimated 1,329 hours. This represents a cost benefit to the county of \$25,929 when calculated at the 2007 value of \$19.51/hour for volunteer time (independentsector.org).
- Programming highlights included the “Kids Can Grow” gardening program, “Kids on the Block,” puppets that teach diversity and acceptance, and county events that provided opportunities for self-expression, confidence development and public speaking.

### **Commercial Agriculture**

- Agriculture in Strafford County includes several high value commodities. Fruits and vegetables, greenhouse plants, and cut-flower producers could lose thousands of dollars very quickly if disease or pests threaten their crops. Workshops, farm/site visits, and phone consultations with Strafford County producers provide them with the knowledge and skills necessary to increase their production and reduce crop loss.
- Growers increased their knowledge and skills in identifying and correcting for nutrient deficiency and toxicity, scouting and control of insect pests and diseases, using Integrated Pest Management (IPM) control techniques, again a cost-saving measure.
- Growers who implemented monitoring for pH and Electrical Conductivity (EC) and scouting and control of diseases and pests improved the quality of their crops and saved money in the process. Growers improved their awareness and knowledge of energy conservation and alternative sources of energy, allowing them to save money as energy costs rise.
- One farmer saved about three acres of squash by diagnosing a plant fungal disease and providing recommendations for control.
- A raspberry grower saved thousands of dollars in future crops by following Extension’s recommendations for improving drainage and selecting the right variety.
- An organic vegetable grower saved a tomato crop valued at \$6,000 after following Extensions recommendation in improving plant nutrition and ventilation in the greenhouse.

## **Homeowner and Youth Gardening**

- Strafford County staff help homeowners who come directly to the local office by identifying disease, insect specimens and weeds and provided recommendations for control. These clients benefited by having 70 insects, diseased plants and weed specimens identified with appropriate treatment recommendations. Educators reviewed another 146 soil tests results for homes and grounds, and answered more than 250 phone and email questions regarding soil tests, insect and diseases, lawn and tree care, and other gardening concerns.
- Master Gardener volunteers worked with staff and volunteered 1,839 hours, reaching more than 120 youth and adults with gardening education and information. Twenty-three children completed the five-month gardening program. This represents a cost benefit to the county of \$35,879 when calculated at the 2007 value of \$19.51/hour for volunteer time (independentsector.org).

## **Forestry and Wildlife**

- 1,167 Strafford County residents were contacted through on-site visits, phone calls, e-mails and 22 educational events on topics including tree identification, water quality, selecting firewood, chainsaw safety, selling timber, insect identification and pruning and planting trees.
- In addition to working with private landowners, UNH Cooperative Extension programs in Strafford County have provided direct assistance to the county and to several municipalities, in the area of forest management, saving the county and these towns money in consulting fees. These include:
  - Work with Strafford County officials on updating forestry and wildlife management plans for the Strafford County Farm.
  - Holding a tornado damage assessment meeting in New Durham.
  - Design of a Forest Trail at Strafford Town forest.
  - Review of the Henderson property in Rochester for forestry/wildlife plans.
  - Sharing expertise on the issue of bank stabilization at a downtown Rochester dam.
  - Consulting on the Barrington town forest.
- Since 2003, 880 acres in Strafford County are now in conservation easements or trusts as a result of working with Cooperative Extension.
- Cooperative Extension provides extensive training to Community Tree Steward volunteers, in return for their continued involvement in local projects. Strafford County Community Tree Stewards devoted 1,725 hours of time last year, presenting workshops, serving on conservation commissions, landscaping at public facilities, and volunteering at local exhibits. Their time, when calculated at the 2007 value of \$19.51/hour for volunteer time (independentsector.org) represents \$33,655 in contributions to local programs.