Support for Cooperative Extension Makes Positive Impacts in Rockingham County

Selected Highlights

Agricultural Resources:
- According to the 2007 USDA Census of Agriculture, agriculture is an increasingly important component of the Rockingham County economy. Since 2002, the number of farms in the county increased 33 percent to 594. Rockingham County ranks 38th in the nation in value of direct market sales of $3,685,000 to consumers.
- Through the Agricultural Resources program, nearly 4,000 growers, small farm businesses, town planners, municipalities, landscapers, and consumers received information and technical assistance on establishing Agriculture Commissions or best management practices in growing crops, athletic fields and landscape. Other requested topics included direct marketing to consumers, food production, and food security, and assistance was provided to establish the new Derry Farmers’ Market.
- Over 7,095 adults and youth were reached through the Master Gardener program involving 3,071 volunteer hours.

Forest Resources:
- UNH Cooperative Extension has an agreement with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to provide technical assistance to landowners who receive federal cost-share payments. As a result, Extension designed and approved forest trails totaling three miles in length, approved four forest stand improvement practices totaling 12 acres, and approved three forest stewardship plans totaling 222 acres.
- In 2011, UNH Cooperative Extension conducted a pre-storm inventory of street trees on 4.4 miles of city streets in Portsmouth, NH and published a Tree Emergency Manual to be used by the city in the event of a catastrophic storm.

Land and Water Resources:
- The Land and Water Conservation Educator worked with landowners, communities and private conservation organizations to complete 22 projects that permanently conserved 1,853 acres in Rockingham County.
Financial Management:
- Many families are experiencing increased financial pressure. Family Resource Management programs focus on increasing knowledge and skills. In Rockingham County, 269 individuals participated in 24 workshops focused on decreasing debt, increasing savings, managing credit, improving credit scores, and helping children better manage money. Ninety-eight percent reported increased knowledge of money management practices, and 89% indicated one strategy they would immediately implement to realize their goals.

Youth Development:
- The 4-H Positive Youth Development Program continues to significantly impact the lives of youth, adult volunteers, and their communities. 4-H in Rockingham County creates learning communities where young people acquire valuable knowledge and life skills. The program’s cornerstone is its flexibility; it offers a variety of ways for youth and families to participate, including community-based clubs, after-school programs, independent members, family programs, and short courses.
- Over 1,500 youth and close to 200 adult volunteers and student interns participated in 4-H Youth Development activities, including teen leadership programs, hands-on agricultural learning projects, science programs, and the Stratham and Deerfield Fairs. In the words of one volunteer leader in 2010, “What touches me as a leader is watching the growth and maturity of the group members as they learn to work together on projects and give back to our community.” Work with community youth coalitions helped expand

Food Safety:
- The Center for Disease Control estimates that 48 million illnesses, 128,000 hospitalizations, and 3,000 deaths occur annually from food-borne illness. Extension’s food safety programs target knowledge and behavior within the food service environment to help reduce risks.
- A total of 660 food service workers, volunteers and consumers participated in a variety of food safety programs. Eight Safety Awareness in the Food Environment programs provided food safety information to 170 food service workers or volunteers in a home health agency, Rockingham County Nursing Home, four restaurants in Portsmouth and Windham, a Derry soup kitchen, and the School Nutrition Assoc. of NH.

Nutrition Education:
- Nutrition Connections, through the national Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), saves states and families money. Multiple cost benefit analyses in several states highlight the value of the program and document that for every dollar invested in EFNEP, benefits can reach as high as $10.64 from reduced health care costs.
- Three Smart Choices newsletters were mailed to adults age 62 and younger, reaching 5,000 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP) households in Rockingham County with each mailing. Three Senior Smart Choices newsletters were mailed to 4,700 senior SNAP recipients.
- Nutrition Connections partners with numerous agencies and organizations, including Head Start programs, NH Housing Authority sites, GED programs, health care clinics, homeless shelters in Portsmouth and Greenland, after-school programs in Seabrook, Portsmouth, and Epping, and family resource centers in Derry and Portsmouth. Last year 443 youth and 165 adults graduated in program series in the areas of nutrition, promoting active living, and managing food resources.

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