Change is inevitable! With the fast pace our world is moving, this is truer than ever.

Cooperative Extension continues to provide educational programs to our traditional rural families, and we strive to reach new audiences in urban and rural areas.

North Carolina Cooperative Extension has recently unveiled a new logo, “Empowering People, Providing Solutions.” We will continue to help people better their lives through agriculture, nutrition, education and much more.

Through the efforts of Darrell Blackwelder, Horticulture Agent, the Rowan County Cooperative Extension launched a monthly radio program on WSTP AM 1490 and Time-Warner Cable channel 7. The 30 minute program is sponsored by Carolina Farm Credit and the Rowan County Farm Bureau. It reaches an audience of over 29,000 households through cable television and over the air.

Rowan County hosted the 2007 Northwest 4-H District Activity Day at Jesse C. Carson High School. All of the staff and many volunteers helped to make it a spectacular day for the 4-H’ers.

Cooperative Extension held a legislative tour in August. The Rowan County Chamber of Commerce sponsored a bus tour of several farms and agribusinesses. The tour theme was “Marketing in Agriculture.”

The entire staff in the Rowan County Center is here to help you with solutions to your problems.

We are pleased to provide this report of our Cooperative Extension programs for 2007. We look forward to working with you in the future.

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Rowan County Center Report to the People 2007 Annual Report

Our Mission

Cooperative Extension is an educational partnership helping people put research-based knowledge to work for economic prosperity, environmental stewardship and an improved quality of life.

Bringing Land-Grant Universities to Your Community in 2007

North Carolina Cooperative Extension brings the power of university knowledge to you, right in your community. The Rowan County Center is directly linked to North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State University, thus we can provide timely, problem-solving educational programs based on the latest and best research.

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Agent Awards for 2007

Toi Degree 2007-2008 Leadership Rowan
Sara Drake Search for Excellence Team Award
Sara Drake NC Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences Community Partnership Award
Sara Drake 2007-2008 Leadership Innovation for N.C.
North Carolina Association of County Agriculture Agents Communication Awards Program:
Darrell Blackwelder First Place Personal Column
Darrell Blackwelder First Place Feature Story
Brad Johnson Second Place Feature Story
Jim Cowden Second Place Personal Column

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Extension Contacts Reported in 2007 ......................36,454
164 Training or Workshops Held Reaching .............8,100
Grants Received .......................................................$11,970
Program Delivery through Media:
114 news articles – households reached .......480,000
7 radio programs – households reached ....29,000
2 websites developed – website hits ..............3,000
Cooperative Extension Helps Growers Cope with Easter Freeze

The 2007 Easter freeze may have caused more damage to Rowan County crops and fruits than first estimated. Tender buds and fruit on blueberries, brambles, grapes, strawberries and tree fruits were killed or severely injured from the cold. Field crops such as barley, corn and wheat were injured also. Initial estimates of overall damage ranged from 10-85 percent loss. After several weeks of close observation, and calculating lost production from prior year's crop estimates, $2.5 million in losses are possible. Cooperative Extension worked with the crop and horticulture specialists at NC State University, North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Sciences, Piedmont Research Station, Rowan County Farm Service Agency, Natural Resource and Conservation Service, Rowan County Soil and Water and local producers to assist growers in making management and planting decisions. Farmers were instructed by Cooperative Extension on how to identify and assess the damage done to their crops. – Jim Cowden, County Extension Director

Cooperative Extension Partners to Preserve Farmland

The drastic loss of farmland continues to be a large concern for the citizens of Rowan County. Cooperative Extension partnered with the Soil and Water Conservation District, Voluntary Farmland Preservation Committee, Land Trust for Central North Carolina to preserve farmland in the county. Extension received a $500 grant from the Tourism Development Authority to promote the voluntary farmland preservation program. Local agribusiness sponsorships of $1500 were used to purchase farm identification signs for members. At the annual Farm-City Day, North Carolina Commissioner of Agriculture, Steve Troxler, addressed the issue of farmland loss statewide. Cooperative Extension assisted in submitting six Agriculture Development and Farmland Preservation Grants on behalf of Rowan County farms. This state grant program will provide funding for permanent, term easements or agriculture development projects. The six Rowan County farms included 828 acres for protection, and some farms have been in the family for nearly 250 years. – Jim Cowden, County Extension Director

Beef Producer Achieves Gains Thanks to Rowan Extension

A Rowan County beef producer asked Rowan County Cooperative Extension to help market their calves through a club calf sale. Rowan CES was involved with the producer in every aspect of production and marketing of their calves, including: selection of genetics, herd reproduction (extensive embryo transfer and artificial insemination), herd health, feed selection and management, establishment of a Web page, and other advertising/marketing. The producer achieved a net gain of $2,300 per calf sold through the 2007 sale versus selling calves through local livestock auctions. This is also an increase of $800 and $1,000 per calf, respectively, over the 2006 and 2005 sales. – Brad Johnson, Dairy and Livestock Agent
Extension Agent Coaches Champion Livestock Teams

Twenty-one youth participated on Rowan County 4-H dairy judging/dairy quiz bowl/dairy skillathon and/or livestock judging teams in 2007. The Rowan County Cooperative Extension Dairy and Livestock Agent served as a coach or assistant coach for all of the teams, while also assisting Rowan County FFA dairy and livestock judging teams. This effort resulted in three state champion teams, three state runner-up teams, and teams placing third, fourth, and sixth in the state, plus numerous high-finishing individuals in placings and reasons. The success of the teams has increased interest at the 4-H and FFA levels. Furthermore, feedback from the youth has revealed that they are developing invaluable life skills of decision-making, communication skills, responsibility, time-management, and leadership. These results are being reflected in the classroom and their lives, as many of the team members have outstanding grade point averages, have received many scholarships, and hold leadership roles in school, state, and national organizations. – Brad Johnson, Dairy and Livestock Agent

Extension Helps Publicize Rowan County Seedstock Producers

Analysis of Rowan County beef producer demographics by Rowan County Cooperative Extension revealed a tremendous seedstock industry represented by most of the major beef breeds. The logical question became, "how to promote this high-quality, diverse industry in Rowan County?"

With Cooperative Extension’s guidance, a decision was made to purchase a one-page advertisement every month in the Carolina Cattle Connection (a monthly publication of the North and South Carolina Cattlemen Associations with a circulation of 6,500). Twelve Rowan County beef producers, representing eight breeds, chose to advertise on the page, which costs each producer $400/year. The Rowan County Seedstock Producer's page has received excellent reviews. The advertisers estimate that the page has generated in excess of $150,000 in sales in less than two years, which is a 70 percent increase in revenue compared to the revenue generated by marketing the same stock through local livestock sale barns. – Brad Johnson, Dairy and Livestock Agent

Cooperative Extension Teams Up to Promote Biofuels

Agriculture will play an important role in the fuel and energy shortage arena. Cooperative Extension teamed with the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the North Carolina Solar Center and the Agricultural Business Management Department at NC State to hold a producers meeting on biofuels. Several farmers have tried or plan to contract the production of canola, which produces four times more oil than soybeans. Canola can be used in a corn, canola, soybean rotation and will yield 125 gallons of oil per acre. Other agricultural crops including trees, switchgrass, and sweet potatoes can be used to make fuel. Farmers can also make biodiesel easily from used cooking oil, like the Piedmont Research Station currently does. – Jim Cowden, County Extension Director

4-H Leadership Fun Day Teaches Life Skills

In an effort to assist newly elected 4-H club officers with their duties, a 4-H Leadership Fun Day was held at the Rowan County Cooperative Extension Office. Over 40 4-H club officers from Davidson, Davie, Randolph, and Rowan Counties attended. Participants learned the duties and responsibilities of the various offices. Various life skills, such as leadership, communication, record keeping, and teamwork were addressed. Workshops were taught by the current Northwest District 4-H Council Officers and 4-H alumni. Evaluations from the day were positive, with over 90% of participants indicating an increase in knowledge. – Sara Drake, 4-H and Youth Development Agent
Rowan County Cooperative Extension Reaching More People Through Mass Media

Conveying information to the general public is sometimes difficult because attendance at workshops and seminars is declining due to busy lifestyles. Homeowners now receive beneficial information with anchored columns in two local newspapers which reach 29,000 homes. The local Salisbury Post reported 90,000 hits per day on their web site which also features Cooperative Extension information. Because of the web based articles from the local web site and Cooperative Extension websites, inquiries for information have increased locally and even nationwide.

– Darrell Blackwelder, Horticulture Agent

Public Speaking Skills Learned through Cooperative Extension and 4-H Program

Public speaking is a common fear among adults. Employers consistently examine communication skills of potential employees. Cooperative Extension and the 4-H program help to address these issues through its public speaking and presentation contests. Rowan County 4-H held a County Activity Day where youth competed in such contests in an effort to advance on to district level competition.

Four youth participated this year at the county level. Each youth placed first in their respective age and presentation topic area. They each then chose to participate in the Northwest 4-H District Activity Day. All four youth earned gold medals and the opportunity to present at State 4-H Congress.

– Sara Drake, 4-H and Youth Development Agent

Cooperative Extension Helps Residents Cut Utility Bills

To address the steady increase in utility bills, Cooperative Extension held three workshops providing various money saving techniques to conserve energy, lower utility bills, and weatherize homes for the winter. During the months of October and November, Cooperative Extension reached over 100 residents. Thirteen received energy kits that could be used to begin making needed changes. A follow-up survey one month later found only four of thirteen made the changes suggested in the workshop. The changes ranged from installation of fluorescent light bulbs to placing aerators on faucets. Cooperative Extension held another workshop in early April with 15 residents present and six kits distributed. This time five of six participants not only added additional compact fluorescent light bulbs and aerators, but also adjusted their water heater, thus assuring even greater savings. For each 10°F reduction in water temperature, water-heating energy consumption can be reduced by five to ten percent.

– Toi Degree, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent

Extension’s Got Milk!

As the number of dairy farms and the amount of farmland decreases, more children are unaware of the origin of their food. This need bred the development of the “Got Milk?” program by Rowan County Cooperative Extension. As part of the Cooperative Extension Summer Fun Program, “Got Milk?” is operated as an integrated program for Rowan and Davie county youth. Twenty two children, ages nine to thirteen, learned about dairy cattle breeds, feeds, management, the milking process, and dairy foods, as they visited a dairy in Davie County and another in Rowan County. The children learned through videos, lectures, pictures, and hands-on experience. From a pre-test, the children gave an average of 7.143 correct answers, with a range of two to eleven correct answers. The post-test showed an increase in knowledge of 85 percent, as the children averaged 13.227 correct answers (range of three to twenty-two correct answers).

– Brad Johnson, Dairy and Livestock Agent
NC 4-H Summer Fun Program Enriching Experience for Rowan County Youth

To help youth remain active during the summer months, 21 educational workshops were offered to the youth of Rowan County through North Carolina Cooperative Extension’s 4-H Summer Fun Program. Eighty-four youth attended at least one of the 4-H Summer Fun workshops. The workshops focused on curriculum areas such as animal science, communication and expressive arts, food and nutrition, health and fitness, and science and technology. The workshops were taught by Extension staff and volunteers. End of summer evaluations were mailed to the participants' parents. With a response rate of 25%, 82% of parents indicated that they had seen positive knowledge/attitude change as a result of the 4-H Summer Fun Program. Some of the most positive aspects that were noted include: learning new skills, interaction with other children, variety of programming and the positive environment. – Sara Drake, 4-H and Youth Development Agent

4-H’ers listen to Chef Katie Powlas to learn cutting techniques during the week-long Chef & Child 4-H Summer Fun Program.

Rowan County Cooperative Extension participated in the annual wellness fair for Rowan County employees. Our focus was on easy to prepare, healthy snacks. “We should have brought more food!”

Extension Helping North Carolina Families Eat Smart and Move More

Results of the 57 families participating in the Expanded Food and Nutrition Program:

- 100% showed improvement in their diet.
- 100% of EFNEP participants showed improvement in their resource management practices.
- 98% of EFNEP participants showed improvement in their nutrition practices.
- 88% of EFNEP participants showed improvement in their food safety practices.
- 45% increased their amount of physical activity.
4-H Gets Cooking with “Farm to Table”

During this year’s 4-H Summer Fun Enrichment Program, ten area youth between the ages of nine to thirteen participated in a six-hour class entitled “Farm to Table.” The class was broken into two sessions; during the morning session the youth visited a local vegetable producer and retail outlet to learn about production and marketing of vegetables with our Agriculture Agent. The afternoon session of the class discussed their visit to the farm, the nutritional value of vegetables, and food safety from farm to table. Participants prepared their own lunch of vegetable lasagna, salad, bread, and zucchini strudel. Here are some of the comments from the families of the participants: “Wow what a difference you have made!” “She made the zucchini strudel and got up yesterday morning and eagerly made breakfast for everyone.” “Thank you so very much, she now enjoys cooking!” – Toi Degree, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent

North Carolina 4-H Enhances Science Skills

A growing area of concern is the ability of youth to perform academically in the areas of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). The 4-H Embryology School Enrichment Project, sponsored by North Carolina Cooperative Extension is a three-week experiential process for students that helps them learn not only about life-cycles and various aspects of agriculture, but also enhances scientific knowledge and skills. Seventy-one percent of teachers strongly agreed to the fact that the 4-H Embryology project was a useful addition to their regular science teaching unit. One teacher even indicated that, “It was great to hear students use scientific terms related to embryology on their own and with comprehension.” – Sara Drake, 4-H and Youth Development Agent

NC 4-H: Preparing Youth for Tomorrow’s High-Tech Workplace

A three-day 4-H Biotechnology Day Camp, sponsored by North Carolina Cooperative Extension was held for youth in Ashe, Alleghany, Guilford, Rowan, Surry, Wilkes and Yadkin counties. The 4-H professionals in these counties recognized the need for delivering programs focused on enhancing life skills necessary for success in today’s workplace while also increasing awareness and interest in science careers. Throughout the camp, youth learned about DNA and biotechnology through workshops, which helped youth to better understand how biotechnology is being used in fields such as law enforcement, medicine and agriculture to cure disease and develop better yielding crops. The youth participated in activities where they were able to isolate DNA strands from fruit, as well as from cells in their own mouth. Participants also toured Wilkes Community College and the Elkin Diagnostic Lab. Based on pretest and posttest results, there was a 29% increase in knowledge. – Sara Drake, 4-H and Youth Development Agent

Top: A 4-H’er learns to dust for fingerprints at Biotechnology Day Camp.

Bottom: STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) training offered by 4-H helps youth to get ready for high-tech jobs like those at the soon to be completed NC Research Campus.
Increased consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables has raised an awareness of food borne illnesses. To prevent this problem, Cooperative Extension has expanded its GAPs (Good Agricultural Practices) Food Safety program to include food handlers, producers and farmer’s market vendors. An E. coli outbreak in Rowan County sparked an investigation into a local strawberry producer’s production and food safety records. As a result of GAPs food safety training, the grower was prepared for this type of food borne illness investigation. Meticulous recordkeeping and documentation is an important part of GAPs training. The source of the outbreak was later identified; however, without proper training and recordkeeping, the grower would have lost their entire strawberry sales during the season due to the negative publicity concerning the outbreak during the lengthy investigation. – Darrell Blackwelder, Horticulture Agent

**Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program: Greater Outreach through Volunteers**

Master Gardener Volunteer Program: The general public including school groups, request horticultural information from Cooperative Extension. In many instances, the horticulture agent was unavailable to assist with their needs. Master Gardener volunteers with training and experience from Cooperative Extension were able fulfill needs with horticultural information for the general public and also meet with five civic groups providing programs with horticultural information. Fifteen volunteers were involved working with over 850 school children providing useful information for classroom studies as well as kindergarten youth. It is important to note that the public continually receives information and has confidence in Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Volunteers. A local private agency recognizes this benefit and has provided Cooperative Extension with $3000 grant to supply audio visual equipment to continue volunteer educational programs. – Darrell Blackwelder, Horticulture Agent

**WIC Vouchers Now at Farmers Market Thanks to CES**

Local growers participating in the Salisbury-Rowan Farmer’s Market need more participants to make the market viable. Cooperative Extension had inquired about WIC vouchers through NC Department of Agriculture for two years with no success. In 2007, the WIC program was offered to the Salisbury-Rowan Farmers Market. Local growers at the Salisbury-Rowan Farmer’s Market were entitled to receive WIC coupons this season. The North Carolina Department of Agriculture approved WIC status in June and eight local growers received these vouchers. WIC vouchers have been a success for local producers providing a great boost to slumping sales and participation. In August, over 100 WIC vouchers ($400) were exchanged each day of the market. Growers have commented that WIC voucher sales were a definitive factor in positive cash flows and provided them the incentive to continue participation during a relatively slow sales month. – Darrell Blackwelder, Horticulture Agent
The Rown County Center Staff are:

**Jim Cowden**  
County Extension Director

**Darrell Blackwelder**  
Extension Agent, Agriculture – Horticulture

**Toi Degree**  
Extension Agent, Family and Consumer Sciences

**Sara Drake**  
Extension Agent, 4-H and Youth Development

**Brad Johnson**  
Extension Agent, Agriculture – Dairy and Livestock

**Lovetta Miller**  
Nutrition Program Assistant, EFNEP

**Carole Massey**  
Master Gardener Coordinator

**Connie Holshouser**  
County Extension Administrative Secretary

**Melva Menius**  
County Extension Secretary

**Judy Branson**  
Extension Associate, EFNEP

**Rob Neely**  
Area Agent, Information Management

Cooperative Extension helped growers manage the 2007 drought by identifying alternative feedstuffs such as corn stover.

Grapes are one of the exciting new crops supported by Cooperative Extension.