

2020 Report to Our County Partners



Halifax County Center

Protecting the Health and Well-Being of Our Farming Communities During COVID-19



In order to meet the needs of our farmers, Cooperative Extension packaged COVID-19 safety kits for farmworkers in our county with items donated by the NC Department of Health and Human Services. Each kit contained 15 disposable masks, 5 cloth masks and two 8oz bottles of hand sanitizer. Over 200 kits were distributed in Halifax County to farmers, migrant workers, H2A visa workers, seasonal and full-time farm employees, and their families. Educational posters and handouts in both English and Spanish were included to better educate recipients of safety measures to be followed to protect them from COVID-19.

Educating Consumers Through *Your Food: Fibs & Facts*



Recognizing the disconnect between consumers and our local farmers about what is fact and what is fiction in our food system, Extension agents combined their knowledge to develop this award-winning educational program, *Your Food: Fibs & Facts*, to bridge that gap by addressing agriculture and food labeling terminology. Information shared in this program educates consumers so they are able to make more informed decisions regarding their food choices while increasing their knowledge of agricultural practices used in the food supply chain.

- This program has reached our community through community groups, church groups, high school agriculture classes, Halifax Community College Beginning Farmers class and health education groups.
- 100% of participants stated they gained knowledge they did not previously have.
- All participants said they would make lifestyle changes based on their knowledge gained.
- This program has been a great success and will continue to be offered across our county in the future.

Med Instead of Meds Goes Virtual



Family & Consumer Sciences programs are anchored around healthy eating, recipes, hands-on cooking and best of all – taste-testing! To safely continue our education, nutrition and healthy eating programs were offered virtually. The *Med Instead of Meds* nutrition class series explores 7 simple steps to eating the Mediterranean way with Med tips, life hacks, and recipes. Halifax County Cooperative Extension partnered with Hertford and Gates County Extension to offer a 6-week virtual class series. Participants received weekly email newsletters containing recorded lessons and cooking demonstrations. These were followed up with a live zoom question/answer session weekly. As a result of this program, we developed a closed Facebook page where participants can talk, share recipes and cooking tips. Thirty-six citizens engaged in the program with expressed interest in additional virtual programming.

4-H Rural Life Center Summer Camps



The 4-H Rural Life Center and staff were able to provide an outdoor summer camp experience for nearly 200 youth this summer over a four week period. Life skill development was different this year as we focused more on patience, concern for others, and perseverance. Normally we work on things like sharing, teamwork, and getting along with others, but with COVID-19, we all had to make adjustments in order to provide a quality program with the safety of the youth and staff at the forefront. We were fortunate again this year to be able to work with the Sheriffs Department, the Roanoke Rapids Fire Department and the Roanoke Valley Rescue Squad along with many others to make this all happen. We also appreciate the support of the Halifax County Health Department to help us ensure camp safety.

Enhancing Healthy Food Options



The Steps to Health Nutrition Educator continued a partnership with Five Corners Produce in Hollister that the previous Health Matters Associate in Cooperative Extension had established. Five Corners produce is a local, small food retail store that offers healthy options including fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, beans, eggs, low-fat dairy, & water for its customers. The Nutrition Educator assisted the owner with communicating with Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services' Marketing Specialist regarding a grant he received to make improvements in the store to continuing providing healthy foods for the community. Steps to Health also partnered to provide additional storage baskets to replace the cardboard boxes in the store. With this partnership, the store has been able to continue to make vital updates to enhance its healthy food storage.

Making the Best Better through 4-H Youth Development



Despite all of the difficulties of 2020, we have seen great resolve from our 4-H youth and volunteers!

- Partnering with eight different classrooms, our embryology program was transitioned to a virtual format and we were able to reach 300 students through various online platforms.
- Halifax County was represented well in 2020! Our 4-H'ers received awards both at the District and State level in the areas of: Presentations & Public Speaking, Project Record Books Competitions, Photography, the NC State Fair Livestock Show, and the NC State 4-H Horse Bowl, Hippology, Horse Judging, and Livestock Judging contests.
- 4-H offered virtual summer workshops to reach our youth. These programs provided our youth education on healthy cooking, survival & natural resources, livestock and poultry, photography & art, robotics, reading & literacy, S.T.E.M., and included a babysitting certification program.
- Three new clubs were established in the county, which now means seven 4-H clubs are available for youth to join across the county!

Teen Cuisine Summer Camp



Teen Cuisine is a curriculum meant to be taught in front of students, but through adaptive planning we were able to offer this program virtually to teens attending a local summer day camp. Each class was offered on-line demonstrating live step-by-step creation of each week's recipe while sharing new skills and healthy lifestyle habits. After the conclusion of the program, volunteers provided the students the equipment needed to enable them to create on their own the recipes taught during the program. The partnering agency and volunteers noted that the students were able to safely follow and cook these recipes on their own, giving them the confidence they needed to then take these new skills home to cook the recipes for their families. They also indicated that in the weeks following the class the students consistently showed better eating habits by selecting more fruits and vegetables to eat during snacks and meals at camp.

Continuing to Do Good Things for Kids



Operation Restart focuses on interpersonal skill development and provides community service restitution programs for Halifax County youth offenders ages 8 to 17. In 2020, this program has adapted as needed to continue services while providing a safe environment amid concerns of COVID-19. Partnering with the System of Care in Roanoke Rapids and the Halifax County Department of Social Services, Operation Restart has:

- Delivered hot lunches and educational packages to students during the spring
- Provided 7 youths summer employment at different worksites throughout the county
- Hosted a nine-week summer educational day camp
- Created a virtual learning worksite at the Extension office for youth with limited broadband access
- Worked with youth at various county food banks

Providing At-Risk Youth Tools to Break Barriers



The WIOA Student Incentive Program works with court offenders ages 16 to 24 with serious barriers to education and employment. By providing youth tools to develop and achieve goals, the WIOA program has:

- Enabled six youth offenders to receive their GED at Halifax Community College.
- Coordinated youth to work with area churches to distribute food to their communities.
- Had two students receive their drivers licenses.
- Secured permanent employment at area business and companies.
- Had several students pay restitution back to victims through the state.
- Participated in a drive-through job fair with NC Works.
- Hosted virtual college tours with WIOA students, touring Elizabeth City State, North Carolina Central University, UNC-Wilmington, and Duke University.