

**The Rowan 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 Youth Development



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



**Connie Holshouser**  
County Extension Administrative Secretary



**Melva Menius**  
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**Judy Branson**  
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North Carolina State University, North Carolina A & T State University, U. S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments cooperating.

**Agent Awards for 2008**

Toi Degree • 2007-2008 Leadership Rowan  
• N.C. Successful Families Team Award

Sara Drake • NCAE4-HA Excellence & Toi Degree in Teamwork Award – Chef and the Child Program

Sara Drake • 2008-2009 Leadership Rowan  
• 2007-2008 Leadership Innovation for N.C.  
• NCAE4-HA Achievement in Service Award  
• NCAE4-HA TC Blalock Young Agent Award, 4-7 years  
• NCAE4-HA Excellence in Teamwork Award – Camping – NWD 4-H Biotechnology Camp

Brad Johnson • Honorary State FFA Degree: Outstanding Alumnus West Rowan FFA

***Did you know?** You can receive useful information from NC Cooperative Extension from local newspapers, radio, TV and the Internet!*

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A&T State University  
**COOPERATIVE EXTENSION**  
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A&T State University  
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**Rowan County Center Report to the People 2008 Annual Report**

**Our Mission**

North Carolina Cooperative Extension partners with communities to deliver education and technology that enrich the lives, land and economy of North Carolinians.

La Extensión Cooperativa de Carolina del Norte se asocia con las comunidades para ofrecer educación y tecnología que enriquecen la vida de los habitantes, la tierra y la economía de Carolina del Norte.

**Bringing Land-Grant Universities to Your Community in 2008**

North Carolina Cooperative Extension gives our residents easy access to the resources and expertise of NC State University and NC A&T State University. Through educational programs, publications, and events, Cooperative Extension field faculty deliver unbiased, research-based information to North Carolina citizens. We can answer your questions on a wide array of topics. To find out how we can help you, visit our website or contact us by email or phone.

Extension Contacts Reported in 2008 .....	39,278
247 Training or Workshops Held Reaching .....	7,900
Grants Received .....	\$10,570
Program Delivery through Media:	
126 news articles – audience reached .....	800,000
21 radio programs – audience reached .....	72,000
2 websites developed – website hits.....	2,026
1 TV program presented – audience reached .....	50,000

*From the Director:*



For nearly 100 years Cooperative Extension has empowered the citizens of Rowan County to gain knowledge and provide solutions to their problems. We continue to help people better their lives through agriculture, nutrition, education and more.

The Rowan County Extension Center transitioned into a new administrative area, 17 counties of the West Central District, in 2008. This provided new opportunities to partner with other counties in our new district.

The 4-H and youth program began a three year celebration of the North Carolina 4-H Centennial. Rowan County has begun to promote this achievement and honor those in 4-H, both past and present who have made a difference in the lives of many. In 2008, Sara Drake, 4-H Youth Development Agent, reported reaching 1380 youth through clubs, camping, school enrichment and individual study.

Families and youth received training in eating healthy, physical activity and chronic disease risk reduction. Toi Degree, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent, conducted several Eat Smart, Move More, Weigh Less workshops in the county. Participants who completed the a 15 week training lost bodyweight, improved their blood pressure and learned to make healthier food/drink choices, which leads to a healthier lifestyle.

Agriculture in Rowan County continued to shine in 2008. The Salisbury-Rowan Farmer's Market continued to grow, offering WIC vouchers to eligible participants which is a win-win for the market consumers and vendors. Food safety trainings provided by Darrell Blackwelder, Agriculture/Horticulture Agent, made a large impact with local growers. A national salmonella outbreak concerned consumers, while Extension's training assured the public that local producers are being proactive towards food safety.

Along with helping Rowan County dairy and livestock producers with feeding, selection and herd management; Brad Johnson, Livestock and Dairy Agent, coached youth 4-H dairy judging, quiz bowl, skillathon, and livestock judging. Many were successful at the district, state and national level.

We are pleased to provide this report of our Cooperative Extension programs for 2008. Please contact us when you need assistance. We look forward to working with you in the future.

*Jim Cowden*



## 4-H Clubs Develop Life Skills

Being a member of a 4-H club gives children year-round involvement, and without question, provides them with the most well rounded 4-H experience. National 4-H Headquarters reported a two-year study which focused on the benefits of 4-H club membership. "The results show that the process of youth development is positively influenced in multiple ways by 4-H Club membership and that young people who participate in 4-H Clubs do better in school, are more motivated to help others, and are developing skills in leadership, public speaking, self-esteem, communication and planning, and are making lasting friendships." Three new 4-H clubs were formed this year in Rowan County. The clubs currently have over 50 members who are learning the 4-H ways and developing life skills that are essential to everyday life.

## 4-H Summer Fun Program Continues to Provide Enriching Experience for Rowan County Youth

North Carolina Cooperative Extension's 4-H Summer Fun Program offers educational workshops not only to increase knowledge, but also aid in the development of life skills. Seventy-two youth attended at least one of the workshops. Workshops, which focused on curriculum areas such as animal science, communication and expressive arts, food and nutrition and science and technology, were taught by Extension staff and volunteers.



Evaluations were mailed to the participants' parents. With a response rate of 32%, results indicated a positive impact in areas of life skill development. Parents indicated a 26% increase in their child making healthy food choices, 22% increase in the ability to contribute as a member of a team and a 27% increase in the youth's ability to clearly state his thoughts, feelings and ideas to others. Forty-eight percent of parents indicated that they aspired to enroll their child in a 4-H club for year-round involvement.

**Did you know...?** Throughout 2008, North Carolina Cooperative Extension offered biotechnology trainings at three 4-H volunteer leader functions. During the training, participants were engaged in a hands-on fruit DNA extraction while learning about the principles of biotechnology and how biotechnology affects our lives. Based on Evaluations, 100% of the 85 participants improved their overall knowledge about the topic. As a result of participation in the workshop, 79% of participants aspired to teach the workshop to youth. One participant, in a follow-up evaluation, stated "This program helped give me the tools that I needed in order to teach other youth in my county about DNA."

## Agritourism Big Draw in Rowan County

Agricultural tourism is important to the economy of Rowan County. Two county farms were named North Carolina's top field trip destinations in 2007: Lazy 5 Ranch, number three and Patterson Farm, number 19. Cooperative Extension actively works with these operations, the Rowan County Convention and Visitors Bureau, and other working farms to promote their agricultural tourism efforts. A survey of local farms that conduct agriculture tourism, found the majority (80%) feel more should be done to promote and develop agriculture in the county. Preservation of the working family farm is a tool that can help do this. Voluntary agricultural districts, purchase of development easements and local land use planning are all ways to protect our farms. Thus far, over 10,000 acres have been protected in the county.



## Pesticide Applicator Trainings Promote Safe Practices

Cooperative Extension held private pesticide applicator trainings and reviewed the Agriculture Health Study that was conducted on certified pesticide applicators in North Carolina since 1993. A Rowan County participant in the private applicator training gave an unsolicited testimonial. He shared that his son was recently diagnosed and treated for leukemia. While he sat with him in a hospital, he began reading about the cancer his son was fighting. There was a strong link to some chemicals – pesticides and solvents that are absorbed through the skin that can alter the genetic pre-disposition of offspring. He turned to the other members of the class and said, "For goodness sakes, wear chemically resistant gloves. You don't want to go through something like I had to if you can prevent it." One-half of the participants plan to speak to their physician during their next office visit about pesticides.

## Stay in School!

With a graduation rate of 68% the past several years in the Rowan-Salisbury School District, a group of 14 local agencies have started a "Help Youth Stay in School" initiative. The group led by Cooperative Extension and the Rowan Partners For Education have prioritized the best strategies to engage youth, parents and teachers in communities, and improve the cohort graduation rate. The school district has received a six million dollar federal grant to address at-risk student behaviors, such as alcohol and drug abuse, bullying and gang activity.



# Family & Consumer SCIENCES

## Prevention Key to Healthy Living

Understanding that prevention is key to living long and living well, the Family and Consumer Sciences agent presented a short and informative talk to a group of women about the importance of regular checkups and preventive screenings. During the workshop, each preventive screening and immunization that women should have was outlined along with age, frequency, and possible warning signs. The coordinator of the event informed me that one of the women present at the workshop was exhibiting several of the warning signs of someone having a heart attack. She went to visit her doctor and informed him of her symptoms and urged him to check her heart. After performing a cardiac catheterization, her doctor found five blockages. She has undergone triple by-pass surgery and is doing well. She insists that it was the information presented that made the difference.

## Eat Smart, Move More, Weigh Less!



Overweight and obesity in children and adults continues to be a critical issue throughout North Carolina. Currently North Carolina is the 41<sup>st</sup> highest state in nation for overweight. Rowan County is no different with 66% of its adults overweight or obese. As a means of addressing this issue, The Family and Consumer Sciences agent conducted a fifteen-week Eat Smart, Move More, Weigh Less (ESMMWL) class. The class began with twenty-two registered participants. Ten successfully completed the program with a combined weight loss of 74.5 pounds, 14.5 inches in the waist and

lowered their blood pressure by 56 points. Participants learned a great deal throughout the fifteen weeks about portion control, reading food labels, making healthier food and drink choices, and how to lead healthier lifestyles. Several also informed me that they will continue to strive to reach their ideal weight applying the ESMMWL principals.

*For ideas on eating smart and moving more, visit [MyEatSmartMoveMore.com](http://MyEatSmartMoveMore.com) or contact our office.*



## North Carolina 4-H's Ambassador Program Empowers Teens



North Carolina 4-H's Ambassador Program strives to empower teens with knowledge, skills and aspirations necessary to be effective leaders. The program strengthens a youth's current abilities so they may serve as positive role models for younger youth, build meaningful partnerships and promote the 4-H mission. Alex Hipp was recognized at the 2008 State Council Conference for earning her bronze level in the Ambassador Program. Hipp serves Rowan County 4-H in many capacities as both a 4-H member and youth volunteer. She is an officer of her 4-H club and president of county council. During the summer, Hipp worked as a summer assistant for the summer fun program. This role strengthened her leadership abilities as she helped plan and execute workshops, teaching two on her own. The

Ambassador Program has indeed strengthened her leadership skills and this has greatly benefited the Rowan County 4-H Program.



**Did you know...?** North Carolina 4-H is celebrating its hundredth year. There will be many exciting events and opportunities to recognize the past history of 4-H and also celebrate the current and future of the NC 4-H Program. We look forward to this exciting year and hope everyone sets new goals and works to "make the best better."

## 4-H I: 4-H Investigates

NCCE partnered with local law enforcement agencies, Surry County Community College, NC Department of Agriculture and other local businesses to host the 4-H I: 4-H Investigates day camp. Youth who participated were engaged in solving a murder mystery while learning about biotechnology. The students relied on critical thinking skills, problem solving and functioning effectively as a team as they used knowledge gained about DNA to solve the murder. Educational sessions focused on increasing the students' knowledge and understanding of how biotechnology is being used in careers such as law enforcement and forensic science. Youth were introduced to biotechnology as they participated in hands-on workshops such as photography, DNA fruit extraction, blood spatter and fingerprinting. Evaluation results reflected a 22% increase in knowledge. Sixty-one percent of participants also reported an increased interest in pursuing science as a career.



**Did you know?** As the number of dairy farms and the amount of farmland decreases, more children are unaware of the origin of their food. This need resulted in the development of the "Got Milk?" program by Rowan County Cooperative Extension, as part of the Cooperative Extension Summer Fun Program. The 2008 program hosted nine children (a total of 74 since the program's initiation in 2004), ages 9-13, who 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.

## Cattle Showmanship Boosts Confidence and Work Ethic

A Rowan County youth contacted the Rowan County Livestock and Dairy Extension agent requesting information on beef cattle showmanship to help him prepare a speech for the Public Speaking contest at the Santa Gertrudis Junior National. The agent forwarded three articles he had written on showmanship, which had been published in the Carolina Cattle Connection. In addition, the agent conducted a one-on-one showmanship tutorial session with the youth and his family at their farm. The youth winning the Junior Division of Showmanship at the 2008 North Carolina Jr. Beef Round-Up. In the past, this child had never placed in the top 10. The youth also won the Junior Division Public Speaking Contest at the Santa Gertrudis Junior National and presented his speech to the American Santa Gertrudis Association Board of Directors. As a result, the boost to this child's confidence and work ethic is immeasurable.

## Dairy Producer Increases Production by Fifty Percent

An area dairy producer contacted the Rowan County Dairy and Livestock Extension Agent regarding his lactating cows producing an extremely low quantity of milk. Following several conversations with the producer and a farm visit, the agent determined that one of the primary reasons for the low milk production was the producer was purchasing extremely poor quality corn silage that had great potential to be contaminated with large amounts of mycotoxins. Analysis of the corn silage by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services lab determined that the corn silage was contaminated with clinical levels of mycotoxins which were severely depressing the cow's milk production. The agent was able to find another source of high-quality (nutrient analysis had been conducted) corn silage. After further educating the producer about lactating cow rations and some ration suggestions being implemented, the mycotoxin-free corn silage resulted in the cows increasing their milk production by 50 percent.

## Livestock Judging, Skillathons Help Develop Life Skills



Seventeen youth participated on Rowan County 4-H dairy judging/dairy quiz bowl/dairy skillathon and/or livestock judging teams in 2008. 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 one state champion team, five state runner-up teams, and teams placing third and sixth in the state. Two Rowan County 4-H Dairy Judging Team members represented NC on the NC 4-H Dairy Judging Team, with one earning All-American honors. Youth on these teams are developing and practicing life skills of decision-making, communication, responsibility, time-management, leadership, and more. These skills are reflected in the classroom and the youth's lives, as many (former and current) team members have outstanding grade point averages, have received numerous scholarships, and hold offices in school, state, and national organizations.



**Did you know?** Events like The Rowan County Junior Dairy Show (left) and the Rowan County Fair (right) are great opportunities for youth to develop important life skills.

## WIC Vouchers Now Accepted at Local Farmer's Market



Local growers and vendors need more participants to make the market viable. The Salisbury-Rowan Farmer's Market began accepting WIC vouchers last year with the approval from North Carolina Department of Agriculture. Vendor participation increased to eleven as compared to eight local growers eligible to receive vouchers in 2007. WIC voucher redemption continues to be a success for local producers providing a great boost to the market. Only the second year of participation in the WIC program, the Salisbury-Rowan Farmer's Market is above the state average in redemption of WIC coupons. Positive redemption rate accounted for 300 additional vouchers for WIC participants in August. WIC redemptions at the market were over \$9000 in 2008, a \$3000 increase from 2007. Vendors have commented that WIC vouchers were a definitive factor in positive cash flows and provided them incentive to continue participation during slow sale days.

## Food Safety Training

Increased consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables has raised nationwide public awareness of food borne illnesses. Food safety has been a critical issue for commercial vegetable growers in Rowan County for six years. Good Agricultural Practices (GAP's) program was introduced by Cooperative Extension in 2002 in an effort to educate workers on food borne illnesses and prevention methods. This food safety program also includes training for food handlers, packers and local farmer's market vendors. When a national salmonella outbreak occurred, information was deemed so valuable, not only to growers but to the public, that a local newspaper covered Cooperative Extension's ongoing training program. Local media coverage of Extension's training presented a positive impact assuring the public that local producers are taking a proactive approach to the problem. This press release is used in agent food safety training as a model for how to deal with potential food safety crisis.



## Master Gardener Volunteer Program



The demands from the general public including school groups for educational information from Cooperative Extension are continuing to increase. Master Gardener Volunteers are able to fulfill these needs by providing information allowing the agent to fulfill other tasks. Master Gardener Volunteers coordinated five 4-H Summer Fun programs. These educational programs were Junior Master Gardener classes with 55 student participants. These volunteers were also involved with over 500 school children providing useful information for classroom studies. The public continually receives information from Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Volunteers. Master Gardener Volunteers utilized a \$3000 grant for audio/visual equipment to help facilitate these educational programs.