

# **I. Executive Summary**

Jackson County is still mostly rural with many of the same economic and social issues any rural Appalachian county has such as unhealthy lifestyle, disconnect from the land and no future leaders. However, three distinct regions of the county are more developed that offer other extension programming challenges. The central part of the county has an expanding university (WCU) of 11,000 near town of Sylva that helps fuel the economy more so than other mountain counties. Other amenities include a diverse topography and climate as one of the most mountainous counties in Eastern America with high elevations and fertile river valleys to grow specialty horticulture crops such as Christmas trees, specialty crops and pasture for small cow/calf farms. A long standing second home community, which is hard to reach, in the southern part of the county has been developed for well over 100 years for those from the deep south to escape the summer heat and a thriving mainstream tourist community in Cherokee on the northern end of the county. All this makes for programming that must be diverse to serve a rural to semi-urban populations. These populations are in need of a broad range of requests such as second home residents that demand much of commercial landscape companies and rural populations that want traditional agricultural extension programs. The educated populous from university want STEM type programs for their young families. The following 2018 programs tried met these needs.

HORTICULTURE work (nearly 1,453) has been primarily with the Christmas Tree, Landscape Industry, Specialty Crop Producers, Beekeeping and many home gardeners and small farmers in 2018. Agent partnered with Public Works Director to secure an NCDA & CS grant for the Pesticide Container Recycling Program for \$3,285 for a holding cargo container for empty pesticide containers that will ultimately be recycled. In addition, metal signage (3x3 ft) was purchased with appropriate instructions on how to recycle.

BEEKEEPERS of Jackson county have successfully established their club as a Chapter of the N.C. State Beekeepers Association. Officers have been elected, bylaws established, and monthly meetings scheduled with varying educational topics to meet the needs of veteran and beginning beekeepers. There are 35 plus members with an average number of 30 attendees per club meeting.

STRAWBERRY and CANEBERRY Training had 100% of the participants stating they gained knowledge about strawberry and caneberry production. 63% indicated they planned to change the way they manage their pests. 79% shared they would change their fertility practices. 63% stated they would switch to organic practices and 8% of those surveyed stated they would establish a commercial strawberry or caneberry operation. As a result, participants increased their knowledge for long term sustainable production at home or as new commercial berry producers.

LANDSCAPE CONTRACTORS CERTIFICATION benefited twenty seven (27) Landscape Contractors in which they were able to obtain the continuing education units needed for re-certification with minimum interruption of their business activities and for a low cost.

4-H and YOUTH DEVELOPMENT has directly worked with 1,878 through 9 active 4-H Clubs

including STEM, Leadership and Embryology with schools.

CODING STARTS YOUNG 4-H Program had results show that 57% of the children answered Yes to the question "I know that instructing Dash to move is how computers are programmed (coded)." It was observed that the children made decisions about how to change the robot movements. We extrapolate this to mean they will continue to apply these skills throughout their education and lives.

LEARNING 21st LEADERSHIP SKILLS program by the Jackson County Youth Leadership Council (YLC) is preparing youth for the ever changing world through real world experiences. One member stated "I learned how to be accountable for the direction and focus of an entire group, how to plan meetings, and communicate on behalf of a group.

FCS just started back in October of 2018 after a 10 month FCS coverage lapse, however new FCS Agent did have impact on about 50 residents in Healthy Nutrition Choices, Cooking and Healthful Hints with Shopping. CED did offer a healthy lifestyle walking program (SSS) mentioned below so that a FCS program did occur when office had no FCS Agent the first half of 2018.

The SMOKIES SKI-WALKING SCHOOL (SSS) of Spring 2018 had twelve (12) participants that attended the school with some even purchasing their own ski-walking poles after trying our county extension center's rental ski-walking poles. A few of the participants said "they enjoyed the class" and "could feel the poles working their shoulders and arms" more than just walking. Six (6) of continuing to ski-walk one month after the school concluded June 4, 2018.

The new LIVESTOCK and ANIMAL AGRICULTURE AGENT worked with 793 livestock people, primarily working through the Jackson, Macon and Swain (JMS) Cattleman's Association in herd health, livestock nutrition and new 4-H LIVESTOCK CLUB.

BEEF QUALITY ASSURANCE (BQA) Training provided 16 producers with BQA certifications, had 5 producers utilize our cattle handling/working equipment and corral system, and 25 producers who expressed a better understanding of vaccination and de-worming protocol with plans to utilize what they learned on their own farm operations. Having producers in the 3 county area who have a better understanding of best management practices and with a knowledge of how to use different working facilities and methods, we are able to show the public that our producers are invested in providing the public with a product that they can feel confident and comfortable buying, knowing that the producers have raised that animal in a humane and healthy way.

CRD and NATURAL RESOURCES included work with 816 through Annual Conservation Field Days with the schools, Community Exercise Training, Wildlife and Resource Management.

The ANNUAL CONSERVATION FIELD DAY requested that Jackson Extension be a presenter for 2018 field days and teach "WEATHER" because weather is a Core Curriculum study during 5th grade in NC. CED taught weather forecasting basics to about 350 5th grade students. The teachers were very pleased with the presentation!

ADMINISTRATIVELY it was a big year for Jackson Extension since it moved to a nice new office in May and with the move it required much energy from staff to get settled and to host an open house for public and a "Farmers Breakfast" in June. Jackson ALS met once in April 2018 to have a regular meeting with agents and their work, along with being trained in Civil Rights and to give feedback to the Community Needs Assessment. TEconomy for Jackson was completed in August and the Agents attended the NCCE Annual Conference in Novembers. All Jackson Extension Staff received training in Civil Rights and the Canity Customer Service. CED was trained in Management Essentials in November. VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT had 108 volunteer 387 hours that benefited 1,670 residents for a value \$9,555 to the county.