

Fayette County Cooperative Extension Service

# Report to the the People 2024

## 2024 Fayette County Extension Highlights:

- 41,466 *public contacts*
- 24,273 *youth participants*
- 4,605 *adult volunteers*



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# Family and Consumer Sciences

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## Food Preservation

To promote safe canning practices in Fayette County, the Family and Consumer Sciences Agent presented a beginner's canning class. Additionally, the agent planned an Apple Butter class to align with the produce available in season in the county and local apples were used. 14 participants attended the beginner's canning class. During the class, participants were taught the basics of canning, food safety and sanitation, equipment needed, and best practices. This class provided hands-on instruction and participants made apple butter.



The participants were involved in the water bath canning process from start to finish. They washed and peeled apples, prepared the fruit according to the recipe, sanitized and filled half-pint jars to the correct headspace, fastened lids and rings, loaded the water bath canner, and removed the jars successfully after the processing time. Each participant was able to take their own jar of Apple Butter home.

After the program,

- 100% of participants reported improved skills in home canning techniques as well as how to prepare food and containers for canning, being able to identify safe, research-based methods for food preservation, and the necessary equipment for water bath canning.
- 79% of participants reported understanding the difference between low acid and high foods and the correct method of canning for each type of food.

The practice of food preservation is important to local culture and history. Three participants expressed this as they attended the class together. A grandmother, mother, and daughter all signed up to participate in the class to learn together. Three generations were present in one class, which is inspiring and shows the importance of continuing this work in the community.



## Estate Planning

Research suggests that more than 50% of Americans think estate planning is important, but only 33% have a will. For the nearly 70% of Americans without a written will, many indicate they do not believe they have enough assets to leave behind anything of worth. In response, Maranda Brooks, FCS Agent, developed a 6-part financial/estate planning monthly series (January 2024-June 2024), utilizing her knowledge gained from attending the professional development conference NEAFCS

and combining existing Fayette County Extension financial planning curriculum to form the Planning Ahead Series. Each session included an agent presentation and provided guest experts presenting on related topics.

100% of evaluations reported that attending the Planning Ahead series helped participants gain increased knowledge regarding financial education, future estate planning, and other important financial considerations. 90% of attendees also expressed how helpful this series was to overall planning and 90% planned to incorporate one or more of the strategies, tools, and/or the toolkit binder, as they are estate planning, handling financial changes, and working on end-of-life planning and final wishes.



# Agriculture and Natural Resources

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## Producer Support

The past year has been extremely productive despite the brief period Fayette County Extension was without an Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent. Educational programming, publications, and trainings were given to hundreds of producers, agriculture lenders, and youth across the county on topics relating to beef cattle, small ruminants, grain crops, agriculture economics, pasture management, equine management, pesticide and chemical management and natural resources.



There was an increase in client demand for consultation and farm-visit services. Within the last eight months from the new ANR agent starting, there have been over 20 farm-visits conducted, allowing for one-on-one consultations with producers about any issues or specific questions they may have. Over 300 soil samples have been analyzed for approximately 50 producers to help them better manage their crop, hay, and pasture production in a profitable and sustainable manner. Hay sampling has gained popularity in the county with producers as well. Fayette County Extension has served approximately 15 producers, totaling around 40 hay samples in the last eight months. This service gives producers an accurate quality and nutritional value of their hay, allowing them to supplement feed as needed to their animals and/or better market their hay for sale. Fayette County ANR has worked in a joint effort with other county agents to bring regional programming in agricultural economics, beef cattle, hay production, and hay analysis. Also, Fayette ANR continues to work closely with the Fayette County Conservation District, Farm Service Agency, and Fayette County Farm Bureau Federation to better serve the agricultural producers and youth of the county.

## Horticulture

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### Home Horticulture



The Fayette County Horticulture program had a productive year, with home horticulture continuing as the most widely used Extension program. Thousands of residents were engaged in topics such as lawn care, food production, pollinator preservation, pest management, and wildlife issues. Summer drought, pest problems, winter cold, and storm damage contributed to an increase in inquiries. Fayette County Horticulture trained a new class of Extension Master Gardener volunteers, expanding the team to 70 active members who support projects like The Arboretum, Seedleaf Farm, community gardens, and events such as the Growing Community gardening bootcamp, and the

Bluegrass Fair Flower and Vegetable Show. Fayette County Horticulture distributed over 3,000 vegetable transplants and seeds and donated an average of 1,000 pounds of produce annually to local food banks. Through partnerships, Fayette Horticulture conducted over 500 free soil tests and offered hands-on gardening education at Connie Griffith Ballard Towers senior living facility. Outreach also included 20 Gardener's Toolbox classes, a monthly newsletter, and a growing social media presence, collectively reaching over 191,000 people. The program remains committed to providing accurate, unbiased gardening information to all Fayette County residents.

# 4-H Positive Youth Development

## Junior Chef Program

Cooking classes for youth, like the Junior Chef program, have become increasingly popular. Participants learn essential life skills, foster independence, and take part in hands-on experiences. Learning to cook at a young age equips children with nutritional awareness, problem-solving abilities, and creativity, while also opening doors to career exploration in the culinary field. The Junior Chef program, offered at the Fayette County Extension Office from September 4th to October 9th, provided youth aged 9-13 with a six-week opportunity to develop cooking skills, practice kitchen safety, and socialize with peers. With 16 participants (5 males and 11 females), this program allowed young chefs to explore the joys of cooking in a safe and supportive environment.



The program's impact was evident in the confidence gained by participants in their kitchen abilities. By the end of the six weeks, 100% of the youth reported they could help prepare a family meal, cut food using a knife, measure ingredients correctly, and follow recipe directions, with or without assistance. Many parents shared positive feedback, noting their children's newfound enthusiasm for cooking and willingness to assist with meals at home. One parent remarked, "Olivia has not only enjoyed trying new foods—she's extremely picky—but also making friends. She loves helping in the kitchen now." The Junior Chef program not only fostered culinary skills but also encouraged personal growth, social connections, and a love for cooking among its young participants.



## 4-H Summer Camp

In 2024, Fayette County 4-H Camp experienced significant growth, with an increase of 109 campers, marking a milestone as the camp reached full capacity for the first time in a decade. This growth reflects the rising interest in programs that offer youth opportunities for hands-on learning and personal development. Campers participated in a wide range of engaging activities, including high ropes courses, canoeing, archery, and arts and crafts. These experiences not only provided entertainment but also taught valuable skills such as teamwork, resilience, and problem-solving in a fun, supportive environment. Beyond the exciting activities, 4-H Camp fosters critical life skills like independence and responsibility. Away from home, campers learned to manage their daily schedules, care for their belongings, and contribute to group activities. These lessons helped build confidence and self-reliance, leaving a lasting impact on the participants. The significant increase in attendance demonstrates the value families place on such enriching experiences and highlights 4-H Camp's success in creating a space for youth to grow, learn, and thrive.