

EXTENSION *Today*

4-H CELEBRATES ITS 100 YEARS WITH GIFT TO NATION

by Martha Jackson

This past year, as part of its Centennial celebration, 4-H/Youth Development held something called *county, state, and national conversations* to help young people expand their role in shaping their own lives and the world around them.

"It was an exciting process," said Miguel Carlin of Boone County, who is vice-president of Kentucky 4-H for 2002-03 and a freshman at the University of Kentucky. "We weren't just creating an agenda for the nation, but for Kentucky as well."

Julie R. Dodson of Woodburn, state 4-H secretary for 2002-03, also took part in the conversations from the county to the national level. "I was astonished that most every state in the nation was looking for the same things to help out America's youth," she said. Dodson is a sophomore at Western Kentucky University.

These conversations brought together youth and adults to talk about strategies for helping youth develop in positive ways. The talks involved not only youth and adults from 4-H/Youth Development, but a wide range of other organizations.

"It was a birthday gift from 4-H to the nation—something with more impact than a monument," said Wendy Stivers, Extension specialist for 4-H/Youth Development Education. Stivers helped organize the conversations in Kentucky and traveled with the state group to the national event.

"The conversations increased awareness of 4-H at the community level, "what we're doing and are willing to do with other organizations

***\$2 million grant**—The Kentucky Agricultural Development Board has awarded \$2 million to Friends of Kentucky 4-H to set up an endowment. Celebrating at a state fair breakfast were, from the left, Smith Mitchell, for ag board secretary Gene Strong; John Mark Hack, director, Governor's Office of Agricultural Policy; Jay Hellman, Friends chairman; Scott Smith, dean of the UK College of Agriculture; Sam Lawson and Wayne Hunt, ag board members; and Billy Ray Smith, state agricultural commissioner.*



interested in furthering youth development issues," Stivers said.

Conversations on the county level began in Kentucky and elsewhere in the nation last year. Nearly all of Kentucky's counties—108 out of 120—held local conversations in October and November of 2001, and almost 3,000 youth and adults took part.

Kentucky's state conversation was held in January at eight different sites at the same time, and the state received some positive attention nationally for its multi-site approach. A satellite hookup at the end of that event made it possible for everybody to hear Monica Hardin, Miss Kentucky 2001, talk about developing youth in positive ways.

The national conversation was held in February. Youth, 4-H staff, and volunteers—24 in all—traveled to Washington, D.C. for the event, where they met in small groups with other youth and adults from around the country. Using laptop computers, the small groups pooled their ideas to come up with a potential national

agenda. Then, they voted to pick the top proposals.

Recommendations for programs and policies were presented to President George W. Bush in April. Plans are that by the end of this year, Kentucky youth, accompanied by adult leaders, will travel to the home office of every Kentucky legislator and every Kentucky member of Congress to personally deliver a copy of the recommendations.

Among ideas that Kentucky 4-H/Youth Development plans to encourage will be:

- Policies involving young people in decision-making in government and in youth organizations.
- Community service as part of school curriculum.
- Mentoring and sharing of experience between generations.

Kentucky 4-H/Youth Development will continue to make possible a wide array of other activities for young people through 4-H clubs, environmental education, summer camps, and county and state fair competitions.

FROM ACROSS THE COMMONWEALTH

Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service programs are locally defined and administered. Here are a few examples of county Extension programs that are making a real difference in people's lives.

Honey Money

For the past four years, the **Letcher County** Cooperative Extension Service has helped local beekeepers—and those interested in beekeeping—learn more about producing a quality product. As a result, the Mountain Beekeepers Association has been formed, the number of hives in Letcher County has tripled, the average output of each hive has increased by two quarts, and the price per quart has increased by half.



Safer Farming

To help youngsters avoid being hurt or killed on farm equipment, the **Taylor County** Cooperative Extension Service collaborated with the local FFA chapter to offer safety classes. Teen members of 4-H and FFA designed the program for younger children. The 59 youngsters who attended the safety session learned how to pay attention to what they are doing and avoid putting themselves in danger.

Learning Interview Skills

To help teens learn skills they need to interview for a job, the **Bracken County** Cooperative Extension Service sponsored an event to teach interviewing skills to 4-H members who participated in the annual 4-H Rally Day. At the rally day, they were interviewed by several judges about how they completed their 4-H projects. The young people learned to become comfortable being interviewed.

Better Nutrition

Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) para-professionals in the **Marion County** Cooperative Extension Service taught financially strapped homemakers how to stretch their food dollars while maintaining high nutrition. All 142 families in the program showed a positive change in their diets.



Dealing with Anger

The **McLean County** Cooperative Extension Service 4-H program, in partnership with 23 teen volunteer leaders from the local high school's family and consumer sciences department, taught fourth and fifth graders ways to deal with anger and appropriately resolve their problems through a three-week, four-session program called *Talking with TJ*. Afterwards, 223 students reported that they learned how to stay cool in frustrating situations, express their feelings clearly, and say the right words to resolve their conflicts.

Marketing Goats

Knox and Laurel County goat producers, with the cooperation of the London Farmers Livestock Market and Cooperative Extension agents from **Laurel, Clay, Knox, Whitley, and Bell counties**, have put on two special goat sales to help market locally produced goats. Extension agents led and trained the producers on setting up and arranging the sale. The first sale was held in December 2000, with 386 goats selling at an average price of \$85 per head. Twice as many goats were sold at the second sale in March 2001, with an average price of \$92 per head. Extension sponsored three tours for producers to learn to produce goats more profitably.



Starting Businesses

Fort Harrod Area Family and Consumer Sciences agents sponsored a seminar to provide basic information for families about starting a business. Half of the 44 seminar participants reported being more confident about starting a business, and more than a quarter reported plans for a business. A follow-up session is in the works.

Teaching Teachers

On the recommendation of the county 4-H council, the **Floyd County** Cooperative Extension Service offered 18 hours of professional development training for county classroom teachers and 4-H club leaders. Topics included science, social studies, practical living/career education, and communications/language arts. This program saved Floyd County taxpayers \$3,000 in fees that would have been paid for outside consultants and resources. Six months after the training, 90 percent of the teachers had begun using at least one new teaching technique or course in their classrooms.

Sweeter-than-Ever Swine

A farmer in McCracken County wanted to feed swine using the waste sugar water from a local soft drink bottling plant. The farmer sought help from the **McCracken County** Cooperative Extension Service. Working with University of Kentucky Extension faculty members in agronomy, biosystems and agricultural engineering, and animal sciences, the county agent provided the farmer with the technical expertise he needed. The farmer now feeds his swine herd the 3 percent sugar water generated each day in the bottling plant's cleanup.

That's about 33,000 gallons of rinse water recycled through swine each week. The bottler pays the farmer about \$5,000 per month to dispose of the sugar water. Previously, the bottler had paid \$10,000 per month to dispose of the sugar water at a sanitary waste treatment plant.

Kentucky Sausage

Three grain producers worked with the **Simpson County** Cooperative Extension Service to develop a new enterprise for specialty cut meats. In collaboration with UK marketing and meat specialists, the producers developed a business plan and strategy for creating a successful business venture. Kentucky's Finest Sausage Company opened its doors in 2001, offering Kentucky-grown beef and dairy products to local consumers and retailers nationwide.

Helping Migrant Workers

In Hancock County, 50 Hispanic seasonal workers attended a health fair sponsored by the **Hancock County** Cooperative Extension Service. At the fair, the workers learned from a local dentist and members of the county health department how to improve their health. More than 50 percent of the participants indicated that they planned to improve the quality of their lives by paying more attention to their health and using the recipes and safety information they received at the fair.

Buying That First Home

Participants in the four-week program *First Time Home Buyer's Workshop Series* offered at the **Boone County** Cooperative Extension Service learned tips for each step in the home buying process. All participants calculated the maximum monthly payment they could afford. Nearly nine out of 10 participants ordered credit reports to find out if they might qualify to purchase a home.

Making Way for Wellness

To help promote healthier diets, the **Jefferson County** Cooperative Extension Service collaborated with Lazarus Department Store. A four-week UK Wildcat Way to Wellness program introduced sound nutrition practices. Over 60 employees participated in the workshop. As a result 80 percent of the employees reported reading food labels to reduce their intake of fat, salt, and sugar; 65 percent reported reducing serving sizes of foods; and 70 percent reported that when eating out they had been ordering healthier dishes.



Diversifying Agriculture

The importance of diversifying agriculture continues to be an important focus of the **Scott County** Cooperative Extension Service. The growth of the Central Kentucky Grower's Association, a marketing cooperative, continues to help farmers market their vegetables and improve profits on their farms. The number of growers has increased, and sales have increased even beyond projections, from \$190,000 last year to \$450,000 this year. This is a \$50,000 increase over early projections.

Kentucky's Youth Are Our Greatest Resource

It has been nearly 40 years since I began my association with 4-H. I was 9 years old, a newly-minted 4-H'er growing corn and making an extension cord for my projects in the small rural county where I grew up. A lot has changed in that period of time, but one thing has not changed—the value of 4-H and youth development in making a positive difference in the lives of young people. There is no other organization that is so centered on the concepts of learning by doing and making the best better. No matter what the project or activity a young person is involved in through 4-H, the common experience of most 4-H'ers is that they learn and grow in self-confidence, leadership ability, and character. This happens through some form of experiential learning as part of 4-H projects and activities. In my own life, 4-H had a profound influence on me well before I took on this role as associate director of Extension.

The front page article of this edition of *Extension Today* celebrates the fact that 4-H has been active and

an influence on Kentucky's youth for 100 years. As I write this, I have just returned from the Kentucky State Fair. We held a celebration in Cloverville on the first Friday of the fair. Commissioner of Agriculture Billy Ray Smith, representing Gov. Paul Patton and the Kentucky Agricultural Development Board, ceremonially presented a \$2 million check to Friends of Kentucky 4-H. This new endowment will enable our Cooperative Extension Service agents and volunteer leaders to provide innovative new programming to our Kentucky youth. None of the principal of this endowment will be spent; rather, the interest will be used to support new programs, curricula, and activities that encourage agricultural entrepreneurship and innovation by our youth. This is but one important part of our 4-H and youth development program that will help us to invest in our most important resource in Kentucky—our young people.

It has been quite a while since I was growing corn as a 4-H'er on our Ohio River bottom farm. However,

like many of you reading this article, my 4-H experience has had a profound effect on my life and my development. We can make a difference in the lives of Kentucky's young people and help shape the future for a better Kentucky. I like what author Graham Greene said about the future: *"There is always one unexpected little moment in life when a door opens to let the future in."* 4-H is a program that helps us open the doors to the future for our Kentucky young people. We know that some of our methods may change, but the core mission will not—opening doors of opportunity for our Kentucky youth. We celebrate 100 years of 4-H, looking back at the past but also anticipating the future. This new endowment will help us build a better future through 4-H.

—Larry W. Turner, *Associate Director, Cooperative Extension Service*

Extension Today is published twice a year and highlights program accomplishments of the Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service. For more information, contact us:

in your local phone book, under
Cooperative Extension Service

or

Larry W. Turner
Associate Director
Cooperative Extension Service
University of Kentucky
306 W.P. Garrigus Building
Lexington, KY 40546-0215

or

<http://www.ca.uky.edu>

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