Agricultural Update Branch County Farmer’s Day

The 47th Annual Farmers Day was held on Monday, February 17, 2013 at the Branch County Area Careers Center in Coldwater. Fifteen educational sessions were held:

Affordable Health Care Act—Roger Betz, MSU Extension Educator

Enhancing Food Flavors by using Herbs and Spices—Val Albright, Sarah Johnson & Suzanne Pish, MSU Extension

Field Crops Profitability—Bruce MacKeller, Dennis Stine MSU Extension

Managing your Backyard Poultry Flocks—Dr. Darrin Karcher, Poultry Specialist, MSUE

Exploring 4-H: Connie Lange, MSUE Educator. All day hands-on craft workshop.

Pork Quality Assurance: Megan Sprague, Michigan Pork Producers Association

Want to take a livestock project to the fair - Half hour sessions throughout the day presenting information on how to start eight livestock projects: Jr. Livestock Board and 4-H Volunteers.

What’s the Fuss about On-Farm Food Safety? - Phil Tocco, MSU Extension

Practices to Improve Soil Health—What is it and Why it Matters—Paul Gross, MSU Extension

Farm Business Succession and Estate Planning—Roger Betz, MSU Extension Educator

Chemigation /Fertigation Where does it fit and what do you need? - Lyndon Kelley, MSU Extension Educator

Small Ruminant Management—Dr. Richard Ehrhardt, MSUE Specialist

Gluten Free—Is it for me? - Diana Fair—MSU Extension Educator

Field Crops Profitability—Bruce MacKellar, Dennis Stine, MSU Extension Educators

Gardening: Growing Your Own Made Easier & Better—Kent Neitzert

Restricted Use Pesticide Exams—Michigan Department of Agriculture.
Connie Lange  
Extension 4-H Educator

Branch 4-H Leadership roles and opportunities

Branch County 4-H provides leadership roles for adults and youth in club programming as well as county, state, national and international programs. During 2013, 21 new volunteers completed the 4-H Volunteer Selection Process which included an application, references, criminal history check, an interview and an orientation. Criminal history rechecks were conducted on current volunteers. Branch County has 38 4-H youth leaders who teach others about projects such as livestock and visual arts. Youth also serve in offices for their clubs and are elected to serve on county wide boards. Branch County 4-H youth leaders were instrumental in planning for a state 4-H youth leader council which will be forming in 2014 through the work of the State 4-H Leadership and Civic Engagement Work group. Youth Leaders around the state serve in program planning roles on events like state 4-H workshops held at 4-H Kettunen Center in Tustin, MI and 4-H Capitol Experience held in Lansing each year. Two Branch Youth are selected to attend leadership training at National 4-H Congress in Atlanta, Georgia each year and several other youth are selected represent Branch County in Washington D.C. at 4-H Citizenship Washington Focus.

Focusing on science literacy through 4-H

Youth in the United States are lagging behind youth in other countries in science knowledge and application. 4-H has a unique capability to teach science in a fun hands-on approach to help youth understand the application of science principles. In 2013, Branch County youth had the opportunity to learn about science areas of electrical, rocketry and robotics through youth and adult leaders in those areas. Branch County youth also took part in the National 4-H Science Day Project.

4-H Exchange Programs

Branch County 4-H Interstate Exchange Programming is over 30 years old! Through this two year program, youth host or travel to another state to create and foster a spirit of understanding and appreciation of others’ heritage, customs and other cultural factors, foster the development of initiative and independence, learn about other areas of our state and nation, create new, and perhaps, lasting friendships, gain new insight, leadership experiences and abilities, expand 4-H understanding beyond local community or county, gain 4-H ideas to strengthen local programs, share information learned with other members and families upon return home, become involved in another community, Branch County just recently completed an exchange with Routt County, Colorado. 4-H also provides summer or yearlong international exchanges for youth.
Suzanne Pish
Sarah Johnson
Valerie Albright

Extension Educator
Extension Educator
Program Instructor

Through community-based approaches, Michigan State University Extension delivers high-quality and affordable education to serve the needs of children, youth, families and communities in urban, rural and suburban areas. MSU Extension programming promotes healthy lifestyles and educates Michigan residents, allowing each individual to acquire the skills to take control and manage his or her personal health, consume an affordable and nutritious diet, improve self, family and community relationships, reduce the spread of disease and to be a leader in the food industry.

⇒ Nutrition and Physical Activity

◊ Communities Preventing Childhood Obesity—Branch County We Can!

“Mobilizing Rural Low-Income Communities to Assess and Improve the Ecological Environment to Prevent Childhood Obesity” is a USDA funded AFRI grant. Community coaches (Sarah Johnson), county Extension Educators (Suzanne Pish), and others involved in the grant have access to various curricula and other materials and resources to help reduce obesity in four year olds. MSU Extension has partnered with Branch County Great Start Collaborative on this grant and initiated a program developed by the National Institute of Health (NIH) that can help youth and families maintain a healthy weight. Branch County We Can!® (Ways to Enhance Children’s Activity and Nutrition) draws on the research and community studies that NIH has conducted for several years.

Branch County We Can! provides activities and programs that encourage improved nutritional choices, increased physical activity, and reduced screen time for individuals and families in Branch County. The initiative is unique among existing youth obesity-prevention efforts in its focus on programs and activities for parents and families as a primary group for influencing youth audiences.

We have joined a network of other community-based organizations around the country that are helping to create a healthier hometown environment by conducting We Can! programs in Branch County.

Branch County We Can! is delivering programs, hosting community events, and promoting media messages that encourage youth and families to:

- Choose a sufficient amount of a variety of fruits and vegetables per day.
- Decrease consumption of high-fat foods and energy-dense foods with low nutrient value.
- Enjoy small portions at home and at restaurants.
- Substitute water, fat-free milk, or low-fat milk for sweetened beverages.
- Engage in at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity on most-preferably all-days of the week.
- Reduce sedentary activity by limiting screen time to no more than 2 hours per day.

We also will be encouraging families to:

- Increase the availability and accessibility of healthy foods in the home.
- Limit the availability and accessibility in the home of sweetened beverages, high-fat foods, and energy-dense foods with low nutrient value.
- Enjoy small portions at home and at restaurants.
- Support and enable family physical activity.
- Support and enable reduced screen time.
Nutrition and Physical Activity

◊ Eating Right is Basic/Eat Healthy Be Active—Series of six contacts or One Time Presentations

* Series:
  - Sarah Johnson- 13 adults completed a series at the Friendship Center.
* One Time Presentations:
  - Sarah Johnson- 90 adults through Project Fresh at WIC and 5 at Pines Behavioral Health
  - Sarah Johnson and Val Albright- 11 Adults at Farmer’s Day
* Series/One Time Presentations:
  - Val Albright: 88 adults participated in a series or one time presentations to improve food choices and to choose physical activity for healthier lifestyles through MI Works PATH (Partnership, Accountability, Training, and Hope) Program. The PATH program consists of activities designed to help families move toward financial independence. It is designed to fulfill the requirements of the federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) law.

◊ Show Me Nutrition- Show Me Nutrition educates youth on nutrition, food safety, physical activity, media influence and body image. Participants receive handouts and content as well as engage in activities to learn how to have a healthy lifestyle.

* Branch County Head Start and Great Start Readiness Series:
  - Val Albright- 107 preschoolers at Coldwater’s Fremont Street Head Start
  - Sarah Johnson- 115 preschoolers at Lincoln Learning Center.
* Bronson Community Schools Series:
  - Sarah Johnson- Anderson Elementary School- 267 Kindergarten through 2nd and Ryan Elementary School- 175 3rd through 5th grade.
* One Time Presentations Sarah Johnson: 338 Branch County 3rd Graders at Project RED (Rural Education Day)
Nutrition and Physical Activity

- **Cooking Matters** - Cooking Matters Signature Courses teach family members skills that will last a lifetime and more as they share them with relatives and friends. When families practice what they’ve learned during the six-week course—how to plan, purchase, and prepare healthy, tasty, and affordable foods at home—they are winning the fight against childhood hunger and protecting themselves from the destructive consequences of poor child nutrition. Highlights of Cooking Matters’ include: 89% of Cooking Matters for Adults graduates improved their cooking skills, which means they’re better equipped to make healthy meals for their families at home.

  - The Cooking Matters Class in February 2013 enrolled thirteen Head Start mothers for a seven weeks course. The class was very motivated and loved the many new foods and recipes they experienced. One of the mothers said that she had made our Turkey Chili with Vegetables every week because her child liked it so much. She was so happy to find something that he really liked that was healthy. Sampling the recipes in class, then going home and making the recipe helps to improve confidence in the kitchen, and this encourages the participant to try new foods and recipes with their families.

Social-Emotional

- **RELAX: Alternatives to Anger** - A four-part educational series designed to help adults, parents, teens and caregivers increase their knowledge about anger issues and put anger management and healthy relationship skills into practice.
  - Suzanne Pish: Nine series were offered throughout District 13 serving a total of 88 adult participants. Fifteen adults were from Branch County.

- **The SMILE (Start Making It Livable for Everyone) program**, designed as a tool to help parents deal with their children in the context of divorce, provides information about how parents can better define and attend to their children’s emotions and needs. It also gives parents tools to develop closer relationships with their children. The program promotes parental cooperation by stressing the importance of co-parenting for children’s well-being. It provides specific behavioral guidelines so parents can relate to each other more positively.
  - The SMILE program, in partnership with Branch County Friend of the Court and Circuit Court, served 105 adults in 2013.
Social-Emotional and Nutrition and Physical Activity

◊ Nurturing Your Body and Mind: Combines social-emotional education and nutrition education, teaching the following two curriculums.

RELAX: Alternatives to Anger: A four-part educational series designed to help adults, parents, teens and caregivers increase their knowledge about anger issues and put anger management and healthy relationship skills into practice.

Eat Healthy ● Be Active: Community Workshop Series, Be Active, Healthy, and Happy! Eating and physical activity patterns that are focused on consuming fewer calories, making informed food choices, and being physically active can help people attain and maintain a healthy weight, reduce their risk of chronic disease, and promote overall health.

* 32 adults in Branch County participated in a six contact series where Suzanne Pish provided social-emotional and Sarah Johnson nutrition education.

4-H, Social-Emotional, and Health and Nutrition

◊ Friend’s Day Camp is a fun-filled health and nutrition day camp where Youth (Age 7-11) learn about being physically active, eating healthy, agriculture, 4-H activities and being a good friend. Camp was held at the Branch County Fair Grounds, Dearth Center on July 8-12, 2013. It was sponsored in part by UDIM, VandyBougurt Farms, Branch County Altrusa, Omega Physical Therapy, Branch County United Way, Branch County Fair Board and Branch County 4-H Foundation. The cost for camps was $20.00, but financial need scholarships were available from the 4-H Foundation. Campers participated in a variety of activities provided through this cross-institute collaboration.

* 82 youth, including campers age 7-11 and counselors age 15 and older, participated in Friend’s Day Camp in 2013.