GOOD NEWS! Yancey Extension has received confirmation that the Yancey Ag Center will receive a NC Specialty Crop Block Grant. The amount will be announced by the United States Department of Agriculture. The original grant was for $68,000. The same week we learned that the Ag Center project will be presented to the Burnsville Town Board (along with three other projects) for approval from the Burnsville STEP Program. Once the town board approves the projects the projects will be submitted to the NC Rural Center for funding. The STEP group is recommending funding the project for $18,000. A work group has also been convened to begin working out An Ag Centers name and a comprehensive management strategy. The group will meet again on October 25th at noon. A site is still needed for an Ag Center.

Agriculture & Natural Resources
Jeremy Delisle, Area Agent, Mitchell/Yancey Counties

September means the tail end of the production season for many producers. However, for Extension Agents this often marks the beginning of our busiest programming window. We know that once farmers wrap up their production activities, they may actually have a bit of time to attend our meetings.

This month I took at trip with Jeff Vance (Mitchell CED) to Pilot Mountain Pride, a cooperative effort located in Pilot Mountain focused on providing marketing assistance to area farmers. We brought a load of specialty potatoes that will likely end up being sold through Lowes Foods. This was also a research trip to investigate how such a facility could fit in to our local agricultural portfolio. On that note, Yancey County Extension did host a meeting to discuss the proposed aggregation center and we are in the process of developing a name and mission statement. Next we will look into the best legal structure of the organization, staffing needs, by-laws, etc. This will be a process that will be heavily focused on over the winter months.

I also helped to establish four strawberry gardens as learning tools for children at schools throughout Mitchell and Yancey Counties. Gouge, Deyton, Bald Creek, and Bee Log schools will all participate in the program and we will utilize 4-H curriculum.

I also facilitated a Farmers’ Market Meeting to discuss our promotional grant. We are in discussions as to how to get the most advertising and promotion for the remaining balance that we have left. Market members have provided lots of input.

Attended Non-native Invasive Plants Workshop to stay informed on invasive species and control recommendations.

Met with Child Nutrition Director in both counties along with a local lettuce producer to work towards getting local produce into the school system. Things look promising.

Spoke to Extension and Community Association about the Local Food Movement. Local farmers and myself urged the group of approximately 50 people to support and help promote local farmers and the businesses that support them.

Spoke to approximately 175 6th graders at the Conservation Field Day hosted by Mitchell County Soil and Water. We talked to the children about entomology and the many uses associated with this discipline.

Worked individually with a variety of farmers and landowners to address their varied needs and goals.
As summer comes to an end and fall begins, the Agricultural Extension staff remains busy assisting growers as their production seasons wind down. The development of a local agricultural products marketing center continues to be a major focus for the Extension Center. As the feasibility study continues to move forward, an Ag Center working group has been formed to develop the operational and legal structure for the planned center. The first meeting of the working group, comprised of a diverse mixture of farmers and local leaders, was held during the month at the Yancey Extension Center to begin the structuring process.

Three pesticide recertification classes were held during September with a total of 16 pesticide applicators receiving credit for continuation of their pesticide applicator certification. Two sessions of a NC Highway Laws Pertaining to Farm Vehicles workshop were conducted at the Yancey Extension Center in conjunction with the NC Highway Patrol with approximately 20 local residents attending.

The final site visits for the WNC AgOptions Program were conducted during the month. All three of the 2011 WNC Ag Options funded grant projects from Yancey have been very successful and have utilized the $15,000 in funding to enhance their farming operations. Ms. Jennifer Ferre, WNC AgOptions Project Manager, was very pleased with the results from our successful applicants.

In addition, Agricultural staff conducted 23 farm/site visits on a variety of topics, including burley tobacco (2), hay and forages (3), commercial fruits and vegetables (9), and general home gardening and landscaping (9). Over 50 office visits and numerous telephone/e-mail correspondences regarding a wide array of agricultural topics.

4-H Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)

Jo Simpson, 4-H Program Associate

September 30th will be the closing of the 2011 federal fiscal year. I am delighted to say Yancey County’s 4-H EFNEP youth group summary reports have shown great results. During 2010-2011 there were 1078 youth reached. Impact indicators shown as a result of participating in EFNEP 87% of youth now eat a variety of foods, 91% increased knowledge of the essentials of human nutrition, 97% increased their ability to select low-cost nutritious foods and 49 % improved practices in food preparation and safety. All impact indicators were above state averages.

Youth EFNEP has began programming for this upcoming school year reaching the students in Bee Log and Clearmont Elementary. Students and teachers are delighted to see EFNEP programming back in their classrooms again as well as “Miss Popcorn” or so I am called. This year my plans are to reach every 5th grade class along with grades K-4 and add one extra week of programming to each class.

Mountain Challenge

Richard Chuvala, 4-H Program Assistant

September has really flown by for Mtn. Challenge. We have had a very busy month starting back at Burnsville Elementary and Bald Creek Elementary. I have 15 participants at Bald Creek and 8 so far at Burnsville, although, I expect that number to go up since the first week only had 5th graders attending. We have stayed busy developing social contracts and introducing our new participants to Mtn. Challenge. Participants have really enjoyed our icebreakers and team building activities.

At Mtn. Heritage we have continued our team building skills series throughout the month. The kids really have worked well together and are developing a good sense of how teamwork can be an important part of their lives. We also just got through with our semester cookout at Ray-Cort Park and I’m going to AB –Tech for a tour of their campus with a group of high school youth.

Our new program for court-referred clients will begin on Oct 10th. Mondays will be for our boys and Tuesdays for the girls. We are really excited about this new opportunity and look forward to working with this group.

4-H School Enrichment

Sybil Chapman, 4-H Program Assistant
September was the start of Character Counts in 2nd and 3rd grades for this school year. Character Counts is a program that teaches students the six pillars of character (Responsibility, Respect, Fairness, Citizenship, Trustworthiness and Caring). A total of 93 students in second grade and 155 students in third grade receive this training in the classroom.

**4-H Discovery**

*Linda Semon, 4-H Program Associate*

Our Green Team members and volunteers are very involved in community service and helping the Dig-In Community Garden. They have been volunteering at the garden since March and we are also helping the Empty Bowls project committee with the marketing package for the dinner they are sponsoring on October 21.

I am working with the 4-H Alumni and Friends state team to promote two events the weekend of October 21-22. On Friday evening there will be a fundraiser in Yancey County to raise money for our 4-H Endowment and on Saturday there will be a 4-H Family Fun Day in Swannanoa to introduce families to our 4-H Education Center and Camp there.

Our 4-H Discovery Clubs have met for the first time this year and are learning about migratory birds this month. Each member made a pinecone birdfeeder to take home and feed the birds this winter.

I attended the WNC Mountain State Fair to view the Yancey County Pony Express entries and help the 4-H Baa-Humm Club prepare to show llamas sponsored by Wellspring Farms. They performed well for their first time, receiving two fourth place and four fifth place ribbons. The llamas were on display the whole first weekend at the fair.

The 4-H Baa-Humm Club demonstrated how to create felted art at Old Timey Day on the square Saturday, September 24. They let youth and adults make a sample needle felted picture to take home with them.

**4-H AfterSchool:**

*Bald Creek Afterschool*

*Susie Hedrick & Glenna Taylor, 4-H Program Assistants*

This month the children have been able to enjoy the nice weather we have had by running and playing outside. This has given them plenty of exercise and fresh air. They have also had the opportunity to learn how to plant and care for strawberries. Jeremy DeLisle, our new Ag Agent, came to the school and taught the kids how to plant the strawberry plants, prepare the soil, mulching, etc. He plans to come back and teach them how to measure the plants and check their progress. Next spring they will hopefully be enjoying the “fruit” of their labor. The high school students in the FFA “PALS” program began coming this month. They will come once a month and engage the students in different learning activities.

One highlight this month was visiting the Recycling Center in Burnsville. Anthony Allen welcomed the kids to the Center and gave them a tour of the facility. He showed them how items were sorted and compacted. He was very helpful and informative. Since the students at Bald Creek do a recycling program, this helped them have a better understanding of the whole process and why recycling is so important. Every afternoon they go to each classroom and collect the plastic and paper to be recycled. This will help them do an even better job of recycling.

We have also had visits from Jo Simpson teaching about Nutrition, Linda Semon with her 4-H Discovery Club, and Richard Chuvala with the Mountain Challenge program teaching about teamwork and character building. As always, the kids are provided a snack and time for homework.

**Bee Log Afterschool**

*Elizabeth McIntosh & Gail England, 4-H Program Assistants*

The month of September was a busy one for the Beelog Afterschool 4-H program. Linda Semon, the 4-H Program associate, came to the school and worked with the children and they made P-nut Butter/ Pine Cone Bird Feeders and 4-H notepads. The 3rd, 4th and 5th graders wrote and starred in their own puppet show which they performed to the delight of the K-2 youth. Jo Simpson, Nutrition Program Associate, came to the school and helped the children make "Butterfly Bread". She spoke with the children about the food groups and proper nutrition. Jeremy Delisle, Area Ag Agent, began a program with the children to prepare a bed and plant their own strawberry plants. He taught them about the preparation of the soil and about strawberries. We took a field trip to David Duncan's Apple Orchard on Arbuckle Rd. David gave a presentation about the many apple varieties and let them pick their own bag of apples which they got to bring home. We are looking forward to October for more fun and learning and more adventures.