Work on the Ag Center (TRACTOR-Toe River Aggregation Center Training Organization Regional) continues. A site tour and work group meeting was held on December 14th.

TRACTOR is now the official working name of the center/project. Additional grants are being prepared with deadlines in January and February. TRACTOR has pulled out of the barn! Funds from the NC Specialty Crop Block Grant will be available once the contract is completed and approved. Goal would be to have it completed by early January.

The support from the county has been critical and deeply appreciated not only for TRACTOR but also for 4-H, 4-H After School, Mountain Challenge, EFNEP, and all the Extension programs. 2011 has been an incredible year and we are looking forward to another year of service to the citizens of Yancey County in 2012.

Agriculture & Natural Resources
Stanley Holloway, Agriculture Agent

This December has been very exciting as we get closer to seeing the vision of a local agricultural products aggregation and marketing center become a reality with the procurement and announcement of a site to host the center. Now the work really begins as we try to get all the details in order for equipment and infrastructure items needed for the center. Mid-month we met with Smithson Mills, consultant of the project, and members of the working group established to develop the legal structure and standard operating procedures of the center, to tour the facility and subsequently discuss our next steps. We have been getting a lot of interest from local farmers and others from the publicity of the project in the local media outlets. Also this month, we held our annual Farm City Awards Breakfast where 13 deserving local residents were honored for their contributions to Yancey County. A considerable amount of my time during the month was committed to the WNC Ag Options Program. There were over 140 applications submitted from the 18 WNC counties for the 2012 program. Unfortunately, this year’s funding for the mini-grant program was reduced by more than half over last year due to limited availability of funds from the Tobacco Trust Fund Commission. In total $150,000 has been committed for
Awarding in 2012, Yancey County had 4 applications submitted but due to the high level of competition this year, only 1 project was successful in obtaining funding at the $6,000 level. Since the program’s inception in 2004, 27 Yancey County projects have been funded bringing in $95,000 in grants from the WNC Ag Options Program. Six farm visits were conducted during the month and numerous office and telephone contacts were made regarding a variety of agricultural topics.

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

Agriculture & Natural Resources
Adam McCurry, NC A&T Agriculture Technician

This month Yancey County Cooperative Extension announced the location of the proposed Agricultural Marketing Center. This project has been in the works for a couple of years. I have been working and talking with local farmers over the past several months about this project and how it could effect their operations. Since the announcement the interest from local growers has increased. A large number of them have contacted Yancey Extension with questions about the center. Although finding a location is a huge milestone there is still a lot of work to be done on this project. It will remain one of Yancey Extension’s top priorities in the coming year.

4-H Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)
Jo Simpson, 4-H Program Associate

The Youth component of the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) began 9 new classes at Bald Creek and Micaville Elementary this month grades K-3. That is approximately 160 students being served in December. Students were excited to see me arrive to their classrooms and I was equally excited to see them. They have learned to plan healthy meals and snacks with the information they have gleaned from the new “Choose My Plate”. They also compared the similarities as well as the differences between “Choose My Plate” and “MyPyramid”.

I represented my state association the NCAEPAAT at the annual Federation Forum in the Lee County Extension Center, Sanford, NC December 9th. It was a good day, Dr Stewart, Sheri Schwab and Dr Tom Melton were representing NC State while Dr's Ray McKinnie, Claudette Smith, Rosalind Dale and Keith Baldwin represented A&T. Administration answered several pertinent questions given to them by our colleagues. We received encouraging news for the upcoming year and were told there would be several changes to the ERS system. Dr. Wanda Sykes gave a humorous and interesting presentation

Upcoming Events cont.

Apple Production Workshop
Jan. 10 & 12
Yancey Extension

Grafting Workshops
March 1 & 6
Yancey Extension
March 8
Mitchell Extension
March 13
Madison Extension

Winter Vegetable Conference
February 22 & 23
Crowne Plaza
Asheville

Apple Pruning Workshop
February
Yancey Extension
entitled "Leadership Secrets of Santa Claus". It was a very good and entertaining speech with Santa Claus as the guest of honor.

Next month EFNEP’s plans are to finish programming at Bald Creek and move onto Micaville in February and also to make a few New Year’s resolutions on ways to improve my programming.

Mountain Challenge

Richard Chuvala, 4-H Program Assistant

December brings an end to the first half of our school year. We have continued to work with our participants on team building activities and have worked to further develop life skills. We had 22 participants at Bald Creek Elementary who celebrated the holidays with a stir-fry cooking class. The kids learned how to prep the vegetables and meat, and then learned how to cook authentic Korean barbeque and Thai Beef and Basil stir-fry! At Burnsville Elementary 13 students completed the “Pipe Line” team building activity. The goal of the activity is to transport various objects or “oil” through our pipeline to the holding tank without spilling or dropping the object being transported. The kids at Burnsville were pro’s and completed every task I had for them!

December is the last month that I will be working with our participants from the S.O.A.R Class out at Mtn. Heritage. This semesters’ group have pleasantly far exceeded expectations on all of the activities I have challenged them with. We concluded our semester with the News Paper Bridge activity. The class broke up into groups and was challenged to build a bridge out of only newspapers and tape. It had to be tall enough for a 1 gallon milk jug to slide under and strong enough to support the weight of a half filled milk jug. Once again they succeeded in designing awesome structures, which not only could support the weight of the jug but also were strong enough for some of our participants to sit on! I am very proud of this semesters’ group of high school students.

We have had a fantastic semester of Mtn. Challenge and we are looking forward to another exciting and fun semester starting in January!

4-H School Enrichment

Sybil Chapman, 4-H Program Assistant

December is the month for catching up on paperwork and reports. My year-end report shows that School Enrichment programs had a yearly total of 7,617 face-to-face contacts. There are nine School Enrichment programs for second through fifth grades that are 6 hours each.

On Wednesday, December 14th, I cooked lunch for the Ag Center Advisory Council.

4-H Discovery

Linda Semon, 4-H Program Associate

4-H Discovery Club members have been working on community service projects to send to nursing homes. Thanks go out to the Yancey County Commissioners for making our 4-H Awards ceremony this year a memorable event. The 4-H youth and families involved were excited to be included on the agenda for the evening!

I took three 4-H members to the 4-H Teen Leadership Focus state event held at Sertoma 4-H Educational Center in Westfield, NC on November 4 & 5th. They attended 4-H Ambassador workshops and were able to network with over 120 youth from across the western half of the state. During the awards assembly, Yancey 4-H, Payton McCoyle was recognized as one of two West District youth with a 4-H Youth Volunteer Service Award.

On November 12th a group of our older 4-H Green Team members served tea at the Yancey History Museum. This month the 4-H youth have also started helping the museum on a regular basis with some of the grounds keeping projects.
I conducted a GIS Day (Geographic Information Systems) learning sessions with the 8th grade students at Cane River Middle School on November 16th. Integrating both their Science and Social Studies classes the students have worked on a project identifying places that youth like to visit in Yancey County. We hope to produce a map, using GPS coordinates, which will be available to youth their age visiting Yancey County.

The 4-H Baa-Humm Club walked llamas from Wellspring Farms in the Asheville Christmas Parade and will be broadcast on Thanksgiving morning from 9AM to 11AM on WLOS ABC 13. They were invited by parade organizers to spend time after the parade on Pack Square to educate the public about llamas.

4-H AfterSchool:

Bald Creek Afterschool

Susie Hedrick K-2 & Glenna Taylor 3-5, 4-H Program Assistants

Even though December was a short month for us, it was a busy and interesting month. The students completed their dulcimer lessons with Don Petty and gave a great closing performance for their parents and the other students. It was amazing what they learned in such a short time. Richard Chuvala demonstrated how to cook stir-fry with the students and we all enjoyed a delicious meal afterwards. Nelda Phillips and students from Cane River came with Linda Semon to teach about the water cycle. The Cane River students demonstrated the cycle by setting up different stations showing the stages of the water cycle. They ended by helping all of the kids make a “water cycle” bracelet. Lauren Evoy with the FFA “PALS” program came and discussed the different Christmas cultures and helped the students paint a “bubble picture”. Each student selected the picture they wanted from one of the cultures.

In addition to the regular schedule of snacks, recycling, homework, and special guests, the students love to read to the group and take turns doing this by using books from the library. A tutoring program has also been started in the After School twice a week to help the students with their reading skills.

Bee Log Afterschool

Elizabeth McIntosh K-2 & Gail England 3-5, 4-H Program Assistants

An important learning experience for the afterschool was the emergency preparedness. We used workbooks, which were educational and fun. We sometimes get to make learning fun! After the children returned from the Thanksgiving Holidays they went to work making crafts that were to become Christmas gifts for their family. Each child was able to complete 6 gifts each by the time our Christmas party rolled around and they had made their own Christmas cards to give to family members. They had their Christmas party on Friday December 16th and their parents and grandparents were invited to attend. First they enjoyed the Christmas cookies and milk and then we all went into the gym where they proceeded to have a "marshmallow war" with the marshmallow guns that were given to them as Christmas gifts. All the children had fun and we ended the 1st half of the school year with a good time. We are looking forward to January and starting a busy new year.

From The Extension and 4-H Staff

We Wish Each and Everyone Happy Holidays & Happy New Year.

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