Extension Leader of the Year

Karen Horton is our Extension Leader of the Year! A Kentucky 4-H alumni herself, she has volunteered with Oldham County 4-H since 2012.

For five years, Karen led the Oldham County 4-H Cloverbuds Club which is geared towards youth ages six through eight. Her caring nature and fun attitude helped transform a loosely thrown-together program into a well-organized learning experience for all involved. Graduated Cloverbuds return as volunteers, sharing their hands-on skills and serving as role models for current members. Parents who used to simply drop off their children for club meetings now stay to learn and help. This special dynamic builds 4-H families.

Karen continues to support Oldham County’s youth in a variety of ways, including volunteering at 4-H summer camp, 4-H Reality Store, and 4-H Communications. She is also starting a new 4-H Photography Club in 2019.

Program Efforts

• 785 youth use skills learned through 4-H to conserve natural resources
• 480 youth and adults adopted practices to conserve or protect soil and water
• 1,648 Oldham County residents reported using leadership skills learned through Extension (communications, decision making, facilitating activities)
• 2,286 youth and adults reported using life skills learned through Extension (science, engineering, and technology; gardening; caring for pets and livestock; culinary arts)
• A total of 3,245 individuals made lifestyle changes (diet, exercise, managing stressors, healthy home practices, etc.) for the purpose of improving their health
• 389 Extension leaders were involved in addressing significant community issues
• 586 farmers and residents incorporated best production practices learned through Extension
• 301 youth mentored younger youth
• 96,061 people reached through Extension programming

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Master Gardeners Break Community Service Record Again

Oldham County's population is just over 65,000, and residential areas make up about one-half of the county. Extension Master Gardener volunteers help address the need for information about growing food and landscaping through a variety of service work in Oldham County.

Master Gardeners must complete a training program and background check in order to begin volunteering. Training consists of 11 classes, each based on Extension curriculum; homework assignments; and a final comprehensive exam. The Master Gardener program is a partnership among the Oldham County Agriculture Agent and Horticulture Assistant, UK Extension Specialists, and local plant experts who teach — plus the participants themselves who agree to learn and contribute volunteer hours.

Oldham County Master Gardeners had another record-breaking volunteer year in 2017-2018. Forty-one Master Gardeners contributed 2,156 volunteer hours to the community, a 17% increase in service hours since last year. This work is valued at over $45,000 based on the Independent Sector’s value of volunteer time in Kentucky.

Highlights of their service include:

• Many Master Gardeners volunteer at Creasey Mahan Nature Preserve and Yew Dell Botanical Gardens. Their work enhances the beauty and success of these sites and supports tourism dollars spent in Oldham County. Activities include gardening, greenhouse work, evaluating All-America Selection plant variety trials, leading tours, and assisting with special events.

• Master Gardeners take care of gardens and plant new ones at local churches. They also help their families, friends, and neighbors to become better gardeners. This provides self-reliance skills in growing food and taking care of landscapes.

• Seven Master Gardeners taught programs or helped lead activities to educate adults and youth.

• Master Gardeners maintain the Demonstration Rain Garden, located at the Extension Office. This garden helps demonstrate how a planned rain garden can reduce stormwater runoff.

• Master Gardeners volunteer at numerous other Oldham County locations, including Brownsboro Alliance Trails, used by both hikers and horseback riders.

Master Gardener volunteer activities are ongoing. Each year, the Oldham County Master Gardener Association develops continuing education and volunteer opportunities to inspire continued learning, leadership, and service.

Raising Poultry for Family and Markets

In Oldham County, the sourcing and purchasing of local foods is a continuing trend. This has also spurred a growing number of people to seek information about raising their own food, and keeping poultry flocks is a very popular enterprise. Oldham County poultry and egg sales have continued to increase over the last two decades, according to the U.S. Census of Agriculture.

To meet the growing need for poultry production knowledge, the Oldham County Agriculture and 4-H Agents and the Shelby County Horticulture Assistant planned a two-part ‘Chickens 101’ program. The program was geared to both adults and youth interested in egg and meat chicken production.
This March 2018 program featured both classroom presentations and live poultry demonstrations. Sixty-six adults and youth attended one or both sessions of Chickens 101. Participants learned about breed selection, chick care, housing, predator control, flock health, and nutrition.

A post evaluation revealed that:

- 100% of respondents learned new information relevant to raising chickens
- 100% of respondents reported they would use information learned to raise chickens to produce eggs for their families
- 36% reported that new knowledge would help them raise meat chickens for their families
- 45% reported they will sell eggs to others
- 23% reported they will sell processed/finished meat chickens to others

Based on evaluation response, classes on selling eggs and meat chickens – plus other production-oriented topics – are in demand and needed. The Oldham County Extension Service plans to host future poultry programs to provide continuing education to both youth and adults.

The success of the Chickens 101 series also led to the establishment of the Oldham County 4-H Poultry Club in the fall of 2018.

**Oldham County 4-H Excels at State Level**

- As top scorers at the State Shooting Sports Competition, three Oldham County 4-H members received green jackets: Justin Ensor, Andrew Myers, and Izzy Perez.
- Leaders of the Pack Junior Dog Bowl Team (Chloe Hardesty, Caecilia Isenhart, Freya Isenhart, and Carrie Olds) won the State Junior Dog Bowl.
- At the State Horse Bowl, Ballardsville High Riders 4-H club members placed first in two events. Emily Altsman, Harper Ash, Peyton Ash, and Carrie Olds made up the Junior Horse Bowl team. The Junior Hippology team was Harper Ash, Peyton Ash, Sydney Cobb, and Carrie Olds.
- Three Oldham County 4-H members achieved the State 4-H Gold Award: Hannah Anderson, Beth Huffman, and Olivia Minor.
- Coach Paul Harjes received the State 4-H Certified Shooting Sports Achievement Award.
- Horse Club Leader Jean Jenkins received the State Conrad Feltner Leadership Award.
- Senior 4-H'er Hannah Anderson received the 4-H State Community Service Award.

**Setting 4-H Camp Records**

Having broken the county’s attendance record in 2017, Oldham County 4-H's dream to have its own camp week became a reality in 2018.

The Oldham County 4-H Council raised over $12,510 to help support camp expenses, roughly twice the amount of donations received in 2017.

The 319 attendees included nine participants who have grown up in the program, experiencing life as a camper, teen leader, and now as an adult leader. In addition, the state employed three Oldham County 4-H alumni in 2018 as paid camp interns.

“When I first joined [4-H], I was a shy kid who did not talk to anyone. Eleven years later, and I am comfortable speaking in front of groups of people...a place I never thought I would be...4-H took a 7-year-old girl who didn’t talk and has turned me into a strong and independent woman.”

- Senior 4-H Member
Collaborating for Community Health

Extension creates partnerships to increase productivity, consolidate resources, and eliminate duplication of services that share the common goal of improving community health. The Oldham County Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) agent brought nutrition, food safety, and cooking classes to existing programs at the LaGrange YMCA, local food pantries, farmers markets, and health clinics. These combined efforts fight the growing rate of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and foodborne illness.

In June, Kids Cooking Camp provided an opportunity for youth to explore healthy eating habits and practice food safety. The participants took home recipes and prepared meals for their families.

During the summer, a partnership with Dare to Care Food Bank brought the Cooking Matters program to youth in La Grange.

In the fall, 4-H Cooking Academy reached youth at East Oldham Middle School.

Healthier Lifestyles for Substance Abusers

Although ranked highest for health and wealth in Kentucky, Oldham County suffers from a high rate of substance abuse. Binge drinking and opioid usage have greatly increased in the past few years. Currently, Oldham County’s alarming rate for binge drinking is 3% above the state average.

Moreover, the U. S. Department of Justice has found that 76.9% of drug offenders are rearrested. A judge supervised substance abuse program, Drug Court seeks to rehabilitate substance abusers, helping prevent participants from relapsing into criminal behavior to instead become productive members of society.

In May 2018, Oldham County Extension partnered with the chief circuit court judge to bring food safety and nutrition to the Drug Court substance abuse program. The Oldham County FCS agent encourages healthy eating and cooking as well as daily exercise. The Expanded Food and Nutrition Program (EFNEP) assistant helped demonstrate easy, economical recipes that emphasize “MyPlate” recommendations. Participants received pedometers and educational materials for meal planning, food security, and cooking skills. This program was offered in both the morning and evening to accommodate work schedules.

The participants in the court-ordered program all planned to reduce their serving sizes, cook and eat at home more often, and exercise daily. The program supervisor also reported that several participants indicated using the recipes the day after the programs.

Since the May program, the EFNEP assistant has taught ongoing monthly classes to help reinforce the important issues of food safety, budgeting, and basic cooking skills.