

Report to the People 2024

Spencer County, Kentucky
Home of Taylorsville Lake

KENTUCKY  **COOPERATIVE EXTENSION**

UK MARTIN-GATTON COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND ENVIRONMENT
KSU COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, COMMUNITY AND THE SCIENCES

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MARTIN-GATTON COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND ENVIRONMENT

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Ag Day

Spencer County Ag Day, held in the fall of 2023, educated nearly 1,500 elementary students (grades K-5) on the importance of Kentucky agriculture and environmental stewardship. Organized by the Spencer County Cooperative Extension Service with local schools, the event aimed to teach students where their food comes from and foster an appreciation for farming.

The event was made possible through community collaboration, including over 70 volunteers, 23 FFA students as hosts for each classroom, and support from the Board of Education and Taylorsville Elementary staff and volunteers. Booths featured 4-H youth showcasing livestock, horses, and the 4-H program, Master Gardener's talking about plants, as well as booths on floral design with our FFA, but-ter-making with our FCCLA, nutrition, safety, and more.

Led by the Extension Office team, the event highlighted the importance of agriculture, nutrition, and safety. Staff coordinated planning, logistics, and educational booths, making Ag Day a resounding success for Spencer County's youth and community.

Commercial Pesticide Update

Each fall, the Spencer County Cooperative Extension Service hosts a meeting for commercial pesticide applicators to earn Continuing Education Units and maintain their licenses. In 2023, the hybrid meeting had 11 in-person attendees and 40 on Zoom.

Topics covered included Turf Disease and Weeds, Invasive Insects, Right of Way Weed Control, Recordkeeping, and Pesticide Safety. The event was promoted through the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's CEU schedule, the UK Turf website, and the agriculture agent's newsletter.

A post-meeting survey reflected positive feedback: "Appreciate the effort...makes it easy to get my yearly CEUs," and "Keep having it online if you can." Respondents saved a total of \$6,205 in travel and registration costs. Knowledge gains included Invasive Pests (95%), Pesticide Safety (85%), and Turf Diseases (97%). With strong virtual engagement, the 2024 training will likely be held entirely on Zoom.

Master Gardener Program

The Spencer County Master Gardener Program, launched in January 2023, is a volunteer-driven educational outreach of the Cooperative Extension Service. Participants complete 40 hours of education and then give back to the community through various horticulture projects.

Volunteers have been active in maintaining downtown Taylorsville planters, hosting project days at the library, assisting at the Farmers Market, speaking at events, working with students, volunteering at field days, and maintaining garden areas at the Extension Office. Between July 2023 and June 2024, they contributed over 511 volunteer hours, saving the community \$17,113.

The program supports the growing horticulture needs of Spencer County's expanding population. Plans for future activities include additional community projects, with a new program set to begin in January 2025 under the leadership of the agriculture agent. The program's ongoing efforts aim to educate residents and promote proper horticulture techniques while enriching the community.



Master Gardeners, Doris Cox and Gina Bryan, teaching elementary school children about gardening practices and capillary action.



Elementary Communications

Spencer County Schools and Spencer County 4-H collaborate to provide 4-H School Club Programs for all 3rd-5th grade students, focusing on communication. Each meeting requires students to introduce themselves, helping them become more comfortable with public speaking—an essential life skill.

Developing communication skills is vital in Kentucky, fostering personal growth, leadership, and community engagement. Using age-appropriate activities from the Kentucky 4-H Communications and Expressive Arts Curriculum, students enhance writing, reading, and verbal communication.

In January, 780 youth participated in 4-H demonstration and speech lessons. Classroom contests took place in March with support from 73 community volunteers and high school students. In April, students evaluated their experience and voted for “Kid’s Choice” awards.

Results showed 79% improved expression, 93% applied communication skills, and 91% demonstrated a learned skill. The program fosters confidence, life skills, and family support. With 100 more participants than last year, the program continues to thrive, strengthening youth communication countywide.

4-H Cloverbuds

The Spencer County Cloverbuds program introduces 5 to 8-year-olds to 4-H before they reach the traditional 4-H age of nine. This program prepares young participants to become well-rounded 4-H members by engaging them in activities focused on agriculture, expressive arts, health, natural resources, and science, engineering, and technology (SET).

In 2024, over 13 children are actively participating in hands-on activities and crafts during regular meetings. The program benefits from dedicated volunteer teen leaders who gain valuable leadership and communication experience while teaching and mentoring younger members. Parents also contribute by volunteering at meetings, fostering a supportive community.

Notably, 90% of participating families are new to 4-H and Extension, allowing the program to reach new audiences and expand its impact. The 4-H Agent aims to recruit additional volunteer leaders who are passionate about serving their community, ensuring the program’s continued growth and success in cultivating the next generation of 4-H members.



Leaders, teen volunteers, parents, and Cloverbuds going on a nature hike and outdoor scavenger hunt to learn about native species.

SuperStar Chef Program

The 2020 Kentucky Kids Count data shows 16.1% of children in Kentucky live in food-insecure households, while Spencer County's rate is lower at 8.4%. Despite this, challenges like limited access to fresh food and public transportation persist, with only one grocery store and several dollar stores. To address food insecurity, Spencer County Extension Services introduced the Super Star Chef camp through the Backpack Buddy program.



This free three-day summer camp, organized by the Spencer County Family and Consumer Sciences Agent and the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service, targeted underserved children aged 9 to 12. Participants learned to prepare healthy dishes like Fiesta Salsa and Whole-Wheat Pizza while developing essential cooking skills.

The camp saw 20 attendees, with 99% learning to read recipes and 100% reporting daily exercise and trying nutritious foods. Parents noted positive family dynamics as children embraced their new skills. The program fostered healthier lifestyles and stronger community engagement.



**Beth
Maxedon, FCS
Agent, teaching
SuperStar Chef
Camp**

Walking Kentucky

Regular physical activity and good mental health are essential for preventing chronic diseases. These serious public health concerns require effective interventions to encourage positive behavior change. Walking Kentucky is a community campaign designed to increase physical activity and promote health awareness. Participants don't need special equipment or locations to incorporate physical activity into their daily routine. Participants receive the tools to lead a more active lifestyle by joining Walking Kentucky.

The Bullitt, Henry, Jefferson, Oldham, Shelby, Spencer, and Trimble FCS Agents collaborated to implement a four-hundred-and-seventeen-mile Walking Kentucky Challenge. Seventy adults participated in the program, with eighty-seven percent feeling they had achieved their fitness goals. Ninety-seven percent reported exercising for thirty minutes three or four times a week or more after becoming aware of the benefits of regular physical activity.

At the end, participants shared positive experiences, such as losing six pounds, feeling more motivated to move, achieving more steps in a day, and enjoying friendly competition with co-workers.