From the Director

Nationally, we will prepare to observe a time of thanksgiving this month. Locally, we will watch as the last harvests come in, then celebrate with family and neighbors at the usual festivals and homecomings. The natural cycle of the seasons makes November the perfect month to reflect on our blessings.

As a staff, we are fortunate that we have a full team on board once again. All vacancies are now filled. Having enough members to carry the load makes a big difference. Being a state and county agency, we can count ourselves among the lucky that state cuts did not dramatically affect our programs. We can give you credit for much of that. Your letters and calls to elected officials kept Cooperative Extension programs from suffering a worse fate than some of our counterparts.

But our greatest thanks might just be to live and work in Anson County. Ask most anybody what they like about living in Anson County, and they will tell you, the way of life. We owe that to our agricultural heritage, and to the farmers that work every day to supply our food and fiber, while protecting our natural resources.

This fall report newsletter shares updates of what is happening in all of the Cooperative Extension programs in the county. We are proud of what we have accomplished, but more importantly, we are proud of the working relationship we have with you. So, our last big word of thanks goes to you. Thank you for working with us, supporting us, and allowing us to serve you and Anson County.

Janine B. Rywak
County Extension Director
4-H & Youth – Roshunda Blount, 4-H Agent

Anson County 4-H has had a busy summer and the fall is starting off full speed ahead with many upcoming events and activities that make for a successful start to 2012. 4-H’ers and volunteer leaders ended this summer with a bang after helping host our South Central District Activity Day in June. Over 500 people were in attendance representing our 15-county district. Not only did Anson County 4-H host this year, we had four to compete in presentations and three advanced on to state competition. Youth have also represented the county at NC 4-H Citizenship Focus, NC 4-H Electric Congress, NC Association of County Commissioners Youth Summit, and assisted the 4-H Agent in summer programs. While the youth are definitely staying busy, the volunteer leaders have not taken a break either. They have been working hard with club development, volunteer recruitment and various programs. Their hard work is paying off because there have been two newly formed clubs this year and an additional seven new 4-H volunteer leaders have signed up to accept the call of volunteerism. Some upcoming programs that 4-H is gearing up for are National 4-H Week, holiday workshops, school enrichment programs, new volunteer training, 4-H Robotics competition, and continue to partner with Wadesboro Elementary School for backpack buddies. In that program, to date, Anson County 4-H has given over 300 pounds of non-perishable food to ensure that targeted elementary-age school children have food to eat over the weekends.

Community Rural Dev./FCS – Janine Rywak, County Extension Director

Summer and fall are busy times implementing community development programs in the county. Most recently, Cooperative Extension hosted the annual Farm-City Week Banquet and Anson Ag Expo & Fair in September. This year marked the highest attendance to date, with an estimated total of 1600 for the week. High numbers included the addition of the SAWA Lumberjack competition to the annual Ag Expo. Many thanks to local sponsors who contributed over $16,000 to put on the week of events. Enrollment in the county’s Voluntary and Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural Districts programs has increased to 5834 acres, with an additional 2164 acres to be voted on at the next quarterly meeting in January. In addition, the Anson Ag Advisory Board hosted its first membership dinner meeting in October. In Family Consumer Science programs, Cooperative Extension offered the 15-week course Eat Smart Move More Weigh Less in the spring. The class of 33 lost a total of 196 pounds and dropped an average of 17 points from their blood pressure. Finally, Anson County was responsible for food procurement and volunteers to provide the Horn of Plenty evening meal at the NC Association of County Commissioners annual meeting in August. The total staff was involved in preparing the meal for over 700 people at the Cabarrus Arena and Events Center, and much of the food items, as well as sponsorship, came from Anson County.

Livestock – Jessica Anderson, Agricultural Agent

As the summer is winding down, most beef producers are gearing up for calving season, ushering in a new generation to the farm. Over the past few months, Cooperative Extension has had the opportunity to host two specialists from NC State to speak to the Anson County Cattlemen’s Association. A group of 15 learned how to set up and construct temporary fencing to efficiently utilize pastures in strip grazing from Dr. Matt Poore, a Beef Extension Specialist. By breaking up pastures into smaller areas, cattle will graze more efficiently, consuming more variety of forage than if left to the open area. The Beef Quality Assurance Program, through the NC Cattlemen’s Association and NCSU, is a program used to maximize consumer confidence and acceptance of beef by focusing the producers’ attention to daily production practices that influence the safety, wholesomeness, and quality of beef and beef products. Producers who are enrolled in the program can sell their calves at specialty state-graded feeder calf sales at the Stanly County Livestock Market. Through the July sale, Anson County producers gained 7.152 cents/lb over regular market price, a total value added of $9,782. For the September sale, producers reached 4.3 cents/lb over market price, a total value added of $5,945 for Anson County beef producers.
Horticulture – Aimee Rankin, Agricultural Agent
Anson Cooperative Extension has assisted private forest landowners in qualifying their woodland for the NC Present Use Value Program, which helps defer the taxes on agricultural lands. Over the summer, eleven landowners have sought forestry management plans, enrolling over 1,100 acres in the program. Extension also continues to monitor populations of a new invasive insect pest, the Spotted Winged Drosophila, which was first reported this spring. It has implications that may affect production practices on host fruit. Working closely with the small crops specialist in Raleigh, agents are taking steps to provide education and guidance to area producers whose crops may be affected. Finally, after the success of the January 2011 Local Foods conference, Anson will once again collaborate with surrounding counties to develop a second regional conference targeted to small/beginning farmers interested in learning more about regulations associated with selling safe, local, meats, eggs, and produce.

4-H & Youth Promise – Erin Dempsey, Program Director
There is never a dull moment for participants and staff of 4-H Youth Promise. Since the spring of 2011, students have had three on-going community service projects including letters to military families, a recycling project, and assisting Anson County 4-H with the backpack buddies program within school system. This is in addition to the normal worksite and community service hours that some clients have been court ordered to complete. The summer of 2011 consisted of summer day camps for staff and youth with various themes. Youth were able to make a lamp using a soda can for a base. Afterwards, staff found out they had some jealous siblings and even a couple of jealous parents. Other camps included team building exercises, a money management session, and an assortment of arts and crafts projects. Since August, and school starting back, after-school is currently in session four days a week. Youth have been working on such topics as self-esteem, character values, goals, an electrical kit and of course the on-going community service projects, while adding in new ventures along the way.

Welcome New Livestock Agent
The Anson County Cooperative Extension staff is pleased to welcome Jessica Anderson to our team as Agricultural Agent with responsibilities in livestock, row crops, forages and pesticide coordination. Bringing an educational background in animal science as well as agricultural extension and education, Jessica’s official start date was June 1. Both her Bachelors and Masters degrees are from NC State University. Jessica hails from Pennsylvania, with personal experiences in 4-H, youth livestock shows, and helping the cow-calf herd operations of her family’s farm. Since Jessica started, she has been involved in the Anson County Cattlemen’s Association, local livestock sales, the 4-H Youth Livestock Show, measuring corn, farm visits and telephone consultations. She is planning a for future programs targeting organization of a youth livestock club, FFA livestock skillathon, a new meat goat program, continuing beef quality assurance certifications, and on-going beef cattle programming. Cooperative Extension is fortunate to have her in Anson County!
Poultry – Richard Goforth, Area Poultry Agent
Local poultry producers’ biggest hurdle to marketing the product often is learning how to quickly and properly process their birds to maintain quality and safety for their customers. Unlike large animal counterparts, there is currently only one approved poultry processor located in Siler City, NC which is travel and cost prohibitive for most producers. Cooperative Extension worked with two local producers to write a grant and obtain $5000 for partial funding to build a mobile processing unit to help these growers with their birds and to be rented as a community asset. In addition, a processing field day was conducted at a nearby farm to test and train 14 people how to operate and process poultry using the equipment available on the unit. Extension Specialist Doug Smith also demonstrated cut up procedures for those who want to offer value added products for their customers. Several of the local producers are focusing on growing heritage breed poultry and providing breeding stock for themselves and others to protect and preserve these genetic lines. Being able to process and market excess males and culls from their breeder flocks helps recoup some of the cost of such ventures and improves the sustainability of the practice.

Gary Sikes demonstrates the scalder and picker, while evisceration and wash down takes place on the table behind, during the Mobile Processing, Breeder Selection Field Day on September 8, 2011.