



Virginia Cooperative Extension

Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

2023 Annual Report

Extension Office Staff:

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Stephanie Romelczyk, Extension Agent, Agriculture & Natural Resources

Cindy Franklin, Program Assistant, Food & Nutrition Program, Retired

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Virginia Cooperative Extension is a partnership of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments. Its programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, military status, or any other basis protected by law.

If you are a person with a disability and desire assistance or accommodation, please notify this Extension Office at 804-493-8924/TDD* during business hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.

*TDD number is (800) 828-1120.



Virginia Cooperative Extension

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About Virginia Cooperative Extension

Virginia Cooperative Extension brings the resources of Virginia's land-grant universities, Virginia Tech and Virginia State University, to the people of the commonwealth.

Understanding that knowledge is power, we place that power in the hands of Virginians and help them learn how to use it to improve the quality of their lives. Our Extension agents and specialists form a network of educators whose classrooms are the communities, homes, and businesses of Virginia, where they bring research-based solutions to the problems facing Virginians today.

To better utilize our resources, we form collaborations with hundreds of public and private partners and volunteers, who help us reach larger and more diverse audiences and leverage the impact of our work.

We are a product of cooperation among local, state, and federal governments in partnership with tens of thousands of citizens, who, through local Extension Leadership Councils, help design, implement, and evaluate our needs-driven programs.

We are a dynamic organization that stimulates positive personal and societal change, leading to more productive lives, families, farms, and forests as well as a better environment.

Virginia Cooperative Extension is an educational outreach program of Virginia's land-grant universities: Virginia Tech and Virginia State University, and a part of the National Institute for Food and Agriculture, an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture.

Extension programs are delivered through a network of faculty at 2 universities, 109 county and city offices, 11 agricultural research and Extension centers, and 6 4-H educational centers. Our system incorporates the expertise of faculty in the Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, College of Natural Resources, Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine, and the Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station; as well as the School of Agriculture at Virginia State University.

The Extension Office in Westmoreland County is one of 25 units within the Virginia Cooperative Extension Northeast District. The Northeast District office is located in Richmond and is led by:

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Virginia Cooperative Extension

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Mission and Vision

Mission Statement

Virginia Cooperative Extension enables people to improve their lives through an educational process that uses scientific knowledge focused on issues and needs.

Vision

Building on the strength of our agriculture, natural resource, family and community heritage, we enable people to shape their futures through research-based educational programs. Recognizing that knowledge is power, we serve people where they live and work. Audiences are involved in designing, implementing and evaluating needs-driven programs. We are a dynamic organization that stimulates positive personal and societal change leading to more productive lives, families, farms, and forests, as well as a better environment in urban and rural communities.

Our vision is:

- To help clientele improve their lives
- To use a systems approach to programming, with task-oriented work teams that respond to the needs of individuals, groups and organizations
- To provide residents prompt access to information and programs through an innovative human and technological system
- To work with the disenfranchised and underserved who need special attention by targeting our resources to programs for low-income groups, those outside the dominant culture, dysfunctional families, limited-resource farmers, at-risk youth and others
- To fully integrate a culturally diverse paid and volunteer staff in planning, implementing and evaluating programs
- To collaborate with public and private partners to better utilize our resources, heighten our impact and reach a more diverse audience
- To capitalize on the respective strengths of Virginia State University and Virginia Tech as partners in supporting the Extension mission
- To recruit, manage and reward faculty, support, and volunteer staff to reflect each person's uniqueness and value
- To have an open and positive administrative environment, based on shared leadership that maintains organizational integrity while providing opportunities for all staff members to fully realize their potential

Program Areas

Virginia Cooperative Extension is organized around four main program areas. However, our diverse Extension faculty often delivers educational experiences that are created through collaboration and teamwork that spans organizational lines.

Agriculture and Natural Resources (Stephanie Romelczyk)

Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) programs help sustain the profitability of agricultural and forestry production to enhance and protect the quality of our land and water resources. ANR programs benefit all Virginians by helping citizens learn about maintaining a healthy home environment, create sustainable rural or urban landscapes, protect water resources, grow a garden, and properly manage pests and wildlife. Virginia Cooperative Extension strives to improve the well-being of Virginians and increase producers' profitability through programs that help put research-based knowledge to work in people's lives.

Family and Consumer Sciences (Vacant)

Virginia Cooperative Extension views the family unit as the cornerstone of a healthy community. We strive to improve the well-being of Virginia families through programs that help participants put research-based knowledge to work in their lives.

Family Nutrition Program (Cindy Franklin, retired January 2024)

Our FNP program is part of our Family and Consumer Sciences Programs and offers education on a wide variety of topics to help you, your children, your schools, and your communities eat better, move more, and save money. We put research-based information to work.

4-H Youth Development (Wendy Herdman)

4-H is a community of young people across America who are learning leadership, citizenship, and life skills. 4-H, the largest comprehensive youth development program in the nation, educates young people, ages 5 to 18, through a variety of experiential techniques that encourage hands-on, active learning.

Community Viability (Specialists only)

Community viability programs are dedicated to strengthening communities and their economic viability by creating innovative programs that allow citizens and local governments to respond to local issues. Our faculty can assess community needs, design a plan of action, and determine the appropriate delivery method suitable for various programs.

To find specific information about programs in our area, visit our Extension office, go to www.westmoreland.ext.vt.edu or scan:





For Virginia.



Virginia Cooperative Extension
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4-H Youth Development in Westmoreland County - 2023

959 youth enrolled



23 volunteers enrolled

4-H School Enrichment Programs – 209 youth

Westmoreland High School Food Adventure
Club MMS 6th Grade Watershed Ed
MMS 8th Grade Reality Store



4-H Jr Camp - 36 Westmoreland youth

100% had fun
100% made new friends
91% shared that they learned something new at camp
100% of parents said they would send their child again

Grant Awarded for Westmoreland High School Store - Project Based Learning

\$8084 awarded from the Department of Education to Faye Turner & Wendy Herdman to create a school store for WHS to be led by students with intellectual disabilities and autism using 4-H Entrepreneurship curriculum

4-H Teen Leadership Opportunities

6 teens were trained and served as Teen Leaders for Jr Camp
1 teen selected to serve as Equity & Inclusion Ambassador

4-H Water Wizards Day Camp – grant funded – 9 youth

100% can define watershed
100% can describe water quality
89% understand that human activity affects water quality



\$23,830 raised in External Funding

2023 Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program

Enrolled **619 youth** in Westmoreland County Expanded Food and Nutrition Programming.

466 students graduated the program.

School and Summer Programming (Westmoreland High School, Colonial Beach Elementary, Cople Elementary and Westmoreland YMCA)

- Provided approximately 174 nutrition education classroom hours utilizing curriculum in compliance with Virginia's Standards of Learning for Health and Physical Education
- K-2nd grade students participated in the Pick a Better Snack curriculum which is presented as an in-person program.
- Students 3-5th grade participated in hands-on lessons from the Choose Health: Food, Fun and Fitness curriculum
- 6th through 12th grade participated in our hands-on nutrition and cooking lessons
- Students gained knowledge about how to choose a healthy snack or beverage and the importance of making a healthy choice
- Students gained the understanding of a sensible portion size
- Students understand the importance of planning their meals using the five food groups from My Plate
- Students were given the opportunity to read and make simple nutritious recipes

Provided 92 starter garden kits to Montross Middle School students and family during summer program.

- Students were able to experiment with growing plants on a small scale to help gain confidence
- Students were able to share their gardening experiences with others
- They learned they can grow and provide their own healthy foods

Impacts

- Students learned that it is their responsibility to make healthy choices in food safety, good food choices and physical fitness
- Students are encouraged to develop better eating habits and increase physical fitness goals
- Students are encouraged to spread their newly found information with others.

Cindy Franklin, EFNEP Program Assistant, Northern Neck, 804-493-8924 rfcynt1@vt.edu



**2023 Summary Efforts Westmoreland County
Rural Opioid Technical Assistance Project (ROTA)
Maria Murillo-Valdez, Coordinator**

2023 ROTA Local Goals

To implement Botvin Lifeskills Curriculum in 7th and 8th grade in Westmoreland County and Colonial Beach. To provide Botvin Lifeskills parenting program to the public. To provide technical assistance to any organization and implement programming addressing any community need that may arise.

Westmoreland County Schools

Montross Middle School has participated in the past, however this year due to a previous contract with the local CSB, were unable to participate. Efforts were made and I am looking forward on collaborating for the future school year.

Colonial Beach Elementary School

46 6th graders and 38 7th graders finished the Botvin Lifeskills Curriculum. The Botvin *LifeSkills Training* (LST) is a research-validated substance abuse prevention program proven to reduce the risks of alcohol, tobacco, drug abuse, and violence by targeting the major social and psychological factors that promote the initiation of substance use and other risky behaviors.

This comprehensive and exciting program provides adolescents and young teens with the confidence and skills necessary to successfully handle challenging situations.

Implemented the program followed by a pre-and-post survey from the students. 2023 was the first year that Colonial Beach Schools participated. The program implementation was successful and we have planned to implement the program again, in the upcoming year.

2024 Collaborative Opioid Prevention Education COPE Local Goals

As of October 2023, ROTA ended and we have received a new grant, COPE to extend our programming. The Collaborative Opioid Prevention Education grant (COPE) is a Virginia Tech/Virginia Cooperative Extension grant funded through the Opioid Abatement Authority. Our new focus is to provide Youth and Adult Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training to anyone in the community, especially in schools and to implement LST at full capacity as well.

Mental Health First Aid is a course that teaches how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. The training gives the skills needed to reach out and provide initial help and support to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem or experiencing a crisis. Our goal is to have faculty/staff/ anyone in schools trained by the end of the year. We will also provide the LST

Parenting Program component again this year. In order to provide LST in schools, teachers sign up and receive both the training and materials at no cost. Most schools opt to implement LST during PE/Health class (this curriculum aligns with the VA SOLs). All programming will be free, and open to anyone in the community. All programming offered in schools is evidence-based.

Westmoreland County

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Community Voices

"Household hazardous waste events present an amazing opportunity for county residents because they have the opportunity to properly dispose of chemicals, paints, and so much more. In 2023, 12,452 pounds of hazardous waste was collected. I look forward to growing this event and making it accessible to all county residents."



Kelly Brann

Marketing and Outreach Specialist,
Northern Neck Soil and Water
Conservation District

48,715

contacts made through
social media

Partners for Solutions

"Last year, 890 K-8 students from Westmoreland and Colonial Beach schools enjoyed hands-on, SOL-correlated 4-H lessons at school. These lessons covered important topics like healthy eating, science, money skills, and evidence-based prevention programs. I'm grateful for these school partnerships because they give more Westmoreland County youth access to 4-H programs."



Wendy Herdman
Agent



A student works with Mrs. Franklin to put the finishing touches on baked potato fries.

Sharing Knowledge

My name is Faye Turner. As the teacher of students with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities at Westmoreland High School, I want to commend Mrs. Franklin for working diligently to meet the needs of EVERY child in my classroom. The students have solidly learned many facts, and they are making better choices at lunch and at home. They describe foods as "go," "slow," or "whoa," and have become proficient at identifying what is and isn't good for their bodies. Some of the students have expressed sincere gratitude for the knowledge imparted; even the paraprofessionals have learned things and were prompted to ask questions. The Teen Cuisine food and nutrition program is not only essential for the students, it has been an absolute joy for the participants.



Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Program Northern Neck

WHAT IS THE EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM?

Mission: Sharing Knowledge and Empowering Communities
Extension Master Gardeners (EMG) are trained volunteer educators who work within their local communities to promote sound horticultural practices. The Extension Master Gardener program delivers the horticultural resources of Virginia's land-grant universities: Virginia Tech and Virginia State University.

Northern Neck

In 2023, 83 Extension
Master Gardeners



drove
80,449 miles



and made
**45,866 educational
contacts**



CONTRIBUTING A TOTAL OF

11,426 volunteer hours

VALUED AT

\$372,373*

TO LANCASTER, NORTHUMBERLAND, RICHMOND, WESTMORELAND, AND ESSEX COUNTIES

*Based on a value of \$32.59/hour from Independent Sector 2022 Value of Volunteer Hours by State.

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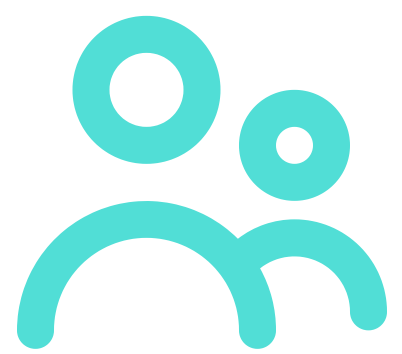




Virginia Master Naturalists

Northern Neck Chapter

2023 in Review



73

volunteers



8,092

service hours,
valued at
\$263,718



20

sites
improved
through
stewardship



19

studies
contributed to
through citizen
science



10,292

contacts made
through
education &
outreach

Who We Are

The Virginia Master Naturalist program is a statewide corps of trained volunteers providing natural resource education, citizen science, and stewardship in their communities. The Northern Neck Chapter is active in Northumberland, Westmoreland, Lancaster, Richmond, King George, and Essex counties.

2023 Activity Highlights

In 2023, Northern Neck Master Naturalist volunteers partnered with Master Gardeners and a local African American church to restore native plant habitat and create nature trails on the church property.

Volunteers collected data on forest insect populations at Belle Isle State Park, contributing to a national citizen science project aimed at understanding patterns in the availability of insect food sources to bird populations that depend on them.



Volunteers worked together with Emmanuel Christian Fellowship members to restore habitat and build trails. Photo by Ellen Hunter

State Sponsors



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