



# Virginia Cooperative Extension

Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

## 2024 Annual Report

### Extension Office Staff:

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**Stephanie Romelczyk**, Extension Agent, Agriculture & Natural Resources  
**Maria Murillo-Valdez**, NE District Project Coordinator, VCE-Collaborative  
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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, sex (including pregnancy), 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

Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

## 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:

Morris F. White, III

District Director, Northeast District Virginia Cooperative Extension

Northeast District Office

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# Virginia Cooperative Extension

Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

## 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.

To find specific information about programs in our area, visit our Extension office or go to [www.westmoreland.ext.vt.edu](http://www.westmoreland.ext.vt.edu)

### **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 (Vacant)**

Our FNP program is part of our Family and Consumer Sciences program 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](http://www.westmoreland.ext.vt.edu) or scan:





<p><b>3</b></p> <p>On-farm research trials conducted</p>	<p>Drinking Water Samples Analyzed</p> <p><b>15</b></p>		<p><b>99</b></p> <p>Area pesticide applicators recertified</p>	<p>Extension Master Gardeners trained in 3 regions</p> <p><b>66</b></p>
	<p><b>265</b></p> <p>Westmoreland County soil samples processed at VT</p>	<p><b>60%</b></p> <p>Attendees at NNVGA Annual Meeting expect to increase profits</p>	<p><b>1st</b></p> <p>Place Pesticide Safety Education Program from VDACS</p>	
<p><b>5</b></p> <p>Classes taught at Westmoreland High School and Northern Neck Technical Center</p>	<p><b>70</b></p> <p>County-funded mosquito briquettes distributed</p>	<p><b>125</b></p> <p>Produce scales certified by VDACS at Scale Certifications for 33 farmers</p>		<p><b>\$10,716</b></p> <p>Value of Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension volunteer time in 2024</p>
	<p>Value of in-person and direct consultations</p> <p><b>\$26,675</b></p>	<p><b>18,507</b></p> <p>Pounds of Household Hazardous Waste Collected</p>	<p>Fall Ag Bag take-home projects</p> <p><b>21</b></p>	
<p>Pass rate for plant pest control commercial pesticide exam AFTER Extension class</p> <p><b>100%</b></p>		<p>Funding from the Virginia Soybean Board to run statewide On-Farm Soybean Research</p> <p><b>\$10,250</b></p>	<p><b>6</b></p> <p>Pesticide Recertification Opportunities Offered</p>	
<p><b>\$14,595</b></p> <p>In donations and sponsorships to support programs</p>	<p>Stephanie Romelczyk, Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Agent - Westmoreland Co.</p> <p>Contact: 804-493-8924, <a href="mailto:sromelcz@vt.edu">sromelcz@vt.edu</a></p>		<p>Agriculture social media contacts</p> <p><b>18592</b></p>	

# For Virginia.



**Virginia Cooperative Extension**  
Virginia Tech. • Virginia State University

# 4-H Youth Development in Westmoreland County - 2024

710 youth enrolled



24 volunteers enrolled

## 4-H School Enrichment Programs – 678 youth

- Botvin Life Skills for CBES grades 6 & 7
- Nutrition Education for CBES grades K-5
- Watershed Education for MMS grade 6
- Financial Literacy for MMS grade 8
- Life Skills for WHS Special Ed



## 4-H Jr Camp - 31 Westmoreland youth

- VCE provided scholarships for 13 campers
- 100% had fun and felt safe
- 92% made new friends and learned something new
- Fav Classes: archery, making box braids, kayaking, paddle boarding, singing, fishing and animal identification

## Social, Emotional Wellness through 4-H

- 5 Westmoreland/Colonial Beach teachers trained to use 4-H Social Emotional Learning curriculum in schools at Rappahannock Education Consortium
- Camp parents shared that camp experience contributed to their camper's self-confidence and self-awareness in these ways: experience away from comfort of home and regular routine; found a new sense of independence; willing to try more; being paired and on teams with others; choosing to be positive and make the experience good.

## 4-H Teen Leadership Opportunities

- 11 teens were trained and served as Teen Leaders for Jr Camp
- 1 teen attended 4-H Congress
- 1 teen applied to be a STEM Ambassador

## 4-H Water Wizards Day Camp – grant funded – 10 youth

- 80% can define watershed
- 100% can describe what water quality means
- 100% understand that human activity affects water quality



**\$18,429 raised in competitive grants, in-kind donations & community donations to support local programs**

# Collaborative Opioid Prevention Education Program(COPE)- 2024 Westmoreland County

## What is Collaborative Opioid Prevention Education (COPE)?

COPE is a 5- year grant that funds 4 regional coordinators statewide at Virginia Tech through the Virginia Opioid Abatement Authority at Extension. VCE-COPE coordinators are supporting Virginia communities by engagement through schools, faith-based organizations, community service organizations and VCE clients. The coordinators work as a team supporting each other's efforts in all regions. This has allowed for a diverse and inclusive discussion around the effects of the opioid crisis on the state, and created a forum where stigma is reduced around mental health and wellbeing.

## Programs Available

- **Botvin Lifeskills Program (LST):** A comprehensive and developmentally designed to promote positive youth development. In addition to helping kids resist drug, alcohol, and tobacco use, the LifeSkills Training Middle School program is also designed to support the reduction of violence and other high-risk behaviors.
- **Botvin Parenting Program:** This program contains materials and exercises that help parents teach their children the skills that help them resist the threats of tobacco, drugs, and violence. These tools help parents prepare their children for a successful transition from adolescence to early adulthood.
- **EXCITE Vaccine Education:** Workshops/Sessions to educate the community about all the adult and youth vaccines recommended by the CDC.
- **Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA)** is designed to teach parents, family members, caregivers, teachers, school staff, neighbors, health and human services workers, and other caring citizens how to help an adolescent (age 12-18) who is experiencing a mental health or addictions challenge or is in crisis. Youth Mental Health First Aid is primarily designed for adults who regularly interact with young people.

## Outcomes in Westmoreland County

- National Night Out for County and Town of Colonial Beach 125 adults and 89 youth participated at event receiving educational materials.
- GEAR UP Program: teachers in this program will receive YMHFA collectively. Students will participate in LST programming for 2024-2025 school year.



# Westmoreland County



## Community Voices



“We invited the Master Gardeners as part of our plant project-based learning unit. With the help of Garner’s Produce, we had plants to transplant. Our kindergarten students enjoyed getting their hands dirty while learning about plant parts and needs as they created baskets to beautify Cople Elementary’s walkway.”

**Tamatha Williams**  
Kindergarten Teacher  
Cople Elementary

# 200

**Program impact  
calendars distributed**

## Partners for Solutions



“I witness social and emotional growth at 4-H Camp. Westmoreland parents reported 100% of campers felt safe, 92% made new friends, 85% are confident and ‘glad to be me,’ 77% handle unexpected situations, and 92% see themselves as helpful. I wish every Westmoreland child could experience 4-H Camp.”

**Wendy Herdman**  
Agent



Participants in the commercial applicator and registered technician certification class learn about pesticide formulations.

## Sharing Knowledge

Agricultural chemical companies that apply pesticides for farmers need employees who are certified commercial applicators to comply with federal regulations.

Virginia Cooperative Extension agents in Eastern Virginia developed a commercial applicator and registered technician certification class in 2018. Since then, 120 participants have taken the course. The resulting cumulative pass rate for commercial applicator test takers is 87% – significantly higher than the statewide average pass rate reported by VDACS of 54%. The pass rate for registered technicians taking the class is 92%.

Information learned in class impacts agricultural land in Westmoreland County and surrounding areas. In 2024, the applicators taking the class made pesticide applications to over 22,900 acres of crops. Cumulatively, 34 registered technicians and 72 commercial applicators have been certified to apply pesticides safely and legally.



# Westmoreland County

## Funding by Source



**45% State**

**17% Local**

**28% Federal**

**5% Grants**

**5% Other**

**Total Funding: \$319,409**

**\$4.79**

return on investment  
for every dollar  
invested by  
**Westmoreland County**

**\$201,649**

Value of extension  
volunteer hours  
in **Westmoreland  
County**

To find out how you can support your local Extension office,  
**visit [www.cals.vt.edu/make-a-gift](http://www.cals.vt.edu/make-a-gift).**



**Extension  
Master  
Gardeners**  
Northern Neck Chapter

# 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 2024, 100 Extension  
Master Gardeners**



**drove 100,757 miles  
and made**



**21,320 educational  
contacts**



CONTRIBUTING A TOTAL OF

**15,078 volunteer hours**

VALUED AT

**\$503,304\***

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

\*Based on a value of \$33.38/hour from Independent Sector 2023 Value of Volunteer Hours by State.

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# Virginia Master Naturalists

Northern Neck Chapter

## 2024 in Review



**69**  
volunteers

The Virginia Master Naturalist program is a statewide corps of trained volunteers providing education, science, and stewardship to benefit natural resource conservation in their communities.



**6,237**  
service hours,  
valued at \$208K

As part of their many activities in 2024, Northern Neck Master Naturalist volunteers:



**30**  
sites stewarded



Photo credit: Ellen Hunter

**Conducted cleanups, habitat restoration, and trail work in parks and natural areas**

*Highlight: Volunteers assisted the Rappahannock Tribe with a survey for invasive plants at Fones Cliffs.*



**17+**  
scientific, monitoring,  
and inventory studies  
supported



Photo credit: Betsy Maddux

**Contributed data to dozens of wildlife studies**

*Highlight: Volunteers helped conduct a study of box turtles on the Northern Neck and also raised awareness about wildlife collisions on roadways.*



**9,727**  
contacts made  
through education &  
outreach



**28**  
partnerships with  
local organizations



Photo credit: Marty Hill

**Gave the community new opportunities to learn about nature from knowledgeable leaders and to spend guided time outdoors**

*Highlight: Volunteers led monthly nature walks at Belle Isle State Park.*

## State Sponsors



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