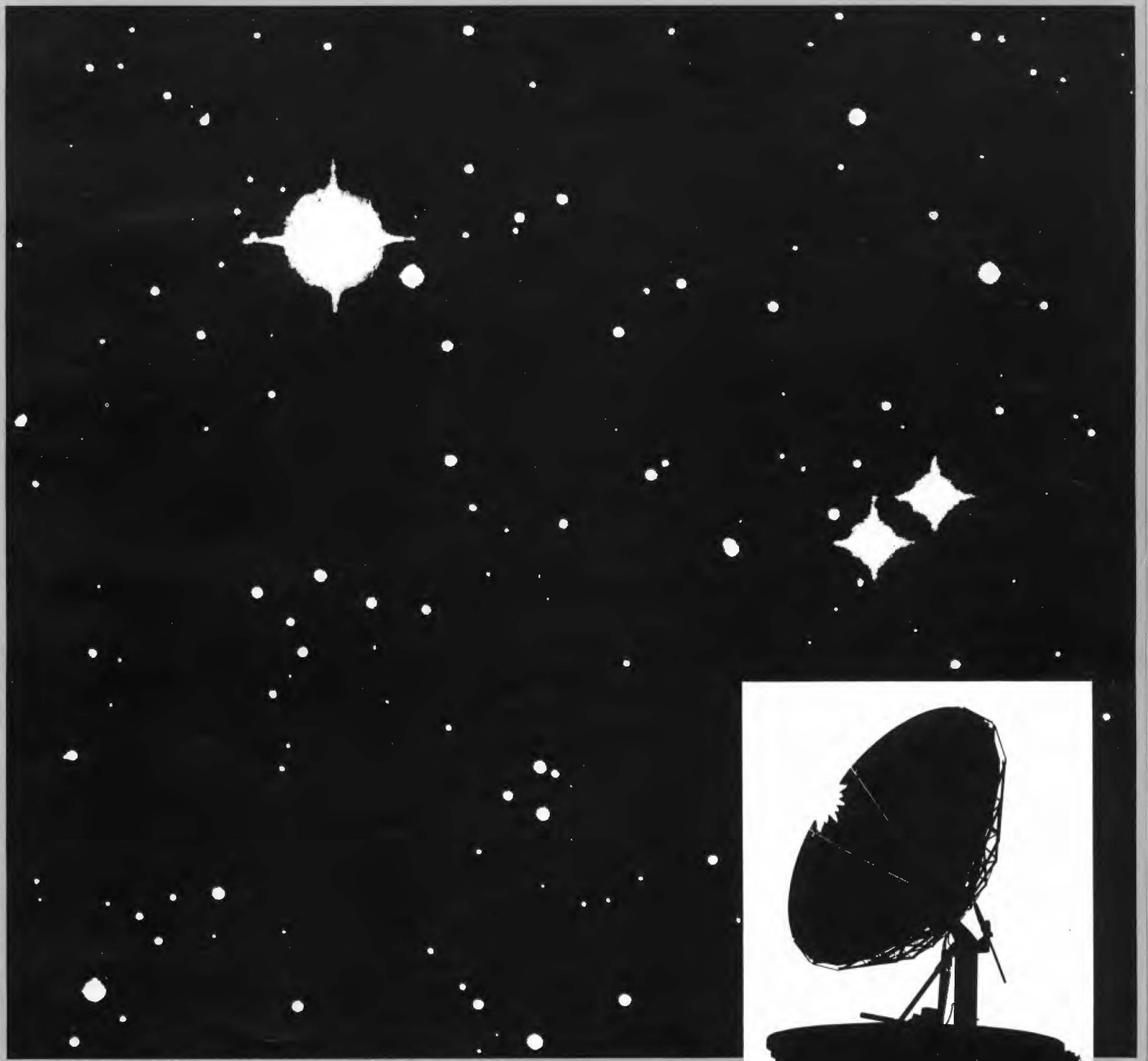


VIRGINIA EXTENSION

THE VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE MAGAZINE

Vol. V, No. 1 1987



TOWARD THE YEAR 2000

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COMMENTARY



Mitch Geasler

M. R. Geasler
Vice-Provost
Extension Division

Staffing Ranks High On Needs List

We almost have our budget for next year. Localities have made their decisions. The General Assembly has completed its work. The only unknown part of the puzzle is what the federal appropriation will be.

In contrast to recent years, the proposed presidential budget contains a slight increase in our base funds. We shall see, when Congress concludes its decision-making process, if there still is a small increase in our federal funds.

On balance, the decisions by our three funding sources reflect a commitment to Extension's mission in the land-grant university system. If you review the recent history of Extension funding, you will find a significant increase in total revenue. This increase may present some with a false picture of the challenges we are continuing to face.

The Commonwealth of Virginia provides the largest portion of the total funds available to the Extension Division. The increases that have been appropriated by the state have, for the most part, gone into salary increases. Each year that we have received significant increases for salaries from the state, the federal partner has not increased its portion of the budget.

Therefore, the salary increase that pertained to our federally supported salaries caused a reduction in available program money. This situation was compounded by the lack of an increase in operating funds.

It has been five years since the Extension system has received an increase in its operating allocation. During that time, we have had to absorb the increased costs caused by inflation, deregulation, and other factors by reducing the scope of our program. In addition, we have experienced two actual cuts in state funding during this period.

I am reviewing this situation for two reasons. First, I want to tell the staff and clientele how proud I am that the system was able to adapt to the challenges presented by these financial

constraints. We have been forced to eliminate positions, move staff to fill more critical vacancies, retrain staff to assume roles in other programs, reduce operating budgets, and refuse to support staff in some types of travel and professional improvement.

All of these actions were difficult. But in every case, staff members responded professionally, resulting in a strengthening of program content and delivery under very difficult circumstances. Let me cite a few of the changes which reflect the professionalism of our staff.

We, as I noted in an earlier column, are moving ahead with priority programming. This stems from the realization that we need to program to meet those critical needs that fall within the scope of our mission and expertise. Staff members have concentrated their time on important areas, research-based subject matter, and where adoption of technology will make differences in the lives of Extension's clientele.

Staff members have successfully recruited more individuals to work as volunteers in all segments of the Extension program, and I keep hearing of new recruiting efforts. The use of trained volunteers to counsel farmers and their families who are under financial strain has been particularly rewarding, as has the expansion of numbers of volunteers in our 4-H Youth program.

We are working to provide the latest in communications technology to staff members and are training them to use the new tools. We cannot continue to assume that the only way to transmit information is by one-on-one contact and at small group meetings.

We, as staff, must look at communications technology and ask a series of questions. How many clientele need information, is it only an awareness of the technology that we want to achieve, or do we want clientele to actually do things in a new way? The list of questions could be expanded.

(continued on inside back cover)

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Editor

William C. Burluson

Contributing Editor

James N. Cranor

Typesetting & Pasteup

*Melinda Shaver
and Charlotte Hungate*

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FRONT COVER

Electronic technology is one of the newest weapons in the Extension arsenal as it looks toward the year 2000. (Cover by Kitty Irwin.)



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Extension specialists outline objectives and goals they are facing in the years ahead.

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Three successful Extension programs are outlined.

Extension Agents Are On a Public Mission

By Mary Ann Johnson

The mission of the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service is to provide useful and practical information that will improve the economic, social, and cultural well-being of the people of the Commonwealth. As a partner in the land-grant university system, Virginia Extension has the responsibility of selecting, interpreting, disseminating, and encouraging the application of relevant research.

Through the years, this unique position has enabled Extension to quickly provide Virginia's citizens with "cutting edge" research information in the four program areas of agriculture and natural resources, home economics, 4-H youth, and community resource development. The problems caused by tight budgets and reduced personnel numbers are not preventing Extension from carrying out its mission today.

In working to ease the economic problems that have beset Virginia's agricultural community, several aspects of Extension's philosophy have come into play. For example, Extension scientists continue to promote maximum agricultural production, but not at the loss of net farm profit.

Using intensive management, Virginia peanut and wheat producers could net an additional \$125 and \$20 per acre, respectively. Extension scientists provide information to help producers become aware of the subtle differences in the crops and then to use inputs only when and where they are needed.

The Extension philosophy includes recommending the application of agricultural techniques and chemicals only when economic analyses deem them profitable. Virginia Extension has been a leader in the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program, for example. IPM encourages the use of "scouting" to determine when pests have reached an unacceptable level before using any pesticides to eliminate them.

"Agriculture leaders who adopt efficient production technologies, who constantly seek the most profitable markets, and who explore new products and enterprises, will be the ones to maintain their places



Milton B. Wise believes those agricultural leaders who adapt to change will survive.



in the industry and will continue to supply the food and fiber to America and the world. Extension education programs help them to find what works for each producer," says Milton B. Wise, associate director of the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service in agriculture and natural resources and community resource development.

"Virginia Tech is a national leader in many priority areas, including development of innovative livestock and grain marketing systems, application of minimum tillage cultural techniques, and rural community leadership development," he says.

In the past year, Extension and research faculty members completed studies in home economics on the effect of phosphates on laundry results. Another study involved development of procedures to deal with the care of pesticide-contaminated clothing. Work also continues on such subjects as the link between diet and heart disease and the nutritional needs of teenage mothers.

Bonnie S. Braun, associate director of Extension for 4-H youth and home economics, says "Change is constant in our society. People in the Commonwealth have a real need for information on how to cope with or to direct change. Information that has the solid base of academic research is valid, is objective, and will be the most useful to individuals. This is especially true if the information is based on a sound educational format."

Virginia Extension is a national leader in using volunteers in a middle management concept for 4-H youth programs. Funded by a grant, the program is designed to help agents train volunteers to carry out the middle-level leadership roles for county-wide programs.

Supporting the statewide program to help agents work with volunteers is the Center for Volunteer Development, a center at Virginia Tech that is involved in research on voluntary organizations as well as coordinating the expertise and making it available where needed.

These various efforts at recruiting volunteers are bearing fruit. The number of volunteers helping Extension more than doubled between 1985 and 1986—from 20,000 to 44,000. When it is calculated that a volunteer averages 3.5 hours a week and could collect better than nine dollars an hour for his or her talents, then the savings are readily apparent.

Educational programs are planned and conducted using the resources at both Virginia Tech and Virginia State.

All Extension agents provide educational information through the mass media in forms ranging from writing news articles to serving as guests on phone-in talk shows. Agents and faculty members often lend their expertise by testifying at public hearings and serving on committees that plan and direct statewide programs.

Where Virginia's international interests are involved, and when appropriate grant funds are available, selected specialists, agents, or administrators will be involved.

A major project is a cooperative effort with Virginia's sister state in Brazil, Santa Catarina.



Bonnie S. Braun says Virginians have a real need for information on how to cope with change.

Faculty members and agents who are working with 4-H youths exchange information about different programs through this Partners in the Americas network.

Educational programs are limited to research-based information, but agents, sensitive to local needs, frequently find teachers for other subject matter desired by clientele. Local rescue squads might teach a CPR course, insurance agents might lead financial planning programs, and farm equipment dealers might assist in many local programs by loaning the latest equipment.

Agents support the programs and services of other agencies in order to avoid unnecessary duplication. In every community, there are examples each year of programs in which Extension cooperates with other public and private agencies or in which local agents help promote the public education effort of another organization.

"Needed" is a key word in the mission of Extension. Learning the needs of the citizens is the first step in the cycle of carrying out the mission. As part of the process, Extension seeks to learn how those needs are being fulfilled by assessing the impact its programs have had on individuals and communities.

This evaluation of impact enables Extension leaders at local, state, and national levels to determine that the Extension mission is being, and will continue to be, performed as effectively as possible.

Technology Opening New Doors for Extension

By Terry Canup

In recent years, Virginia Extension representatives have been telling farmers that they are going to have to diversify their operations if they are going to survive in today's economic climate. Those in the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service are heeding their own advice and are diversifying the methods being used to distribute information in an age that is characterized by an ever-increasing array of media.

"We have seen some of our counterparts put all their eggs in one communication technology or another," says Mitchell R. Geasler, VCES director. "Our policy is to stay diversified and try the different technologies as they arise."

The most visible sign of the policy is the installation this spring of twenty-six satellite receiving dishes at Extension offices and experiment stations across the Commonwealth. The dishes will turn offices into electronic classrooms for agents and clients who will have easier access to Extension experts from Virginia Tech or other land-grant universities across the country. The satellite network follows by only three years the completion of a computer network that put a personal computer in each of the 120 field sites and connects them with Virginia Tech's mainframe computer.

The new networks were introduced to Extension professionals who were already extremely active as mass-media channels. A 1982 survey of Virginia agents showed that they contributed 105 columns or other items to newspapers on a regular basis and took part in or produced 113 regular broadcast programs.



Most of the programs were on radio, but agents regularly appeared on local television and cable TV stations as well.

Meanwhile, Extension faculty hit the airwaves on three regular radio programs, each syndicated to approximately fifty stations in the state. Television news features relating to Extension topics are aired on a third of the network affiliates in the state. These same news features have been distributed by national syndicates and aired on national programs that reach 200 stations nationwide. The Extension news operation routinely reached the state's 135 newspapers.

The computer network complemented these efforts.

Extension became the first state agency to develop computer ties with major news outlets, allowing instantaneous transfer of information to the computers of the news gatekeepers. The system allows timely market analyses to be transmitted, not only to state media, but to two national computer information services. Some local Extension offices have joined state offices in transferring news and feature items to media outlets via computer.

Even more importantly, the computer network became a source of instant and easily retrievable information for agents. Each year, 350 news releases are put on the system for agents to access. Other specialized data bases are there as well. For example, Tech's chemical, drug, and pesticide unit has updated files on pesticide regulations, restrictions, and descriptions.

Horticulture information is in great demand, and, consequently, is used heavily by the units. Eighty units save approximately 175 hours of staff time each week through easy access to horticulture information.

Personal computer software became increasingly available to agents for tasks ranging from office management to farm financial analysis.

The fastest growing consumer technology is the video cassette recorder. Sales of a million units each



month in America have introduced the watch-at-your-convenience technology into four of ten American homes as well as many public and business establishments. The easy public access to these machines has prompted efforts to capture instruction from Extension specialists on tape, on subjects ranging from tree pruning to weight maintenance. Twenty special video projects were completed in 1986.

Audio tape is not forgotten either. This fall, Extension will make audio information available to those localities that are equipping themselves with automated dial-a-message services.

Extension is on the verge of a truly new world of educational delivery that is combining the technologies of the computer and the video disk. The melded technologies create a self-paced learning machine capable of responding when an individual touches a television screen or speaks into a microphone. This interactive video technology can also create information centers that require no personnel.

Initial pilot interactive video projects concentrate on recertification training for pesticide applicator personnel and information booths that can answer citizen questions in high pedestrian traffic areas, such as shopping malls. The first public use of these new developments should take place within two years.

The media-diversification principle has a strong background in history. Since the printing press was invented, humankind has had to learn to deal with communication diversity. No way of communicating is totally replaced or abandoned. New information media are simply added.

Speech survived the press, the press survived radio, and radio goes on despite television. Today, interactive video disks, home video cassette recorders, and satellite transmissions are being added to a crowded media landscape. Extension must prepare itself to be a part of this brave new world that lies between us and the year 2000.



Extension Sets Priorities To Meet Future Needs

Extension agents in 107 localities in the Commonwealth have developed plans for dealing with pressing needs and problems during the next four years. Their plans are based on personal knowledge, the advice of local citizens, and the vision of faculty experts who apply themselves to solving these problems and satisfying these needs.

Some of these experts express in the following text their thoughts about the priorities that will receive major attention from Virginia Extension during the next four years.

Priority: Restore Profitability to Agriculture

Forty percent of Virginia's agricultural production in 1984 came from commodities that are declining in marketability, and farm receipts from 1975 to 1984 rose only a little more than half as much as the consumer price index. Yet, expenditures for farm inputs have skyrocketed since 1970. Nationally, expenditures for fertilizer and for the operation of machinery and buildings rose about three and one-half times by 1984.

During the next four years, Extension will help farmers restore profitability by showing them how to be smart marketers, choose marketable products to produce, achieve maximum profit per acre, and base all business decisions on sound financial information.

Offer marketing options

The potential returns to Virginia farmers who improve their marketing efficiency are tremendous. Just a 3 percent improvement in prices received by all Virginia farmers would mean another thirty million dollars in total farm receipts for the state. This is certainly achievable through an improvement in marketing strategy on the part of producers and the introduction of technologies that improve efficien-



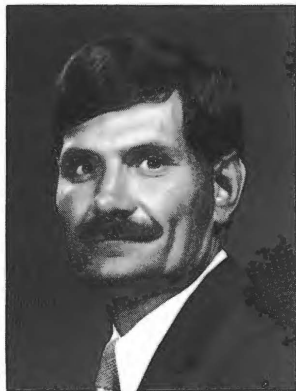
cy in the marketing process. As we aim toward 1991, we are intensively training agents to help farmers with strategy, and computer and satellite technologies are being applied through our work. — **James B. Bell, Extension agricultural economics project leader, Virginia Tech.**

Stimulate alternative enterprise

Agricultural producers in Southside, Eastern Shore, Northern Neck, Middle Peninsula, Southwest, and Northern Piedmont have expressed interest in changing the face of agriculture for the sake of higher profits. But most do not know how to proceed. The key to agricultural diversification is a systems approach that takes into account the unique factors of

markets, production, finance, and transportation—then weaves them together in a planning process. We must show producers how to do this. — **Charles W. Coale**, Extension agricultural economist, Virginia Tech.

Foster production efficiency



The more time spent gathering and evaluating information, the more likely production decisions will be correct; meaning that money will be spent only on a crop when that investment will generate a profit. We've got to use this idea of precision inputs no matter what we raise. In the next four

years we need to develop precision systems for more crops. — **Daniel E. Brann**, Extension agronomist, Virginia Tech.

Improve farm financial management

Financial analysis is the pulse of a farmer's operation. Typically,



farmers haven't thought of financial planning as a means of deciding what to produce and how to market. We think we can show them how they can make the best returns by doing what they do best. — **Gerald W. Warmann**, Extension farm management specialist, Virginia Tech.

Priority: Strengthen Virginia's Economic Base

Virginia is blessed with a diversified economy, but it faces many serious challenges. Coalfield unemployment is high and the industry sees no employment growth despite record coal deliveries. Those agricultural counties outside of the urban corridor seriously lag behind other parts of the state in economic development. Halifax, Lancaster, Accomack, and Southampton counties have lost more than 80 percent of their rural farm populations, and decreases in farm income have been devastating to farm-supply and other rural businesses. Local governments are coping with a decrease in federal monies. In the homes of Virginians, debt and bankruptcy are up and real income per family is down. Help to manage in these times is needed.

Revitalizing rural Virginia



There's trouble in River City and talk about rural revitalization is in vogue. But strategies for revitalization are not immediately apparent. An effective strategy in one location will not be a guaranteed

success in another part of the Commonwealth. What is increasingly important is having access to the information that supports local decision making. Extension will act as a bridge between technical expertise at the universities and locally identified problems. — **J. Douglas McAlister**, Extension community resource development program leader, Virginia Tech.

Providing skill development programs for youths



The ultimate goal is for youths to know about the allocation of resources so they can increase their financial stability and personal satisfaction. The amount of financial education from Extension for youngsters will be on the increase during the next four years. — **Kim Reda-Wilson**, Extension 4-H economist, Virginia Tech.

Fostering home-based businesses

Approximately 95 percent of all business failures occur because of bad management, and 55 percent of new businesses fail in five years or less. Through our educational program we want to teach management skills to those who are involved or plan to be in business, while, at the same time, dissuading those who are not suited from going into business. We will be concentrating on rural communities where entrepreneurs need help identifying markets, and on youths who will be entering an increasingly entrepreneurial society. — **Ann Lastovica**, Virginia State University Extension home economics specialist.



Teaching sound family resource management

A 1983 survey of Virginia families indicated 13 percent had experienced wage freezes, 9 percent a loss of jobs, 6 percent layoffs, and 8 percent reduced hours. Virginians in these circumstances will have to modify their expectations and the way they use resources. Extension home economists are gearing up for major initiatives to help Virginians in the next four years. — **Elaine Scott**, Extension family resource management specialist, Virginia Tech.

Improving hotel and restaurant management

The hospitality industry is one of the state's largest employers; particularly of women, minorities, and teenagers. Management problems are particularly acute in areas of the state that need industrial growth the most. Extension can make a difference by creating a data base about the trends and performance of the industry that Virginia industry decision makers use to create strategies for tomorrow. — **Michael D. Olsen**, director of hotel, restaurant and institutional management division, Virginia Tech.

Improving commercial food processing

Improved management practices, labor saving devices, and better trained personnel could result in a twenty-two-million-dollar increase in profits for the Virginia food processing industry by 1991. — **George J. Flick**, Extension food technology specialist, Virginia Tech.

Priority: Improve Nutrition, Health, and Safety

Virginia has serious health problems with which it must deal. We have a rapidly graying population that is vulnerable to degenerative diseases. Already, 10 percent of our population is over sixty-five and the number in that age group will nearly double by the year 2000. In 1984, 1,014 Virginia infants died during their first year of life. Poor maternal nutrition and low birth weight played a big part in the problem. The 15 percent of Virginians who live below the poverty level has special needs in nutrition because they must spend nearly half their income for food. Finally, our farm populations represent a group at high risk of injury and incapacitation due to high exposure to hazardous situations.

Reduce infant mortality

Virginia ranks forty-fifth among the fifty states in infant mortality. Three of every four of these deaths are due to low birth weight. In seventeen localities we will be conducting maternal, infant, and child nutrition programs as part of the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, which is aimed at low-income audiences. Many of our Extension units are also planning to conduct the educational portion of the Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies program, which offers broad health guidance for mothers. — **Betty Mifflin**, Extension nutrition specialist, Virginia Tech.



Improving food habits



Nutrition education can make a difference. Studies show that such education changes both attitudes and behavior. While we worry about obesity, it is also a fact that the average American has dietary deficiencies. Extension agents are honing their knowledge and skills to deal with these problems directly in the next four years. — **Charlotte Pratt**, Extension nutrition specialist, Virginia Tech.

Diminish disease risk

Cardiovascular disease, malignancies, anemia, and osteoporosis are serious disease problems that are related to nutritional practices. In-service education is being designed to address the needs of agents as determined by a testing program. They will be better prepared to teach current dietary recommendations and how to apply them in the selection of foods for meals and snacks in homes or



restaurants. — **Jo Anne Barton**, Extension nutrition specialist, Virginia Tech.

Teaching farm operations safety

Long hours of exposure to machinery and hazardous situations make farming the second most hazardous occupation in the nation. Proper training of rescue and fire personnel is critical for rural residents. In the next four years, we will be making a special effort to help the handicapped in rural areas to pursue active lives in a safe manner. — **Glen H. Hetzel**, Extension farm safety specialist, Virginia Tech.

Disseminating safe pesticide management information

Extension instructed 20,000 people in the last three years on



the safe use of pesticides. And we are making this information even more accessible through the latest technologies of interactive video disk, computers, and satellites. By 1991, such technology will be regularly used by those who are certified to apply pesticides. — **Michael J. Weaver**, coordinator of Virginia Tech's chemical, drug, and pesticide unit.

Priority: Develop Human Capital

People and their education are the major determinants of our quality of life. Extension aims to increase the number of people who apply their skills to the resolution of critical issues, whether as leaders, workers, volunteers, or simply in their roles as citizens. Critical issues that must be addressed are rural Virginia's place in the state economy, Virginia's place in the international economy, public sector management ability, limited resources for civic programs, and youth citizenship.

Developing leaders

Rural Virginia must adapt to the need for more public services and changes in agriculture so it can kindle economic vitality. To do this, we must have rural Virginians with savvy and perspective. Our Rural Leadership Development Program is identifying and supporting these young leaders. By 1991, about sixty of these up-and-coming leaders will have completed a formal leadership educa-

tion program. — **J. Paxton Marshall**, Extension public policy specialist, Virginia Tech.



Improving public sector decision making

Five billion dollars are spent by Virginia's local governments under the direction of 1,800 elected officials, 20,000 appointed officials, and almost 3,000 managers. The high turnover rate among these officials and the diversity of needs between the most rural and metropolitan governments demand a continuous program of spe-

cific instruction that we are offering in an ambitious education program. — **Donald P. Lacy, Extension community resource development specialist, Virginia Tech.**

Improving citizenship

A 1986 nationwide study has shown that 4-H alumni are more active in political, business, and civic activities than those who were not 4-H'ers. In the next four years, we are particularly concerned with making youngsters aware of the political system and offering them the opportunities to get involved. — **Rudolph Powell, Virginia State University 4-H specialist.**



Recruiting and developing volunteers

Extension already has more volunteers working for it than any other state agency; but, by 1990, half of our Extension programs will need to be conducted by nonpaid staff members. To meet this challenge, we will be preparing volunteers to be managers of programs and of other volunteers. The ultimate volunteer managers will be our Extension advisory councils who help Extension units decide how to best use the available human resources. — **Delwyn Dyer, director of the Center for Volunteer Development, Virginia Tech.**

Improving international understanding

The best chance we have for a safe and stable future internationally is through education and aid to needy countries. Virginia has little to lose and much to gain by helping developing nations because we cannot sell farm or industrial products to these nations until their economies are built to the point that they have buying power. — **Kenneth E. Dawson, Extension international programs specialist, Virginia Tech.**

Priority: Manage Natural Resources

Sixteen million acres of Virginia, 62 percent, is covered with woodlands, another 900,000 acres is covered with surface water, and much of the rest of the face of Virginia is cropland. Extension has a vital role to play in educating Virginians to protect and nurture the Commonwealth's natural resources. Woodlot owners, local officials, farmers, and owners of mined land are all targets of educational programs to protect what nature has provided.

Improving renewable resource management

Many woodlot owners don't have timber production as an objective. Consequently, productivity of privately-owned, nonindustrial Virginia woodlands averages only

55 percent of potential, and disease loss costs \$60 million annually. We have a great deal of room for improvement and we'll make real strides by 1991. — **Robert L. McElwee, Extension forest and fisheries project leader, Virginia Tech.**



Promoting minimum tillage



The ultimate goal we are striving for is to have a no-till system available so a farmer can plant any crop without disturbing the soil surface and exposing the soil to erosion, which harms productivity and pollutes water. — **Harlan E. White, Extension agronomy project leader, Virginia Tech.**

Stimulating mined-land reclamation

The coal fields need the kind of attention that the research and Extension programs of the Powell River Project provide. By exploring the economic and nontraditional uses of reclaimed mined land, we offer hope for expanding available building and agricultural sites and therefore offer economic alternatives for the region. We expect our work to intensify in the next four years. — **H. John Gerken, Extension coordinator of the Powell River Project, Virginia Tech.**



Instituting integrated pest management

Integrated pest management (IPM) programs save Virginia farmers more than \$5 million annually in protected yields and

reduced pesticide costs. Extension IPM programs in alfalfa, soybeans, peanuts, and small grains use a wide array of biological and cultural control tactics to minimize the need for pesticides. Although considerable progress has been made in implementing IPM programs, only a small proportion of Virginia's crop production systems



are utilizing the IPM approach. New programs, however, are being developed for apples, vegetables, and field corn, and acreage enrolled in existing IPM programs is increasing rapidly. More and more farmers are seeking economically and ecologically sound alternatives to the pesticide treadmill, and Extension will continue to provide those alternatives through IPM. — **John Luna, Extension entomologist, Virginia Tech.**

Protecting surface and groundwater

A priority need is to educate local officials on necessary management practices as they are increasingly being called on to be responsible for surfacewater and groundwater quality. We aim to help 40 localities develop or implement water-related plans by 1991. — **Waldon Kerns, Extension public policy specialist, Virginia Tech.**



Extension Successes Not Hard to Find

By Sherrie Whaley

Virginia Extension is moving aggressively toward the year 2000. A variety of innovative programs are under way to help the citizens of the Commonwealth maintain or increase the quality of their lives. Some Extension offerings are aimed at short-term problems while others will stretch beyond the end of this century.

There is no lack of success stories. They can be found in the four program areas of Extension. Neither are they restricted to one area of the state nor to one type of clientele. Extension's only goal is to help people, keeping them in life's mainstream.

The following ongoing efforts by Extension are examples of how Virginians are being helped in agriculture and natural resources, home economics, 4-H, and community resource development.

Finding New Opportunities in Home-based Businesses

They may not have business degrees, but Bridget and Tracy Smith think they have what it takes to succeed in the business world.

The Williamsburg entrepreneurs recently flexed their business muscles by opening "The Grub Runners", a unique home-based business that offers grocery shopping services to area residents.

"I love shopping," says Bridget Smith who, with daughter-in-law Tracy, takes orders, goes shopping and delivers groceries to satisfied clients. "And I have two sons in college, so I needed to increase my income."

However, the decision to begin a home-based business wasn't an easy one. A full year of study and research preceded their opening. The Smiths credit an innovative Extension seminar with making their decision much easier.

"I knew absolutely nothing about starting a business," admits the fifty-one-year-old Bridget Smith. "I couldn't have done it without the help I

got from the Extension Service. The agents and specialists started me on a carefully-planned course."

The Smiths aren't the only ones to have benefited from Extension's "Starting A Home-based Business" seminar. It is playing to rave reviews across the state as more and more Virginians look to home-based businesses for extra income and increased job satisfaction.

The brain-child of Virginia State University Extension specialist Ann M. Lastovica, the seminar last year provided training to approximately 550 aspiring businesspersons. But why the sudden interest in home-based businesses?

"The 1980's are already being called the 'decade of the entrepreneur'," explains Lastovica. "People are wanting to take control of their lives and they're willing to take the risks that are involved."

And these risks can be quite intimidating. For example, Lastovica informs her classes that more than 85 percent of those who go into business will



fail—frightening odds for even the most promising of ventures.

“Most entrepreneurs fail simply because they don’t have the necessary management skills,” says the family management specialist. “During the day-long seminar, I try to introduce them to some of these skills and whet their appetites for more information.”

Working with local Extension agents, Lastovica designs a program to meet the needs of entrepreneurs in each locale. Standard seminar features are discussions of legal issues, record keeping, marketing research, tax regulations, licensing, office space, and profit-loss statements.

“It’s always gratifying to hear of former students’ business successes,” says Lastovica. “I also consider the seminars to be successful, however, if they help someone decide not to go into business.”

Introducing new clientele to Virginia Extension has been an added benefit of the seminars. “More than 65 percent of the participants had never been to an Extension program before,” she says.

Finding the Right Path Through 4-H Business Training

You won’t find their companies listed in the Fortune 500 just yet, but don’t count them out as the business leaders of tomorrow.

Senior 4-H’ers and other teens in Virginia are being groomed for the business world with hands-on experience in basic business management.

By running their own “companies”, more than 200 youths in northern, central, and eastern Virginia have learned the importance of such business skills as planning, organizing, budgeting, producing, merchandising, record keeping, scheduling, and evaluating.

“It’s important to start developing these skills early in life,” says former All-pro National Football League (NFL) linebacker Willie Lanier at a recent 4-H workshop.

Lanier, who is currently an investment officer with Wheat First Securities in Richmond, spent eleven years with the Kansas City Chiefs and was a 1986 inductee into the NFL’s Hall of Fame.

The Halifax County native draws analogies between professional football and the competitive business world. A sports season is over quickly, he says, but a lot of behind-the-scenes work is necessary to make it a success.

“The ingredients for football success—teamwork, proper attitudes, discipline, group dynamics, and everyone working toward the same goal—are the





same ingredients that make a business successful," he explains.

The teens who attend the two-day workshop put those ingredients to work by forming imaginary "companies", completing job applications and job interviews, developing products, using spreadsheets and bank accounts, creating commercial advertising, and finally, marketing their products at a trade show.

"One of the companies made a big profit off of me," says Barbara A. Board, Amelia County Extension agent and a workshop coordinator. "Their product was greeting cards and I ended up buying most of their inventory for my Christmas cards."

Other teens expressed their creativity by offering designer clothes, Christmas ornaments, pine-cone wreaths, and designer watches. Northern Virginia youths who participated in the annual 4-H "teen

weekend" chose more service-oriented businesses, such as lodging companies, food services, and various entertainment businesses such as a disco and a casino.

Teaching business management to youths is an idea whose time has come, believes Kim Reda-Wilson, Extension economist and 4-H youth specialist at Virginia Tech. "We can no longer look at increased production as the answer to our economic problems," she says. "Management is an equally and sometimes more important component of the solution to these problems."

"A basic knowledge of business management is an important skill to have whether you're an owner or employee of a business. By providing this training, Extension is helping to shape the business leaders of the future," she concludes.

Finding the Best Way To Market Your Beef

A revolution is brewing in Virginia's cattle industry and Virginia Extension is prepared to lead the charge.

Limited marketing opportunities, slim profit margins, and declining consumer demand for red meats have brought the beef industry to its knees in recent years.

With high-tech marketing strategies and innovative risk-management tools, Virginia Extension is charting a course that promises to revitalize the sagging beef sector.

One program that is already accomplishing this goal is a custom-feeding demonstration at Culpeper County's Horseshoe Farms. "The project is designed to help cattle producers understand what goes on in a custom-feeding environment," explains Bruce B. Bainbridge, Extension animal scientist at Virginia Tech.

Seventeen cattlemen from throughout Virginia have committed 167 head of cattle to the project,

which may be the base for an expanded custom feeding industry in the state.

"The participants can see firsthand how their cattle perform in a feedlot and the costs involved," says Bainbridge. "In the past, most Virginia cattlemen sold calves at weaning or as yearlings and had no idea how they performed for the buyer who fattens them in a feedlot."

Cow-calf and yearling producers can often profit by retaining ownership of their better quality cattle instead of selling them in the cash market. Custom feeding gives the farmer a viable marketing alternative.

Expanded custom feeding in Virginia would benefit meat packers as well. "The East doesn't produce as many finished cattle as the packers need to process," explains Mark L. Wahlberg, Extension animal scientist. "They have to go to other parts of the country to buy finished cattle and then transport them back to their Eastern plants."

Packers in Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania slaughter more than 4,000 head each day. "If they can buy the cattle locally, they will," says Wahlberg. "We feed 50,000-70,000 head to slaughter in Virginia each year. There's room to double those numbers."

Marketing and market development, even more than production methods, will be the key to future profitability in Virginia agriculture, according to Virginia Tech's recently released study on the future of the industry. "Virginia is well positioned in terms of location, climate, and production potential to take advantage of marketing opportunities," it states. "However, revolutionary new approaches to marketing are needed to capitalize on these opportunities."

Two such approaches will be unveiled in early fall when a satellite livestock sale and a forward-pricing marketing agency are offered to beef producers.

"The satellite sale will be a combination of a live auction and a tele-auction," explains Bainbridge. The satellite sale will feature visual images of feeder cattle direct from the farm while the actual sale is being conducted over telephone lines.

"Cattle buyers are like everyone else. They like to see what they're buying," Wahlberg says.



While the satellite sale promises lots of "gee whiz" value, it's also expected to offer definite advantages to both buyers and sellers. "It will allow us to sell farm-fresh cattle that have not been exposed to any diseases or sale-barn stress," notes Bainbridge. The sale will also increase the awareness of buyers throughout the nation to Virginia feeder cattle.

Virginia Tech specialists plan to offer feeder cattle producers an additional marketing option with the formation of a forward-pricing marketing agency.

The agency will allow producers of small herds to obtain legitimate forward-contract prices—a luxury that has been unavailable to these cattlemen in the past.

"For feeder cattle producers to use the futures market at present, they must deal in a minimum of 44,000 pounds or about 70 head of cattle," says Bainbridge. "Most Virginia cattle operations are not large enough to do this."

The proposed marketing agency will allow the mingling of cattle from several owners to take advantage of the futures market and offset risks.

"Virginia producers have a hard time understanding and following the futures market," says Wahlberg. "Because they don't have large enough herds to use the futures market on a regular basis, it's hard for them to market effectively. There's strength in numbers and the forward-pricing agency will give the small producer some buying power on the futures side."

The Extension specialists anticipate offering the same service to slaughter cattle producers in the future.

"We're looking to give risk-management tools to producers from one end of the spectrum to the other," Bainbridge says.

COMMENTARY continued

The point is that staff members cannot make decisions on the most appropriate and efficient ways to disseminate information to get the desired results until they do a review and ask those pertinent questions.

We have attempted, despite the budget restrictions, to give the staff the tools to increase the options that are available to them. We hope this will increase the efficiency of the system.

In addition, the system has expanded efforts to acquire funds from non-traditional sources. We expect to continue increasing these efforts in grantsmanship.

I did not review these positive efforts to encourage the continuing decline in revenue. We do have plans to turn this tide; and this is the second reason for my review of the financial situation.

In the early 1980's, the Virginia Extension system was viewed by many as being too large, too broad in program content, and attempting to go beyond the scope of its mission. They felt the system had to be downsized and improved.

We have accomplished what I feel was the intent of actions of the decision makers at that time. Now we must rebuild in the areas that have been defined as priorities and prepare the system to meet those challenges that are ahead.

To do this, we have begun the development of a budget that will be considered next year by Governor Gerald Baliles and the General Assembly. We have outlined ambitious plans to seek funds to fill the high-priority vacancies that exist among the faculty and field staff.

In addition, we are working toward funding for improved expertise levels, in the more technical areas of agriculture, among field staff by using multi-

county agents in some commodity areas. We are seeking significant increases in operating funds to assume the delivery of high-priority programming without cost to the clientele. The increase also will assure that professional improvement and training opportunities will be available to staff to improve their abilities.

We also are initiating a new effort in the area of international trade and international marketing education. This will be a fairly small initiative, but one which I feel can provide significant dividends to the agriculture and business community in the Commonwealth. These are the major initiatives on which we are moving.

Success in funding these requests is important. The continued responsiveness in program excellence, professionalism by staff, and clientele satisfaction are keys to building support for these needs. In addition, it is essential that decision makers be made aware of these factors.

We must all work to make sure that the decision makers know what Extension is doing in the mid-eighties and not assume that it will be the same as it has been in the past. We are prepared to assist in the delivery of this message.

Any ideas that you, as clientele or staff, have about these subjects will be appreciated. We in administration and I personally stand ready to respond to any reasonable request to appear personally, visit with individuals, provide you or others with needed information, and to do all that is required to get our message heard.

Your cooperation, as always, is appreciated as we move together to improve the financial support of the Extension system.

VIRGINIA EXTENSION
Extension Division, Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
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