

Department of Neighborhood and Community Services

LOB #174:

VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Purpose

Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) is 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 a needs-driven programs. VCE is 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.

Fairfax County VCE brings the resources of Virginia's land-grant universities, Virginia Tech and Virginia State University, to the people of Fairfax County. 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 resources, collaborations are formed with hundreds of public and private partners and volunteers, who help VCE reach larger and more diverse audiences and also leverage the impact of VCE's work. The Fairfax County-VCE partnership is one such collaboration, and the Department of Neighborhood and Community Services is the organizational home for that arrangement.

Description

VCE is a business unit in the Access to Community Resources and Programs (Access) division. VCE 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. In Fairfax County, programs offered include 4-H Youth Development, Family and Consumer Sciences, and Agriculture and Natural Resources. VCE incorporates the expertise of faculty in the Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, College of Natural Resources and Environment, Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine, and the Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station, as well as the School of Agriculture at Virginia State University.

- **4-H Program:** VCE addresses these issues through its 4-H youth development program. There are 24 4-H clubs that meet on a monthly basis. These clubs are safe places for youth to meet and learn about a certain area of focus. Clubs meet at all times, some directly after school, some in the evenings, and some are home school groups meeting during the school day. 4-H clubs may focus on a specific projects, such as beekeeping, shooting sports, and robotics. Community clubs select several projects to work on throughout the year.
- **Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS), Food and Nutrition Programs:** VCE's food and nutrition programs empower residents to make healthful choices by teaching basic nutrition and cooking skills. Programs target key behaviors shown to improve health, such as consuming more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, while decreasing intakes of sodium, added sugar, and solid fats. Programs also address safe food handling for households and foodservice professionals.

All programs accommodate food preferences, cultural traditions, and customs of the many diverse groups who live in Fairfax County. While all community members benefit from improved lifestyle, the Fairfax Unit pays special attention to low-income communities. Two Family Nutrition Program Assistants and Nutrition Outreach Instructor provide nutrition classes for low-income individuals and families receiving or eligible to receive benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). A registered dietitian FCS agent and trained Master Food Volunteers provide food preservation programs, to education residents on safely preserving healthful produce for year-round consumption.

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- **Horticulture:** With the help of VCE, the local foods movement throughout the Commonwealth has gained momentum in support of Virginia agriculture. This movement not only promotes green, sustainable agriculture, but also contributes to Virginia's economy. Even in urban areas such as Fairfax County, residents want to grow their own food, eat more locally grown foods or know how far it traveled.

VCE Master Gardeners and Master Food Volunteers promote programs to eat more green and local foods. Master Gardener and Master Food Volunteers facilitate education programs at schools, community gardens and farmers markets. Connections are made with growing your own food and nutritious eating habits as a healthy lifestyle.

VCE Master Gardeners have 23 plant clinics across Fairfax in which plant problem diagnosis and insect identification can be obtained. Programs for Nutrient Management such as "Home Turf" help the homeowner learn more about their lawn and fertilizers and being more sensitive toward the Chesapeake Bay. VCE also plays an active role in presentations at Green Industry professional workshops, local civic associations and citizen groups.

Benefits

Volunteer opportunities: VCE program areas provide needs for valuable volunteer opportunities. Baby boomers and millennials are more connected to their community. These are people who increasingly want to give back and serve. VCE's programs help to serve this need to create meaningful opportunities for positive connections to Fairfax County. The 4-H program positively connects youth to their community, developing connections, life skills, leadership and citizenship. Through the FCS and Family Nutrition Programs, childhood obesity, healthy lifestyles and nutrition are addressed through hands-on education programs. The local food movement has been a trend for the last several years, growing your own and eating local saves money and our environment. VCE's Horticulture and FCS programs provide education programs and services to Fairfax County residents to help them grow a healthy environment and lifestyle.

Mandates

This Line of Business is not mandated.

Trends and Challenges

Older adults and volunteerism: Baby Boomers, the generation of 77 million Americans born between 1946 and 1964, represent a potential windfall for volunteerism. Based on U.S. Census data, the numbers of volunteers age 65 and older will increase to more than 13 million in 2020. What's more, that number will continue to rise for many years to come, as the youngest Baby Boomers will not reach age 65 until 2029. For Fairfax County, VCE continues to see the trend of Baby Boomers being the primary volunteer age group. Baby Boomers are different from other generations of volunteers and VCE programs have needed to adjust accordingly by providing unique experiences and an opportunity to volunteer with family and friends; scheduling volunteer activity to fit a busy lifestyle; developing marketing strategies that target Boomers; creating Boomer-friendly volunteer incentives; and offering episodic volunteer roles will all contribute to a larger volunteer Boomer corps in Extension programs.

Obesity rates: The 4-H program is positively impacting the trend of increased obesity rates in Fairfax County. Fairfax is ranked 7 out of 35 health districts in Virginia for the percentage of adults (58.1 percent) who are overweight or obese. Obesity rates among children and adolescents are increasing. VCE's FCS and Family Nutrition Programs educate families on healthy lifestyles and nutrition through hands-on education programs. The local food movement has been a trend for the last several years, growing your own and eating local saves money and our environment. VCE's Horticulture and FCS programs provide education programs and services to Fairfax County residents to help them grow a healthy environment and lifestyle.

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Resources

| Category | FY 2014 Actual | FY 2015 Actual | FY 2016 Adopted |
|--|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| LOB #174: Virginia Cooperative Extension | | | |
| FUNDING | | | |
| <u>Expenditures:</u> | | | |
| Operating Expenses | \$95,123 | \$76,169 | \$89,900 |
| Total Expenditures | \$95,123 | \$76,169 | \$89,900 |
| General Fund Revenue | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Net Cost/(Savings) to General Fund | \$95,123 | \$76,169 | \$89,900 |
| POSITIONS | | | |
| <i>Authorized Positions/Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)</i> | | | |
| <u>Positions:</u> | | | |
| Regular | 0 / 0 | 0 / 0 | 0 / 0 |
| Total Positions | 0 / 0 | 0 / 0 | 0 / 0 |

Metrics

| Metric Indicator | FY 2013 Actual | FY 2014 Actual | FY 2015 Actual | FY 2016 Estimate | FY 2017 Estimate |
|------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| Number of Volunteers | 1,428 | 1,341 | 1,281 | 1,307 | 1,333 |
| Number of VCE participants | 52,959 | 58,804 | 59,804 | 61,000 | 62,220 |
| Cost per participant | \$1.32 | \$1.62 | \$1.27 | \$1.28 | \$1.29 |
| Percent satisfied VCE participants | 95% | 93% | 95% | 90% | 90% |

Attendance at Virginia Cooperative Extension programs continue to increase primarily due to continued program integration efforts with multiple partners and overall increased community collaborations. Service quality results indicate a continued high level of satisfaction with VCE programs.