FOOD SUPPLEMENT NUTRITION EDUCATION (FSNE)

Maryland’s Food Supplement Nutrition Education (FSNE) offers nutrition education programs to help Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) households and those eligible for SNAP. FSNE programs are provided at no cost to support the work of community agencies serving SNAP-eligible individuals and families, such as literacy centers, local food banks, soup kitchens, WIC offices, senior centers, community centers, neighborhood groups, and homeless shelters. Many materials are available in both English and Spanish.

In St. Mary’s County, with four Title I elementary schools, training teachers and bringing nutrition education programs to parents and youth, as well as school-sponsored events, Judy Center and Head Start sponsored events. Gardening for healthy eating is also a component of FSNE’s work. In FY18 FSNE shifted work towards a more comprehensive Policy, Systems, and Environmental changes throughout the site, as well as branching out to local Farmers’ Markets to deliver Nutrition Education to families. Currently 2 sites have been trained on Water Campaign, focusing on incorporating more water into their day.

In 2018, the following were reached through FSNE programs:

- 926 low-income youth and adults participated in FSNE programs
- 33 collaborators were trained
- 38 classes were implementing FSNE Programs
- 310 participants were reached at local Farmers’ Market

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES (FCS)

FCS programs promote healthy lifestyles among youth and adult community members to reduce their risk of food-borne illness and chronic diseases (e.g. obesity, diabetes, and heart disease). This year, FCS Healthy Living Educator, Erin Carney, wants to better understand the needs of Southern Maryland’s residents. She will be reaching out to key stakeholders within the community who know their organization and the communities they serve best. By identifying where programming gaps exist, Erin hopes to fill these areas with programs on nutrition, physical activity, food safety, wellness, and even new approaches like Mindful Eating and Intuitive Eating.

Since starting in July 2018, Erin has been involved with the following events/projects:

- St. Mary’s County Fair – Fair patrons learned about mindful eating; creative ways to grow and eat vegetables; balancing recipes using MyPlate guidelines and a Blender Bike; and how to safely catch, kill, clean, cook, and consume fish species invasive to the Chesapeake Bay and Potomac River.
- Farm to School – Local elementary schools are encouraged to source local produce and animal products into their cafeterias and adopt agriculture-based education into classroom curriculum. Students participate in hands-on learning activities during Farm to School Day to learn about nutrition, agriculture, and farming.
- Red Ribbon Week – Elementary students participate in interactive activities to learn about making healthy nutrition, physical activity, and drug choices.
- Fresh Conversations – Older adults gather to discuss current nutrition and health topics while tasting low-cost, easy, healthy recipes, and discover new ways to stay active and independent.
- Food Safety is for Everyone – Agency staff, volunteers, and other adults acquire food safety knowledge and skills, enabling them to make healthier lifestyle choices for themselves and those in their care.
- Dining with Diabetes: Diabetes 101 – Funded by the Rural Maryland Council, Southern Maryland residents will learn about the basics and complications associated with pre-diabetes and diabetes, ways to manage symptoms, and the next steps in making lifestyle changes.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND EXTENSION

St. Mary’s County
Annual Report 2018

University of Maryland Extension
St. Mary’s County
26737 Radio Station Way, Suite E-2
Leonardtown, MD 20650
Phone: 301-475-4484
AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES (AGNR)

St. Mary’s County is home to a variety of agricultural enterprises, including tobacco, row crops, vegetables, greenhouse and nursery crops, as well as hay and livestock. Agriculture has experienced a significant amount of recent change as farmers adopt enterprises that allow them to remain profitable and sustain operations.

University of Maryland Extension strives to provide the practical tools and information that farmers need to adapt to such changes. Using non-biased, research-based information and the network of extension agents and specialists throughout the state, farmers and those seeking alternative crops have direct access to the latest technology, marketing, and production information.

2018 Program Highlights:

- UME drives economic growth. Knowledge gains regarding cropping practices and advances in technology are key contributors to increased profitability. Providing current, relevant information producers can use to improve their operations is a cornerstone of the University of Maryland Agricultural Program. 382 sessions reaching 2,836 participants were conducted.
- Seven applied field research trials were conducted in collaboration with farmers across the region during the last year to address current production issues. Field trials included evaluating anaerobic soil treatment in vegetable high tunnels, use of Bloom soil amend- ment in corn, common ragweed weed control in soybeans, herbicide resistance in corn field (also non-tillage systems), and small fruit (blackberry, raspberry, blueberry) variety trials, tobacco fertilizer treatments and tomato grafting trial in high tunnels.
- Increasing the number of successful beginning farmers in the region through participation in the Maryland Collaborative for Beginning Farmer Success. Participants receive regular newsletters, access to on-farm training and online training modules.
- Provide direct consultation to agricultural producers solving a diverse array of production and marketing issues. Each year, an average of 300 field consultations are conducted with growers and 500 fact sheets, bulletins, or written recommendations are distributed to agricultural producers.
- Assist farmers transitioning to other enterprises including vegetable, cut flower, MD 609 tobacco and MD Broadleaf tobacco, greenhouse, nursery, forage and grape production.
- Conduct various workshops and conferences including the Southern Maryland Vegetable Conference, No Till Field Day, Southern Maryland Crops Conference, Hay and Pasture Conference, Vegetable Production Twilight Tour and Grape Growers Workshop.

MASTER GARDENER (MG)

The Master Gardener program mission is to train and support volunteer horticulturists who put their knowledge to work for the citizens of St. Mary’s County. They pass along safe, effective, and research-based sustainable practices to county residents through “Ask a Master Gardener” plant clinics, “Bay-Wise” site visits, St. Mary’s County community events, public presentations, and various other ways within the county. Certification is maintained through advanced training and continued volunteer service. The program is supported by a part-time UMD horticulturist. In 2018, the St. Mary’s County Master Gardener Program consisted of 65 active volunteers and 15 interns who performed a total of 3,103 hours of volunteer service in St. Mary’s County. A few of the many projects undertaken by the St. Mary’s County Master Gardeners and coordinator during 2018 included:

- Held 42 “Ask a Master Gardener” plant clinics at three county libraries and three local farmer’s markets to answer plant disease and pest problems.
- Certified 6 residential properties as “Bay-Wise.” The Bay-Wise Landscape Certification Program promotes landscape practices that help protect our waterways. Information such as “River Fest,” “Heritage Days” at St. Clements Island, “Plant-a-Paloosa” at ELMS Environmental Center, “Family Fun-on-the Farm” at Sotterley Plantation, and county fair.
- Presented community service activity centers, garden clubs, and county fair.
- Provided therapeutic horticulture at St. Mary’s County Hospice.
- Renovated the St. Mary’s County Agricultural Service Center entrance gardens and replaced invasive plants with a native plant demonstration garden.
- Provided garden maintenance to 18 county park sign gardens, as well as historic beds at Sotterley Plantation, Historic St. Mary’s City, and native gardens at ELMS Environmental Center.
- Cultivated partnerships with St. Mary's County public schools by teaching lessons about “Grow It Eat It” and composting during their “Earth Day” celebrations. Also, participated in the state-wide “Farm to School” program.

AGRICULTURAL NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT (NM)

The local NM program is coordinated by Greg Simpson, a Maryland Nutrient Management Advisor. The NM Advisor conducts farm visits, prepares soil samples, conducts plant tissue tests, and also provides technical support to any farm operator in the county who requests it. Upon gathering information from a farm operator, the advisor provides recommendations for the efficient use of both nutrients. These recommendations are provided to each producer in the form of a “Nutrient Management Plan.” The goal of this plan is to maximize crop yields while minimizing nutrient losses into the environment. Upon receiving a plan, farm operators have the tools and information to keep in compliance in Maryland’s Nutrient Management regulations. Salary, training, mileage, and program expenses are funded through a grant from the Department of Agriculture.

During 2018, NM plans covering a total of 10.246 acres were completed covering 300 tracts of land farmed within St. Mary’s County. Of these plans, a total of 32 were prepared for those operations participating in the Maryland Cover Crop Program, 13 were prepared for operations participating in the Maryland Manure Transport Program.

The NM Advisor also assists Beale Beale, the County Agriculture Educator, in conducting various farm visits and nutrient-related seminars throughout the year.

WATERSHED PROTECTION AND RESTORATION PROGRAM (WPRP)

WPRP is administered through the University of Maryland Extension—Sea Grant Extension Program through the work of the regional faculty member and local program assistant. These individuals provide programing in watershed management and restoration, water- shed, and ecological health, and food and agriculture throughout Southern Maryland. Specifically, they:

- Engaged with the local Land Use & Growth Management and Department of Public Works offices in WIP directives.
- Assisted the St. Mary’s River Watershed Association in planning and implementing on-the-ground projects that result in quantifiable reduction in non-point sources of pollution.
- Supported the St. Mary’s River Watershed Association in the pursuit of funding opportunities for planning and implementation efforts.
- Conducted Stormwater BMP workshops that have a direct connection to watershed improvements, enhanced water quality and habitat, or environmental science education.
- Participated in the St. Mary’s County Fair, Earth Day on the Square, and Riverfest at Historic St. Mary’s City, Plant-a-Paloosa, and 4-H Day Camp.
- Conducted one-on-one with homeowners and farmers on pond management strategies and provided recertification for local aquatic pesticide applicators.
- Provided technical assistance to a new local watershed association, Friends of St. Clements Bay, in support of watershed projects.
- Collaborated with new, well and septic specialist on local outreach and education planning.
- Collaborated with the Commission on the Environment on the second annual Environmental Stewardship Event.
- Consulted one-on-one with residents and conducted site visits on properties with stormwater concerns.

WATER/REUSE DEVELOPMENT (4-H)

The 4-H Program is the largest youth development organization in America, empowering nearly 70,000 youth in Maryland and 6 million young people nationwide. The mission of 4-H is to enable youth to reach their full potential as responsible, caring citizens by increasing knowledge, life skills, engagement, and participation in community development. UME 4-H program staff work directly with adult leaders to provide the materials, training, guidance, and support needed to achieve these goals.

In St. Mary’s, we have 10 clubs throughout the county including a military partnership at NAS Patuxent River. We have interest groups such as the Western Drill Team and English Drill Team that perform with their horses in the community and at the St. Mary’s County Fair. We support after-school and school-based summer camps by partnering with St. Mary’s County Public Schools and Leadership Southern Maryland. In 2018, we reached approximately 1,100 youth in St. Mary’s County with programs in Agricultural Science, Citizenship, Environmental Science and Outdoor Education, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), and Healthy Living.

2018 Program Highlights include:

- Focus on positive youth development elements of “Belonging” and “Independence”.
- Youth development of leadership skills developed through club officer training and public speaking contests.
- Support after school programs focused on nutrition and exercise.
- Day camp for youth ages 5 to 12 and leadership/counselor experiences for youth ages 13-18.
- Workshops to provide youth hands-on learning opportunities in 4-H project areas such as animal science (e.g. horse, livestock, poultry, dogs, etc.), STEM, archery, photography, public speaking, and leadership.
- Sixteen Club community/service projects performed.
- 119 certified adult 4-H volunteers, 4 new volunteers; and 30,000 volunteer hours.
- 4-H members entered 1,336 County Fair exhibits, including 301 livestock project animals.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The 4-H Program is the largest youth development organization in America, empowering nearly 70,000 youth in Maryland and 6 million young people nationwide. The mission of 4-H is to enable youth to reach their full potential as responsible, caring citizens by increasing knowledge, life skills, engagement, and participation in community development. UME 4-H program staff work directly with adult leaders to provide the materials, training, guidance, and support needed to achieve these goals.

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WATERSHED STEWARD ACADEMY (WSA)

WSA program mission is to train and support community leaders in St. Mary’s County to serve as Master Watershed Stewards in the protection, restoration, and conservation of watersheds, working to reduce the negative impacts of stormwater runoff into the Chesapeake Bay. Master Watershed Stewards are leaders who engage communities to be proactive about local stormwater management. The Steward Certification Course typically includes 45-60 hours of classroom and field training culminating in a class project, capstone project and presentation. Certification is maintained through continued volunteer service and advanced training. Stewards can help identify areas in the St. Mary’s county that are in need of stormwater management and help the County to meet its Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) goals and S4A permit goals. 10 Master Watershed Stewards maintained certification in 2018, and the second certification course will be conducted in 2019.