Examples of Success Stories: 2008

Leadership Brown County
County officials and community leaders have seen a lack of interest in citizens willing to take leadership positions, serve on local boards and committees, and run for public offices. Purdue Extension partnered with the Chamber of Commerce, Community Foundation, and Brown County YMCA to address this need through a series of seven workshops. Class topics included assessing personal leadership, team building, government, conflict resolution, diversity, health & social services, ethics, education, communication, business & tourism, and economic development. Evaluations after the workshops indicate that participants are more aware of the services and governmental aspects of the county and now have resources and tools to get more involved in the county. A participant said “I believe the leadership class is invaluable to understanding the government in the county and how it works. I would not have had the courage to run for an elected position if I had not participated in this Leadership class.”

Wildlife Field Day
Hunting and wildlife watching activities pump over $1.1 billion dollars into Indiana’s economy. Purdue Extension partnered with local Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) offices to conduct a wildlife field day which focused on food plots for deer, turkeys, and other game. Twenty two participants heard about establishing plantings, saw demonstrations of how to plant small plots, and toured existing food plots. When surveyed after the program, 100% of respondents indicated they picked up tips about locating a wildlife planting on their property and what to plant for the wildlife they hoped to attract. Ninety three percent indicated they learned how to properly prepare and plant their wildlife planting, and 100% said they learned ways to properly maintain their planting. When asked if they planned to establish wildlife plantings as a result of this program, 93% indicated that they did. All respondents were more aware of resources and experts available to assist them to manage or attract wildlife. Ninety-three percent said this was the first Extension program they had ever attended.

Managing Current Agriculture Challenges
Farmers face difficult and costly choices on a regular basis and many are not sure where to turn for reliable, unbiased answers to their questions. They may end up making decisions that not only negatively impact their bottom line but that also have negative environmental consequences. In 2008, 160 producers and representatives from agribusinesses attended an Extension field day designed to assist them with decisions related to pesticide selection and application, managing new diseases and insect pests, maintaining grain quality during storage, and proper pesticide disposal practices. Ninety-two percent of respondents indicated the information would influence their weed management decisions next year, and 92% also indicated they had a better understanding of how herbicide-resistant weeds can impact their farming operations. Ninety-six percent of respondents indicated they were better prepared to manage insect pests. Finally, 89% of those responding said they had a better understanding of the factors that contribute to losses in grain quality, and 89% replied they had a better understanding of the management practices that help maintain grain quality.

Community Campaigns Improve Health
Obesity continues to be a national concern as more than 66% of the adult population is reported to be overweight or obese. Obesity contributes to a number of chronic conditions including diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and stroke. Newton County Extension promoted two walking programs, Walktober and America on the Move, to address this issue. 200 participants reported walking more than 20,000 miles in the past year, thereby reducing their risk for disease. Of participants who returned surveys, 100 percent indicated making at least one positive health change since participating in the programs. One participant said “I completed my first challenge and decided to keep going for another 6 weeks. It really keeps me motivated by logging my steps!!!"
Other participants said “I finally got motivated to do this. I've been able to spend more time with my dogs." "Kept me counting my steps, so I was aware and often surprised."

It’s A Lot Harder than You Think to Make Your Own Living
Middle school students do not see a correlation between their success in school and their future standard of living. Purdue Extension collaborated with the North Gibson Youth Coalition and community volunteers to provide a series of real-life simulations in which students received a glimpse of the standard of living they can expect from their chosen careers. 195 8th graders participated in four lessons including the Reality Store. After participating in Reality Store, 97% of the students said they are likely to make wise financial decisions, and 97.6% now plan to get more education after high school. One student summed up the experience by saying, “I thought it would be easy, but I learned that I need to make wiser choices on money spending.” The cost of raising a child provided the biggest dose of reality for students with 96.3% stating they learned about this cost as a result of this program. 92% of the students learned the type of job they have will affect how much money they make and this will determine their lifestyle. After the Reality Store, 68.5% of students talked to a parent or guardian about their career or job plans, and 74.4% of students discussed plans with their friends.

Pasture and Hay Land Management after the Drought of 2007
The late spring freeze and the drought of summer 2007 resulted in dramatically lower forage yields and were anticipated to impact the quality and productivity of pastures and hay lands in 2008 and beyond. A series of workshops was designed for landowners who wished to assess the condition of their forage lands, to develop a plan for renovation where necessary, and to find ways to manage these lands in the future for increased yield and forage quality and to better meet the needs of their livestock. Thirty two Hancock County farmers attended the three workshop sessions. In a late summer follow up survey, over 70% of those responding rated their pastures as average or above average, had surveyed pastures for poisonous or noxious weeds, and had controlled them as appropriate. Seventy percent indicated that they had actually tested their soils for nutrient content and nearly 60% based nutrient and/or lime applications on those test results.

Youth Leadership Hancock County
Many youth would be willing to assume leadership roles within their schools and communities but feel inadequate. Youth Leadership Hancock County is a means to help youth develop their leadership skills. Twenty-one class members were selected to participate in a one day retreat and four additional classes on diversity, citizenship, communication, community issues, delegation, and group skills. When class members rated their leadership skills at the end of the sessions, 100% of the participants agreed that Youth Leadership developed their leadership and teambuilding skills as well as skills they will use in their future occupations. Eighty percent said that Youth Leadership gave them the incentive to become an active leader in their school or community. One participant commented “I learned to be better at communications and that a leader is not always the head of a group.”

Clean Sweep -- Pesticide Disposal
Leftover pesticides and empty pesticide containers are a threat to the environment and a hazard to humans and livestock. To assist Indiana pesticide applicators in disposing of unwanted, leftover pesticides, the Office of the Indiana State Chemist annually sponsors “Clean Sweep” pesticide disposal days. In 2008, extension educators hosted 35 programs that educated farmers on proper pesticide disposal and the Clean Sweep Program. The pesticide education programs also explained other proper pesticide disposal and storage methods, and keeping accurate pesticide records. Four Clean Sweep collection dates were held with 87 participants bringing in 15,551 pounds of leftover pesticides. After attending the pesticide training session, 47% of participants said they would make a change with 24% of these saying they planned changes in their pesticide record keeping methods and another 13% indicated they would make a change when disposing of leftover pesticides and pesticide containers.

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Fun with Science
In an effort to overcome student apathy and a decline in science fair projects Purdue Extension conducted a program focusing on how much fun a science fair project can be. The Fun with Science program reinforces classroom science education standards and teaches students that science is a part of their everyday life. In 2008, 1,989 students in Boone and Marion counties learned how to use the scientific method to conduct an experiment and how to effectively communicate data collection. Teachers reported science fair participation increased nearly 25% in 2008 as a result of this program. They also reported that 83 percent of the students could more effectively conduct a science fair experiment and 67 percent could effectively communicate their data through charts, graphs, written reports, and oral communications. One teacher stated “I think it helped them see that there is science going on all around them and that creating a science experiment is not that hard.” Another teacher reported “Kids love this time to see how science is used with everyday things. They are motivated to go home and become scientists!!”

Marion County Master Gardener Program
The large volume of horticulture questions indicates that many people need accurate, environmentally responsible information to better understand and practice proper lawn and garden management. Purdue Extension-Marion County had 125 participants in four Master Gardener programs. Participants received 50 hours of training on topics including plant science, soil science, pests, pesticide use and safety, plant problem diagnosis, landscape design, landscape plant selection and maintenance, vegetables, fruits, lawns and indoor plants. Surveys showed that 94 percent of the participants indicated they became a better environmental steward as a result of the Master Gardener program. Fifty-nine percent stated the program helped them save money during the period of time the class was held and 83 percent indicated they felt the program would save them money in the future. One person said “It has helped me to do things right so I don’t have to do them over,” In addition, during the training period, 78 percent stated they had already adopted a better landscape or garden management practice. The dollar value of time contributed by Master Gardener volunteers during the past year amounted to $258,995.25.

Unraveling the Mystery of Commodity Marketing for Farm Women
Since women operate 23% of the farms in Indiana and have indicated a need for more information about marketing and how to evaluate production contracts, the Purdue Women in Agriculture Team developed a five week educational series to provide farm women with the knowledge and confidence to participate in and make successful marketing decisions for their farm operations. Workshop sessions and an online self-study course covered topics such as understanding the futures market, options, local cash market alternatives, and market decision making. Eighty-nine individuals participated in this program. A follow up evaluation found that 93% of the respondents increased their knowledge of common commodity marketing terms and 77% said they could now calculate the breakeven price to successfully market grain. A participant reported “I can ask smarter questions and will know what they are talking about.” Another said “My goal in taking this class was connected to the responsibility of purchasing and hedging contract seed production for our grower contracts. It is important to understand the marketing perspective for both the grower/farmer and our company.”

Home Grown, Northwest Indiana—Local Foods Expo
Northwest and North Central Indiana have strong agricultural roots yet face pressure from growth. One means of sustaining agriculture is to connect more directly to consumers and provide value-added products and services. Two all day local foods expos were held to bring together individuals, businesses, and organizations with an interest in promoting local foods. In Northwest Indiana, 121 people attended the expo representing 60 businesses and organizations. A follow up survey found that 62% of respondents increase sales or purchases of local foods. Sixty-six percent reported that contacts made at the expo helped their business or organization. In the six months following the expo, 38% collaborated with other local foods businesses or organizations and 31% volunteered time or donated to a charitable cause related to local foods.