Mission Statement

Washington State University Extension Lewis County helps people put research-based knowledge to work improving their lives, communities, and the environment.

To realize this mission, faculty and staff plan, conduct and evaluate research and experience-based educational programs to improve the lives of Lewis County residents.

WSU Extension Lewis County also employs the assistance of hundreds of volunteers and community partners and provides access to the resources available at Washington State University and the National Land Grant University Extension System.

Local Programs Include:

- 4-H Youth Development
- Master Gardener/
  Master Recycling Composting
  Program
- Master Food Preserver Program
- SNAP-Ed Program
- Small Farm/Agritourism
- Stewardship Forestry
- Noxious Weed Education and Control
- Pesticide License testing

WSU Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local WSU Extension office. Washington State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Lewis County cooperating agencies.
BY THE NUMBERS

- Over 813 reached through 4-H enrichment programs including
- 344 youth traditionally enrolled in 4-H Clubs
- 106 certified and Enrolled Adult Volunteers
- 25 teens in County Wide Teen Leadership Club

Lewis County 4-H Youth Program, Sept.-Dec., 2020 (COVID-19)-
Pam Watson, M.Ed., WSU Lewis County Extension, 4-H Faculty

County 4-H volunteers work with youth in the framework of the “four Essential Elements” of positive youth development which are Belonging/Bonding, Mastery, Independence/Leadership, and Generosity. The 4-H membership year runs from Oct. 1 – Sept. 30 of each year. Youth and volunteers have from Oct. 1-April 1 to enroll/re-enroll each year. Impacts to youth were:

- A total of 813 youth in all WSU Extension program reaching K-12 youth in Lewis and surrounding counties
- 106 4-H volunteers in 4-H Volunteer Club Program with 36 of those as middle managers and/or in officer positions
- 344 youth are in the year-long 4-H volunteer led club program, including 25 youth enrolled as youth volunteer leaders (Junior Leaders)
- “Outreach 4-H Programs” ranging from after school 4-H clubs to day camps to school enrichment (heavily modified for this year of course) had approximately 469 4-H youth with a minimum of 80 contact hours. In spite of COVID-19 we reached several youth through the Morton Up! program, the Chehalis Farmers’ Market, packets passed out through local elementary schools with lunches on snacks and nutrition, and several 4-H outreach project related programs provided via zoom in a multi-county effort we are calling Experience 4-H.

Pam has continued to meet with county committees/boards through phone and zoom meetings. Lewis County 4-H Council meetings are made up of 4-H volunteers, 4-H Teens, and parents. We have continued to meet each month, taking a break for Dec. as we normally would do. Each Council meeting has contained an educational portion for up to one hour prior to the meeting, sometime focused on volunteers and other times focused on youth education. The 4-H Horse Advisory committee has elected to not meet electronically/virtually through fall 2020/winter 2021. Continued participation with community board groups such as Lewis County Thrives, Centralia Coalition, and Morton Up!; these meetings have been educational and supportive for members and to the community too during COVID-19. All of the community groups are planning to move ahead with different community support efforts in the winter and into the new year.
To stay abreast of information, twice-weekly meetings have been participated in throughout the fall and weekly meetings in Nov. and Dec., through WSU, based on the program area. We have had staff meetings twice a month to stay in touch with our WSU Lewis County Extension Office partners. Pam has also been a part of several state-wide discussion groups for youth animal science and adolescent leadership development, two of her 4-H focus areas. Pam has provided leadership to several state-wide and national opportunities in the areas of virtual fairs, virtual judges training, communication & expressive arts, and poultry by hosting/co-hosting 12 live (recorded) zoom sessions.

Through the 4-H Un-fair Virtual Showcase we collected 28 entries from 12 4-H youth and worked with Tamera Hayes, SWWF Manager, to provide ribbons and to showcase entries virtually on the Southwest Washington Fair and WSU Facebook/website after entries were judged. This was a great opportunity for the kids to showcase what they had accomplished for the 2019-2020 4-H year despite Covid-19.

Because WSU 4-H programs are not allowed to meet in person yet an effort has been made to stay in contact with the 4-H youth of Lewis County by: encouraging 4-H Volunteers to get a free Zoom or other free video chat capable program to have virtual 4-H meetings and by hosting 4-H Family Game Nights three times between Sept. and Oct. These are a time to check-in, have a short learning session about 4-H project work, a social time to interact, and have some fun. In late Oct. we (multi-county group consisting of Lewis, Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, Pacific, and Thurston counties) started to put together several project related, multi-county, virtual programs, called Experience 4-H. While these meetings do not make up for the time spent together in club meetings they do give the youth and adult volunteers a place to interact and learn about different 4-H project areas. See photos of what the youth have made during the November Experience 4-H programs with Pam. The most challenging part of keeping 4-H active and engaged has been the lack of high-speed technology and connectivity throughout the county.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS ABOUT 4-H

4-H'ers are:

- Nearly 4x more likely to make contributions to their communities
- About 2x more likely to be civically active
- Nearly 2x more likely to participate in science programs during out-of-school time
- 2x more likely (Grade 10) and nearly 3x more likely (Grade 12) to take part in science programs compared to kids in other out-of-school time activities
- Nearly 2x more likely to make healthier choices

The Positive Development of Youth: Comprehensive Findings from the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development
The WSU Master Gardener (MG) Program is a public service program that provides university training to volunteers for the purpose of enabling them to serve their communities by providing horticultural, gardening, landscaping, and pest management advise, free workshops, and other educational outreach to the public.

Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, Fifty-five dedicated Lewis County MG's volunteered over 5,970 hours in 2020.

Though severely limited in 2020 due to COVID restrictions, volunteers are committed to using the Demonstration Gardens to educate visitors about how to plant, maintain, and harvest food crops and other useful plant products. Several hundred pounds of produce from two of these gardens were donated to local food banks in 2020 but 1,000 pounds of donated produce is our goal for 2021. Using our new virtual Plant & Insect Clinic (PIC) format, MG volunteers and staff helped over 100 clients solve a wide range of plant, insect, and landscaping issues throughout Lewis County. In 2021, a newer web-based PIC system will be used to help more residents quicker and more efficiently. This system is in its final stages of development with an anticipated launch in March 2021.

To compensate for the fourteen MG workshops that were scheduled but then canceled in 2020, Lunchtime Learning—a virtual workshop series—was developed and offered to the public beginning in August 2020. Through this, the program made 127 public contacts, some of whom expressed interest in becoming a volunteer. Likewise, because in-person MG training was canceled due to COVID-19, Lewis County’s first online MG training program was developed in 2020 and launched on January 4, 2021 with eleven trainees from around the county, including the east end. Expanding the MG volunteer base across the county will provide opportunities to help more Lewis County residents in communities where training and educational resources from Master Gardeners have not been available including:

- Demonstration gardens
- Research sites
- Information kiosks
- Plant & Insect clinics
The WSU Master Recycler Composter (MRC) Program is a partnership between WSU Extension and Lewis County Solid Waste that supports and trains volunteers to provide educational demonstrations, workshops, and other information to the public about reducing, reusing, and recycling solid waste.

**Some highlights of the MRC program during COVID-19 include:**

Nearly 50 hours by only 14 MRC volunteers were devoted to maintaining two Demonstration sites in Centralia and Chehalis and answering numerous questions from local residents about a variety of composting and recycling issues.

The program’s newest demo site, the Floral Park Sustainability Project, will provide residents in the Twin City area with a family-friendly “eco-park” experience while learning from numerous static displays, kiosks, and working composting and other environmentally-focused demonstrations along creatively landscaped paths and seating areas. This “eco-park” concept will be duplicable for other towns and cities in Lewis County with an ultimate goal of reducing Lewis County’s solid waste issues.

The first ever online training is being developed with a scheduled launch in January 2021 to allow residents throughout Lewis County to become Certified Master Recycler Composters. With an interest in East Lewis County for MRC (and MG) training already, classes will fill up quickly.

The MRC training and newly offered online workshops will open up new opportunities for residents in more communities to receive education regarding how to reduce, reuse, and re-cycle solid waste, which could potentially reduce solid waste in Lewis County by 60% (or roughly 5-10 million tons).

*Value of volunteer time in Washington $33.02 hr. (2019) www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time

14 volunteers

50 Volunteer Hours = $1651.00 *
SNAP-Ed Program

2020 SNAP-ED ACTIVITIES

- SNAP-Ed delivered educational trainings in the community, reaching primarily youth participants.
- Educators provided training programs reaching low-income families.
- PSE (policy, systems and environmental) reach across all sites.
- New partnerships were formalized, with PSE interventions provided at several sites.
- New 2020 partnerships were coordinated through baseline data collection at in-county sites and shared goal establishment at local sites.
- Student behavior change following SNAP-Ed training:
  - Students were observed making healthier meal and snack choices

Situation & Issue
This project targets adults and children with messages that are consistent with the Dietary Guidelines and teaches the skills to select and prepare the lowest-cost, most nutritious (and tasty) foods. Educators emphasize increased consumption of fruits, vegetables, low fat milk, and decreased consumption of high fat and high sugar foods. Additional messages emphasize portion size and the importance of physical activity.

Outcomes and Results for 2020
Collaborated with SNAP-Ed programs across the state to develop virtual nutrition education curriculum to be used in schools and partner sites.

Extended the Regional Food Security project, with an additional 2 cooking videos focused on using winter produce and storing surplus winter vegetables. Will continue to work with the Southwest Washington Food Hub to support emergency food programs in Lewis and Thurston counties.

Exploring partnership with the Lewis County Food Bank Coalition to build a Farm to Food program that would support farmers, while providing fresh produce to local emergency food programs.
These are examples of the Curriculum being used in the schools and some of the videos that were created to help facilitate this.
WSU Extension Forestry serves communities throughout the state by providing opportunities to learn about forest management through research-backed information and experts from throughout the Pacific Northwest. These efforts engage landowners in forest stewardship and help them actively manage their forests towards a variety of goals and objectives, including forest health and restoration, timber production, wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, and other ecosystem services. The Extension Forestry program for southwest Washington is based in the Lewis County office and serves nine counties in the region.

**Programming**

Extension Forestry is best-known for offering immersive, hands-on learning opportunities to landowners who value forest stewardship. In the fall of 2020, four online educational events were offered to landowners in Lewis County:

- **Online Family Forest Field Day** – twenty immersive one-hour sessions taught by forestry experts on a variety of topics relevant to small forest owners (see highlight for more details)
- **Forestry Lunch Breaks: Tree Planting Series** – Five half-hour sessions taught by DNR and WSU Extension experts on proper tree planting, species selection, and seedling care to ensure proper forest establishment in the coming tree planting season.
- **Ash Seed Collection Training** – forest owners with Oregon ash participated in USFS study on the potential effects of emerald ash borer.
- **WA Tree Farm Program Fall Forestry Seminar** – WSU Extension Forestry and the Washington Tree Farm Program partnered to deliver a three-part online seminar series on forest products.

**Programming Summary:**

- 33 hours of forestry programming delivered
- Production of over twenty class recordings available on Youtube for ongoing viewing
- 29 forest owning families in Lewis County have attended one or more of the above educational events representing 1,120 forested acres
- Additional individual assistance provided to 25 forest owners in Lewis County
Forest Stewardship Program

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: ONLINE FAMILY FOREST FIELD DAY

The program featured twenty classes on a variety of forestry topics taught by forestry experts from around the state. In an effort to maintain the immersive experience of learning in the field typical to a normal Family Forest Field Day, Extension Foresters worked with the speakers to pre-record videos in the field, which were then streamed live via Zoom with the speakers available to answer questions.

This event was attended by 424 forest owning families throughout the state, representing 25,271 acres of privately owned forestland in Washington. In Lewis County, 13 families attended representing 800 acres of forest. Some notes worth remarking on the demographics of the audience:

- For 39% of the audience, the online Family Forest Field Day was their first time attending an Extension Forestry event
- 99% of respondents reported learning something valuable during the program
- 91% of respondents with forested property intend to implement new management practices based on knowledge gained at the Online Field Day
- 97% of respondents encouraged the Extension Forestry program to continue doing the online version of the program even after the COVID-19 crisis subsides

Research and Demonstration:

WSU Extension Forestry regularly partners in or leads research and demonstration efforts that provide forest owners with the information necessary to make smart management decisions. Currently, the SW WA program has established research and demonstration sites for bigleaf maple syrup production and log-grown specialty mushroom operations to help forest owners explore forest product-based enterprises. In addition, the Extension Forestry program has partnered with WSU faculty to research emerging forest health concerns, like western redcedar dieback, using citizen science platforms.