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 Recycler
- Food Safety & Preservation
- SNAP-Ed Program
- Small Farm/Agritourism
- Stewardship Forestry
- Noxious Weed Education and Control
- Pesticide License testing
SNAP-Ed Program

**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 2021**

SNAP-Ed has been busy fostering new relationships with local food banks and Farmers Markets. Through a new connection to the Lewis County Food Bank Coalition (LCFBC), we have been introduced to leadership from 9 different Food Banks all across Lewis County. Many of the food banks are small and would significantly benefit and appreciate support from SNAP-Ed. SNAP-Ed has a lot to offer food banks including cooking classes, nutritious food demos, providing nutrition and recipe handouts, planning and assembling unique meal kits, and assisting with local food rescue programs. This is exciting because our current relationship with the Salvation Army has been a huge success. Last summer, we supported them with a food rescue program that provided over 1,000 pounds of donated fresh produce from the Chehalis Farmer’s Market. It is exciting to consider this is a viable possibility for all food banks.

Our main goal with partnering with the LCFBC is to build a Farm to Food program. This program would support farmers in Lewis County and provide fresh produce to local emergency food programs. The funding that will make this program possible comes from a grant called the Farm to Food Pantry grant. The grant secures funds that allow food banks to purchase fresh produce from local farmers. A win-win for everyone. We are eager to see what type of impact SNAP-Ed will have on these smaller food banks over the Spring and Summer growing seasons.

We are also looking forward to Farmer’s Market season! We have an upcoming meeting with the Lewis County market managers. We are excited to see how we can support and encourage SNAP benefit usage at the markets again this year. Each year, Lewis County Farmer’s Markets continue to see significant growth in SNAP benefits being used which means there is increased accessibility to local fresh foods in our community. We are hoping to possibly work with some of the smaller Farmer’s Markets, in Toledo and Morton and help them with similar programs as well.
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, Jan.-Mar., 2021 (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 programs reaching K-12th grade 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) Virtual Know Your Government (Feb.), and Experience 4-H Online workshops and clinics (NEW) had approximately 344 4-H youth with a minimum of 60 contact hours. In spite of Covid-19 we reached several youth through virtual 4-H club meetings, 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 when those options have been made available. 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. Each Council meeting has contained an educational portion for up to one hour prior to the meeting, sometimes focused on volunteers and other times focused on youth education. This quarter’s education included 4-H Online 2.0 enrollment help and Resuming 4-H In-person application, video, and discussion. 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, WA Ag in the Classroom, 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 state-wide information twice-monthly zoom meetings through WSU are participated in based on the program area of Extension and 4-H. We have had staff meetings twice a month, recently dropping back to once per 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 county, state-wide, and national opportunities in the areas of Experience 4-H, communication & expressive arts, and poultry by hosting/co-hosting 23 live (recorded) zoom sessions.

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. 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. Our multi-county regional group consisting of Lewis, Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, Pacific, and Thurston counties continue to put together several project related, multi-county, virtual programs, called Experience 4-H, averaging 5 programs per month. 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 Feb. and Mar. 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.

The Positive Development of Youth: Comprehensive Findings from the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development

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

Decorated Egg Workshop March 27th, food coloring with cool whip and food coloring with dry rice
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.

Though severely limited in 2020 due to COVID restrictions, MG volunteers are committed to using our Demonstration Gardens (4) and Greenhouse to educate visitors about how to plant, maintain, and harvest food crops and other useful plant products.

Many thankful customers came to our first Fall Plant Sale at our greenhouse at Borst Demonstration Garden in September 2020. We are excited to be able to offer our Spring Plant Sale at the SW Washington Fairgrounds in May 2021 after having to cancel it in May 2020 due to COVID restrictions.

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 in 2020. In March 2021, we launched a web-based PIC system to help more residents quicker and more efficiently.

Since October 2020, the Master Gardeners delivered 8 Lunchtime Learning workshops to the public. Through these, we have made over 186 public contacts via attendance and recorded viewership.

Our first virtual Gardening For Everyone on March 13, 2021 was a great success and 108 contacts were made. Unless an in-person event will be allowed, we plan to host another event in the fall.

Lewis County’s first online MG training program was launched in January 2021. After transitioning to a new virtual training platform, the next training cycle will begin in January 2022 and will be available to anyone in the county with adequate internet service.

Beginning in March 2021, the MG program launched Gardening: The Series for Mountain View Timberland Library in Randle. This 9-month virtual workshop series will focus on teaching beginning and advanced gardening skills to East Lewis County residents.

By training and providing research-based information to more Lewis County residents virtually (and in-person, when possible), the its promotion of community sustainability and resilience throughout the county despite COVID!
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.

Online MRC training is anticipated to be available in June 2021.

Since August 2020, MRC volunteers delivered 14 Lunchtime Learning workshops to the public. Through this, we have made over 141 public contacts through attendance and recording viewship.

MRCs volunteers support Lewis County Solid Waste and the community by assisting at many events including Christmas Tree and Styrofoam Recycling, Tire Recycling, and the Leaf Exchange. By organizing and managing these events, MRCs prevent thousands of pounds of solid waste from going to the landfill and saves the county thousands of dollars in disposal-related costs.

Since January 2021, several MRC volunteers assisted with Lewis County Solid Waste's Recycling Reset by engaging transfer station customers in Centralia and Morton about the new recycling policies. Efforts by MRC volunteers prevented the contamination of the recycling bins by misplaced items deposited by the public.

The MRC program’s newest demonstration site, the Floral Park Sustainability Project, will provide residents with a family-friendly “eco-park” experience while learning from numerous static displays, mini-research stations, kiosks, and working compost bins to demonstrate how to reduce, reuse, and recycle solid waste.

Floral Park's first workshop, Greenscaping: Pesticide Alternatives, was held in September 2019 but other workshops were canceled due to COVID. When able, MRC volunteers will teach free in-person workshops about a wide range of topics including residential and worm composting, Hügelkultur (mound gardening), water, soil, and energy conservation, greenscaping, pesticide reduction, upcycled yard art and hardscapes, and much more!
WSU Extension Forestry serves communities throughout the state by providing opportunities to learn about forest management through research-backed information and experts from around 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 winter of 2021, two programs were offered to landowners in Lewis County:

- **Online Forest Owners Winter School** – over twenty immersive one-hour sessions taught by forestry experts on a variety of topics relevant to small forest owners (see highlight for more details)

- **Online Forest Stewardship Coached Planning** – This immersive forestry short course includes eight 3-hour class sessions, an in-person field trip, and a site visit from a professional forester. Landowners receive a suite of resources and one-on-one guidance in the creation of a forest stewardship plan designed to help them manage their forests.

**Programming Summary:**

- 40 hours of forestry programming delivered
- Production of over twenty class recordings available on Youtube for ongoing viewing
- 66 forest owning families in Lewis County have attended one or more of the above educational events representing 2,788 forested acres
- Additional individual assistance provided to 70 forest owners in Lewis County

**IN THEIR WORDS**

Messages from program attendees during COVID-19

“During everything that has been going on, retreating into the forest and applying what we have learned from the Coached Planning class has been a fantastic way to spend the time.”

“WSU-Extension educational programs have contributed not only to my understanding of forestry principles, but also immeasurably to maintaining my sanity during the past many months of pandemic isolation. Thank you!”

“Though it would be difficult to replace hands-on experience with on-line, this was a very good substitute. I, also, think it is a valuable education approach to reach more people who have small forests or who are thinking of buying forest property. Even without COVID, it is unlikely that we would have attended this workshop in person, so this was a wonderful opportunity for us.”
PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: ONLINE FOREST OWNERS WINTER SCHOOL

The program featured over twenty classes on a variety of forestry topics taught by forestry experts from around the state. Landowners participated in Q&A sessions, expert panels, round table discussions, and "lunch table" networking opportunities via Zoom. Recordings of the sessions are also available on Youtube for ongoing reference.

This event was attended by 542 forest owning families throughout the state, representing nearly 50,000 acres of privately owned forestland in Washington. An additional 916 people signed up to view the recordings. In Lewis County, 42 families attended the event representing 2,000 acres of forest. Of the attendees of the Online Forest Owners Winter School:

- 99% reported learning something new about forest management
- 98% said the event provided practical forest management advice they can use on their properties
- 89% reported an intent to implement new practices based on what they learned at the event

Research and Demonstration Highlight:

This winter, the WSU Extension Forestry - Southwest Program used a WSU property to participate in a UW-led study on the commercial viability of bigleaf maple syrup production in the region. While unlikely to compare with the scale of the east coast sugar maple industry, bigleaf maple syrup is a specialty product with a unique flavor profile that fetches a much higher price per ounce.

Funding from the UW project was used to establish a field experiment that will also be leveraged for demonstration to teach forest owners interested in syrup production. Whether it’s at the commercial or hobby-scale, this practice has significant potential to get landowners and their families engaged with their forests, making them more likely to stay on the landscape.