



Perry County Cooperative Extension
2023
**REPORT TO
THE PEOPLE**

 perry.ca.uky.edu

 perry.ext@uky.edu

 facebook.com/perrycountykyextension

 933 Perry Park Road
Hazard, KY 41701

 606.436.2044

After the Flood: Supporting Local Farmers

In 2023, the focus of flood relief efforts shifted towards aiding farmers and producers during the initial growing season after the flood. The primary goal was to support them in restoring their land for agricultural production.

\$17,000.00 from Flood Relief Funds was used to buy a special seed drill. This drill helps farmers fix pastures and hay fields damaged by floods. A workshop at the Robinson Center for Appalachian Resource Sustainability (RCARS) in Quicksand taught over 30 farmers how to use the drill correctly. Another \$17,000.00 in hay and pasture seed was donated to help farmers in flooded areas improve their fields.

Efforts were extended to aid vegetable growers in recovering from the flood. Two educational workshops were conducted to guide growers on using flooded ground. Participants were educated on which vegetables should not be planted in such areas. During one of the workshops, \$7,000 worth of vegetable seeds and fruit trees were given out to attendees. Additionally, the Perry County Extension Office and the Perry County Conservation District collaborated to provide free soil testing. Participants in these workshops were encouraged to test for heavy metals possibly deposited by the flood. In 2023, our office processed 100 soil tests.



Bee-utiful Beginnings: Inaugural Pollinator Days Fosters Environmental Awareness

In Spring 2023, we launched our inaugural Pollinator Days program at the Perry Co. Extension Office. Designed to educate students about the vital connection between flowering plants and the local environment, the event featured four booths highlighting the significance of pollinators.

Students learned proper flower planting techniques and the importance of specific flowers for pollinators. They also explored the health benefits of honey and its versatility in recipes. Additionally, they delved into the world of bees, discovering their crucial role in nature and exploring beekeeping.

The highlight of the event was when students got to explore a real beehive up close and try on beekeeping suits. This hands-on activity was a fantastic opportunity for them to learn about beekeeping in a safe and controlled setting. With guidance from experienced beekeepers, students watched bees in action. Wearing the beekeeping suits allowed them to experience what it's like to care for bees firsthand.

Overall, Pollinator Days offered students valuable insights into the importance of pollinators in our ecosystem. Following the event, we discovered that nearly 100 students had been educated about pollinators and the agricultural and dietary uses of bees and honey. Furthermore, over 25 students expressed interest in starting their own beekeeping operations and have taken steps to make that a reality. We're excited to announce that the program will return and expand in 2024!



Preserving Hope: “Canning After a Disaster” Program Empowers Families Affected by the 2022 Eastern Kentucky Flood

According to the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland’s September 2023 report on the historic Eastern Kentucky flooding of July 2022, over 8,900 households were affected or completely lost during that natural disaster event. Of those households, 74% were within the highest affected area of Breathitt, Perry, Knott, and Letcher counties. Families lost homes, vehicles, and stored food supplies, exacerbating a regional, high food-insecurity rate.

Because flood recovery efforts take place well after the initial impact of a disaster, and because individuals felt as though they had no education, resources, or equipment to better secure a food supply for their families, Perry County FCS Agent, Kelsey Sebastian, Knott County FCS Agent, Lorie Adams, and Community Recovery & Resiliency Agent, Kayla Watts, presented the Canning After a Disaster program in partnership with a local church in Hazard. The program took place one year after the historic flooding, was a two-day educational event covering boiling water and pressure canning and was open to participants from the four-county area hardest hit by the disaster.

Twenty-two adults attended, and five adults volunteered for the Canning After a Disaster program hosted by a local church. Each participant discussed how their family’s food supply was impacted by the 2022 flooding, with most stating they had lost whole freezers full of preserved foods, thus creating an interest in how to preserve using canning methods. Using pre- and post-evaluation, we were able to gauge the success of the program. In our pre-evaluation, we noticed that many participants indicated a “beginner” level status when discussing their knowledge of pressure and water bath canning. Our goals then became focused on ensuring participants understood the basics of canning, including safe canning methods, understanding the difference between canning low-acid and high-acid foods, identifying spoilage in home-preserved products, and more. By the end of the program, 71% of participants strongly agreed, and 29% agreed that they could identify safe, research-based methods of home food preservation, 65% of participants strongly agreed, and 35% agreed that they understood the difference between low-acid and high-acid foods, and 60% of participants strongly agreed, and 35% agreed that they could identify spoilage in home-preserved products. In a follow-up evaluation sent to participants three months after the initial class, 100% of participants indicated they had used the skills taught in the class to preserve food at home, and 100% of participants indicated they had shared the information they had learned with family, friends, and other community members.

Family & Consumer Science

One participant stated, "This is a great program. I lost everything in the flood including my freezer full of meat and veggies. I've always wanted to learn how to can instead of just freezing." Church volunteers managed canning equipment donations, allowing all 22 participants to take home new jars and canners at the end of each session. The Canning After a Disaster program was a success. Participants learned new food preservation techniques, and were given the equipment to do so, all which aids disaster recovery and helps fight food insecurity.



Meet Our Staff:



Charles May
Agriculture &
Natural Resources



Tate Sasser
4-H Youth &
Community
Development



Kelsey Sebastian
Family &
Consumer Science



Taylor Wilson
Extension Staff
Assistant

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