Tourism

***Person Reporting:*Tahnea Locklear     *Location:*Robeson *Date:*2012-12-20**

In Robeson County, tourism provides $17 million of annual payroll income, however only a small portion comes from small businesses. Based on this need, Robeson County Cooperative Extension collaborated with North Carolina State University's People-First Tourism Project to encourage talented local people to provide more engaging tourism experiences. The project can benefit the "micro-entrepreneur" while improving the economy of the county.

People-First Tourism utilizes a web-based marketplace for buying and selling genuine tourism experiences. This project links entrepreneurs trying to pursue sustainable livelihoods through tourism with conscientious tourists interested in unique, interactive experiences which also positively impact the communities. The People-First Project was introduced through 3 workshops exposing 27 potential micro-entrepreneurs to new income and business ownership possibilities.

To date, three Robeson County citizens (farmer, artist, business owner) are on the website and nine more are currently being added. Involvement in People-First Tourism will potentially increase individual income as well as increase and promote tourism in the county.

***Person Reporting:*Peggie Garner     *Location:*Onslow *Date:*2013-01**-15

Onslow County is home of several hotels that are extended stay. The county is the Home of Camp Lejeune and New River Air Station which are two large bases with a lot of training. The training is often done by teams from other bases in our country. These teams will stay anywhere from six weeks to six months.

The Hotel and Motel Association continues to support the Hospitality curriculum taught by the Southeast District. They want to make sure the individuals that away from home for a long period of time are happy while they are here. These hotels and motels often hire young front staff employees and need help them with being good front staff. They continue to call on us for help.

Not only have they provided money to help offset the cost of the class but they continue to share the good things that have come from the class and the information that is being shared from participants to other employees. The Tourism Director and the Chamber of Commerce is very supportive of the class and refer businesses to the class often. Several classes were taught in 2012 and the only marketing that had to be done was through the hotels. More classes have been requested for 2013.

***Person Reporting:*Jessica Anderson     *Location:*Alamance *Date:*2013-06-27**

The Anson County Tourism Development Authority exists as an entity of County Government to disperse funds collected from an occupancy tax to promote the tourism industry in Anson County. The Authority utilizes a relationship between County Government, Chamber of Commerce, Uptown Wadesboro Inc. and the Anson Economic Development Corporation to develop and promote local tourism events.

This past year, the Anson County Livestock Agent served as chair of the Anson County Tourism Development Authority, including oversight of an annual budget of $35,000 and how it was distributed for advertising, marketing, and support of local events to promote tourism. As the agritourism representative on the Board, it is essential to provide an agricultural insight of the heritage of agriculture in the area and how that may promote tourism in Anson County. The Authority also received much needed guidance in planning, networking and relationships building from Extension. This past year over $5,000 was given to promote local events and contests in the county to promote tourism.

***Person Reporting:*Cameron Lowe     *Location:*Currituck *Date:*2011-06-29**

According to a recent parks and recreation survey, residents have identified water access and multiuse play areas as a primary recreational need in Currituck County. Currituck Cooperative Extension is tasked with managing the county owned Currituck Rural Center.

The facility was originally designed for equine activities on a residential or small farm scale. Numerous improvements have been made to enhance equine residential and tourism activities and expand the availability to the public. To broaden the scope of the center, Currituck Cooperative Extension applied for a Parks and Recreation Trust Fund grant.

The application included a plan for kayak access to the Currituck sound, marshland boardwalks with interpretive signage, picnic shelters and playground areas. An online public meeting was conducted to get citizen input on the plan. Public response was positive and despite the lack of PARTF funding, county commissioners elected to fully fund the project as planned. This represents a commitment of over $700,000 to meet a need expressed and affirmed by residents of Currituck County.

***Person Reporting:*Kevin Starr     *Location:*Lincoln *Date:*2011-12-30**

Cooperative Extenison started the Lincoln County Apple Festival in 1972. Today, Extension serves as the coordinating agency for the event, working closely with the festival's board of directors. While all Extension staff members contribute to the festival's success, our Administrative Secretary takes the lead role by handling the entire registration process and answering thousands of questions each year. The County Extension Director facilitated the development of a new festival website which received over 9,000 visits in 2011. This year's festival drew approximately 60,000 visitors to downtown Lincolnton, resulting in gross sales to vendors in the range of $150,00-$200,000. This is the largest community event in Lincoln County and a major fund-raiser for many non-profit groups.