CONTACTS through Extension educational programs to encourage healthy lifestyles have increased 82 percent since the Health Extension through Extension Leadership Program (HEEL) began two years ago, county agents report. That translates to 142,468 more Kentuckians learning about adopting healthy lifestyles in 2004 than in 2002.

Those figures are part of the latest report on HEEL accomplishments. Here are more numbers from the report:

- More than 45 groups and 80 professionals from other UK colleges and departments and outside agencies have joined Extension in forming partnerships to tackle Kentucky’s health issues.

- County extension staff in 114 of Kentucky’s 120 counties are involved in health-related coalitions and have offered more than 1,770 educational programs as a result of the coalitions.

The partnerships keep coming…

Sharlee Shirley, B.S., M.P.H. and a faculty member in the UK College of Dentistry, now has a joint appointment with HEEL and the College of Dentistry. Shirley is working on a curriculum about children’s oral health and also will develop resource materials on the relationship between oral health and chronic diseases.

Two new collaborations are now in the works for HEEL. One is the sharing of a general health specialist with the College of Nursing. The other is a shared specialist with the College of Pharmacy. This collaboration will expand HEEL’s efforts in helping clients better understand verbal instructions from health care providers and how to use their medications appropriately.

Noteworthy HEEL programs include:

- KENTUCKY ALLIANCE FOR DRUG ENDANGERED CHILDREN, which has trained more than 1,000 people to be first responders and develop local protocols.

- GET MOVING KENTUCKY, which this year is expected to involve 33,000 Kentuckians in improving their health through physical activity.

- LITERACY, EATING, AND ACTIVITY FOR PRE-SCHOOLERS: This program has been selected as a Models that Work program by the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky.

HEEL has awarded $200,000 in grants to 33 counties to fund new health programs, some of them across county lines.

In late February, $850,000 in HEEL funding was announced as part of UK’s federal funding for 2005 through the efforts of U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell.

—Denise Rennekamp, HEEL project coordinator, contributed to this story.
FROM ACROSS THE COMMONWEALTH

Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service programs are locally defined and administered. Here are a few examples of county Extension programs that are making a difference in people’s lives.

**Straight to the Heart of Good Nutrition**
Poor nutrition and inactive lifestyles lead to overweight kids and adults. Because of the growing problem of child obesity in Bullitt County, county Cooperative Extension Service agents teamed up with the local health department to develop a fitness program aimed at youth. The 16-week program “Be Fit for Your Heart’s Sake” was offered twice last year and had more than 200 participants. Local businesses and agencies supported the program by donating prizes for a recognition event.

**Advancing Agriculture in Carter County**
Working with the Carter County Agriculture Advancement Council, the Carter County Cooperative Extension Service helped diversify agriculture in the county. Through the council’s work, nine individuals received Phase 1 tobacco cost-share funds to construct and renovate greenhouses; initiate or improve rabbit, sheep, and goat production; and carry out other diversification ventures. In addition, county cattle producers purchased 34 bulls to improve herd genetics. They also built cattle handling facilities and hay and feed storage structures.

**Mature Driving**
As drivers age, their skills may not be as keen as they once were. The Fulton County Cooperative Extension Service coordinated a “Safe Driving for Mature Operators” program. The class, taught by a Kentucky State trooper, helped older drivers practice safe driving. Participants received a 10 percent discount on their automobile insurance for three years.

**Variety Trials Help Farmers**
The Daviess County Cooperative Extension Service and 15 county grain and tobacco producers conducted crop variety trials on 13 farms. At the end of the growing season, results from the trials were compiled and distributed to producers. Because of this information, producers can select varieties that perform best in Daviess County.

**Seniors Living Better**
Because about one in six of Monroe Countians are senior citizens, the Monroe County Cooperative Extension Service developed a program to encourage seniors to stay active and healthy. A low-impact aerobics class was taught over 10 weeks. Eighteen seniors took part in the hour-long, twice-a-week program. When the class was over, participants were encouraged to take part in the Extension Homemakers Walking Club, which meets three times a week to walk up to three miles daily.

**Get Your Goats in Magoffin**
The Magoffin County Cooperative Extension Service worked with the Magoffin County Goat Association to present important topics about goat production, including parasite control and nutrition basics. A newsletter provided more information about profitable goat production. Because of the programs, producers are reporting fewer problems with their goats.
Looking Sharp in Lyon County

The Lyon County Cooperative Extension Service, in collaboration with the Lyon County Chamber of Commerce, worked on developing a favorable atmosphere for creating new businesses and promoting existing ones. “Enhance Your Appearance, Stretch Your Resources,” a seminar designed to enhance the professionalism of local employees, attracted nearly 60 participants. Eighty-six percent of them said the seminar gave them good tips.

Sprucing Up in Harlan County

Many elderly and disabled persons in Harlan County live in houses badly in need of repair. Most are not financially or physically able to complete repairs themselves. To help out, the Harlan County Cooperative Extension Service, in cooperation with the Harlan County Community Action Agency, government officials, local businesses, church groups, and concerned citizens, conducted the “Repair Affair.” Participants, many of them 4-H members, mowed lawns, trimmed trees, cleaned fencerows, and helped with repairs on 11 homes.

Grain Marketing Savvy Reaps Profits

Grain farmers in Hickman County have faced several years of low prices and less-than-normal yields. To help farmers improve their profits, the Hickman County Cooperative Extension Service developed a program on marketing and risk management. As a result, farmers learned to market their grains strategically. Thanks to the program, farmers reported a $1 premium on corn and a $2 to $3 premium on soybeans.

Sustaining Local Culture

The Clay County 4-H Council identified a lack of quality arts education programming in the region. The Clay County Cooperative Extension Service answered the call and organized an accelerated reader program for each of the county’s nine elementary schools. More than 800 children and 3,000 residents attended the reading celebration and storytelling festival. Forty of the children served as storytellers.

Tourism Boosts Local Economies

Tourism is an important component of economic development. As a result of the Public Summit and the efforts of the Greenup County Cooperative Extension Service, the county is gearing up for a stronger economy through tourism. The fiscal court enacted a hotel/motel tax to provide a budget to enhance the area’s tourism. A $200,000 transportation grant was awarded for a county restoration project. Tourism is expected to contribute nearly $5.5 million to the local economy, with some 340 jobs involved.

After-School 4-H Clubs a Big Hit

Due to the large cut in tobacco income over the past several years and the lack of jobs within Bracken County, many parents travel more than 45 minutes to and from work. That means some young people spend lots of time without supervision. To address this problem, three local school systems, local family resource centers, and the Bracken County Cooperative Extension Service found ways to involve youth in supervised after-school activities, including 4-H Clubs, which have meaningful activities for youth. The result is that 50 young people became involved in after-school 4-H activities.

Job Readiness Starts Early

4-H has been preparing young people for employable futures for a long time. With the recent emphasis in schools on workforce readiness, the 4-H experience is emphasizing employment even more. In Logan County, the Logan County Cooperative Extension Service organized and delivered a four-day workforce prep class. Ninety-two eighth graders learned about the job application process, professional dress, and workplace etiquette. The class ended with mock interviews provided by Wal-Mart. Almost all the participants thought the training was beneficial in preparing them to seek employment.
MAKING A DIFFERENCE THROUGH HEALTH EDUCATION

Obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and cancer, not to mention mental illness and drug or substance abuse, have all been identified through our local issues identification processes as important to the people of Kentucky. The article on Page 1 and many of the short program highlights included in this issue of Extension Today illustrate how Extension is responding with programs that make a difference.

As Jim Rohn, a contemporary philosopher, has said, “Learning is the beginning of health.” Through multiple learning opportunities, the Health Education through Extension Leadership (HEEL) program is helping Kentuckians across the state improve their health and well-being.

One example of the impact of our programs is the Kentucky Alliance for Drug Endangered Children, which is led by one of our HEEL staff, Holly Hopper. This program has received overwhelmingly positive feedback from health professionals and community members. The program teaches about methamphetamine production and its consequences to both rural and urban communities. Meth production has impact on farms through issues such as anhydrous ammonia storage and residue in the environment, on children who are exposed to meth labs by their parents, on families, and on communities. Extension is at the forefront of educating all Kentuckians on ways to address this important issue. For more information on this and many more of our health education programs, visit the HEEL Web site: http://www.ca.uky.edu/heel/.

Our health education programming illustrates some of the key strengths of our Cooperative Extension system in meeting the educational needs of Kentuckians. We connect the University on campus to Kentuckians wherever they live and work. Through creative partnerships with other colleges on campus, state government agencies, law enforcement, and other organizations, we add greater breadth, depth, and strength to our educational programs. The bottom line is that we are meeting needs of Kentuckians through quality educational programming in every county of the state. We are proving Rohn’s statement that “learning is the beginning of health.”

—Larry W. Turner, Associate Director, Cooperative Extension Service