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# Extension News from the Middle Peninsula

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Frank Long examines seed heads on the Wheat Tour  
Photo courtesy of Christie Culliton, Virginia Cooperative Extension

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## Thank You To Our Producers

Thank you to our partnering farmers with their assistance in helping provide land, equipment, time, and effort for VCE's On-Farm Crop Variety Trial research. This research has involved working with soybean, wheat, and corn varieties to see how well different varieties and maturity groups work at different locations across the state. This information and data gathered will be published and disseminated to producers across the Middle Peninsula and the state! We wouldn't be able to do this without their support and help!

# 2025 Mid-Atlantic Wheat Tour Finds Optimistic Outlook for Wheat Crop

By Robbie Longest



Robbie Longest examines seed heads on the Wheat Tour  
Photo courtesy of Christie Culliton, Virginia Cooperative Extension

Local Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) Agents from the Middle Peninsula, Northern Neck, and surrounding areas partnered with Virginia Farm Bureau Grains Division again this year to host the 2025 Mid-Atlantic Wheat Tour on May 29. Participants of the tour, including merchandizers, partner agencies, VCE Specialists and Agents, and Virginia Farm Bureau staff, began with a pre-tour meeting and dinner at the Eastern Virginia Agricultural Research and Extension Center (EVAREC) the evening before to hear updates from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS) and VCE leadership, followed by field tours learning about the small grains

breeding program and other research happening at the AREC. The following day there were two separate tours, one on the Middle Peninsula and one on the Northern Neck, each visiting five local wheat producers' farms to evaluate their fields for yield potential and quality. Participants learned how to estimate wheat yield potential before harvest and assess the crop for quality and disease presence.

Overall, the tour revealed an optimistic yield outlook for the 2025 crop, with an overall average estimate of 76.1 bushels/acre for the Northern Neck, and 75.3 bushels/acre for the Middle Peninsula. Some locations revealed even higher yield estimates.

We would like to thank the producers that hosted the tour for their time and dedication to help support this annual event, as well as Virginia Farm Bureau, Virginia Cooperative Extension, EVAREC, CALS, and all of the 75 participants that attended the events related to this year's tour!



# Thank you

## Mid Pen Farmers Help SWVA Farmers Impacted by Hurricane Helene

By Robbie Longest

Hurricane Helene caused catastrophic damage to many communities in Southwest Virginia last fall at the end of September, with damage estimates compiled from Virginia Cooperative Extension estimated between \$416 million and \$629.7 million in direct, future income, and ripple effect losses for the agriculture and forestry industries. Many efforts were initiated to aid those affected by the storm, and are still ongoing as these areas continue to recover. One important support effort has been ongoing from October 2024 to March 2025 here locally. Southwest Virginia farmers who were primarily livestock and forage producers were severely impacted as flood waters damaged, destroyed, and swept away hay, livestock, fencing infrastructure, equipment, and barns, and left many pastures and forage fields littered with debris. Cattle farms are the livelihood of many Southwest Virginia farming families. Feed became a major concern as this natural disaster struck, as they were heading into the winter months. Much of the hay and forage crop that had been harvested and stored to feed the livestock through the winter was destroyed, with no time or ability to harvest more. Many local farmers from the counties of Middlesex, Essex, King and Queen, Gloucester, and Mathews stepped up to help their fellow farmers in need by donating hay to those affected. Local Virginia Cooperative Extension Agents worked with their fellow agents in Southwest Virginia to find producers in need and coordinated with local producers that had hay to donate to direct it where it was needed. In total, there were more than 325 round bales donated from this area with an estimated value of \$24,375. Local producers from the Middle Peninsula that supported the effort by donating hay to those in need included Crazy Clover Farm (Wayne, Zach, and Lynne Burch), Jimmy Brizendine, Todd Henley, Corbin Hall Farm (Evan Perry and Ronnie Russell), Christian Kelley, Cloverfield Enterprises (The Hundley Family), Robert Respass, Todd Blake, Jason and Wayne Bray, Bill Gresham, and William Richardson.



Other producers from surrounding areas, including Hanover, Caroline, and the Northern Neck, also made donations. These efforts were supported by several local trucking operations that donated their time and use of their trucks to transport the hay to those in need in Southwest Virginia, often traveling more than five hours one way to deliver it. Trucks included those operated by Gibson Logging Inc., Ben Ellis Jr. Hauling Inc., C.P. Anderson, Phil Minor Farms, Bill Bohannon, and Jerry Dickinson. Truck drivers included Steve "Hotrod" Haston, Steve Haston Jr., Nick Landman, Josh Anderson, Bill Bohannon, and Jerry Dickinson. The effort could not have been possible without the generous support and donations from many local businesses, organizations, and individuals to help with fuel to get the hay delivered to those in need. Supporters included Milby Oil Co., Thrift Oil Co., Atkins Petroleum, Riverland Insurers, James River Equipment, Hooper Inc., Coastal Agrobusiness, United Bank, Cedar Plains Farm LLC, Louis Muse, Heather Wright, Mike Smelly, Wynn Davis, and Howertons Baptist Church. We would like to recognize and thank these local farmers, truckers, businesses, organizations, and individuals, as well as all who assisted for their support and compassion in helping those in need who were affected by Hurricane Helene through these efforts over the last seven months.

# Fun at 4-H Camp!

By Krista Gustafson



Gloucester, Essex, and Middlesex youth attend camp at Jamestown Educational Center June 9-13.

The 4-H camping season at the Jamestown 4-H Center kicked off with “The G.E.M. of the James.” From June 9 to June 13, one hundred sixty-eight youth from three counties participated in the camp, where they enjoyed a week filled with opportunities to learn new skills. Activities included archery, sewing, cooking, music-making, kayaking, swimming, stand-up paddleboarding, and more. Campers also made new friends, improved their teamwork and communication skills, and developed their independence.

Prior to camp, twenty-five high school students from the three counties completed 24 hours of training in leadership, risk management, and youth development. They had the opportunity to use these skills to create a memorable experience for the campers.

4-H Camp would not be possible without the support of volunteers who dedicated a full week to serve as “camp parents” alongside the Extension staff. The camping cluster is grateful for the assistance of Brian Altland, Flora and Robbie Brunjes, Jeff Buswell, Danielle Gray, and Jay Ward.

Each local Extension office played a vital role in the camp. ANR Extension Agents

Robbie Longest and Frank Long provided supervision for cabins and evening activities. FCS Agent Glenn Sturm taught the cooking class, while VCE-Middlesex Intern Faith Lewis provided supervision and assistance in various classes. The 4-H staff, including Jackie Jefferis (Program Assistant, Gloucester), Danielle Brown (4-H Educator, Middlesex and Essex), and Krista Gustafson (4-H Extension Agent), taught classes, supervised the youth, and ensured everything ran smoothly. Our administrative team--Heather Johnson, Roxanne Johnson, and Christin Minx -- ordered supplies, recruited campers, and kept camp afloat.

The camping cluster is grateful for the financial support for camp scholarships from several key sources. We thank the Tractor Supply Paper Clover fundraisers, the J. Edwin Treakle Foundation, the Abingdon Ruritan Club, and the Gloucester Extension Master Gardeners. We also appreciate the financial contributions from Essex and Middlesex counties, as well as the scholarship support provided by the Department of Social Services (DSS) in those counties. Finally, we extend our gratitude to the private individuals who supported our efforts.





By Danielle Brown

### Owl Exploration:

The third graders at Tappahannock Elementary School were a part of the Owl Exploration 4-H Program created and delivered by Essex 4-H. This program taught students about the owls in Essex County and showed them what those owls looked like and sounded like in hopes of them being able to identify the owls if they encountered them! Students were also taught about owl behavior, owl adaptations, what owls may eat, what a habitat is, and what the habitat of Essex County includes. Diving deeper into what owls eat, students dissected owl pellets and identified bones found in the owl pellets! This program was designed to incorporate the 3rd-grade science SOL standards.

### Ag Day at TES:

At Tappahannock Elementary's Ag Day, Essex 4-H was present with a station talking about agriculture in our county, what the crops can be used for, what the different plant structures are and their function, what plants need to grow, the stages of plant growth, and the role pollination plays in plant growth and reproduction. At this station, different crops were exhibited with the grains they produce! Along with this, students planted lavender seeds to take home to experience plant growth.

## 4-H Clubs Build Life Skills

By Krista Gustafson

4-H clubs help youth develop important life skills such as leadership, teamwork, and public speaking. Alyssa Hall, a member of the Gloucester 4-H Animal Science Club, recently shared her passion for raising and showing rabbits with the Cloverbud group. This exchange benefits both Alyssa and the younger 4-H members. By sharing her experiences, Alyssa builds her confidence in public speaking, while also inspiring younger participants to engage in 4-H projects and share their own 4-H stories.



# The 77<sup>th</sup> Annual Fredericksburg Area Junior 4-H/FFA Show and Sale

By Robbie Longest

Local youth from the Middle Peninsula and surrounding areas participated in the 77<sup>th</sup> Annual Fredericksburg Area Junior 4-H/FFA Livestock Show and Sale at the Meadow Event Park in Doswell on May 2-3, 2025. Members of the Essex 4-H Livestock Club, Richmond County FFA, and the Northumberland River Ranchers 4-H Club joined other 4-H Clubs and FFA Chapters from the counties of Caroline, Hanover, King George, Spotsylvania and Stafford to exhibit their project animal species, including beef, swine, lamb, and goat, in both conformation and showmanship classes. All conformation classes were held on Friday May 2, and showmanship classes on Saturday May 3. There was also a stockman's contest where youth were tested on their knowledge of livestock equipment ID, breeds, feeds, meat cuts, and other general livestock knowledge. Exhibitors have the option of selling their project animals following the show in an auction on Saturday to supporters, including local business, farmers, and other supporters.



Mid Pen 4-Hers show off their awards

In total the 2025 Show and Sale had 92 youth exhibitors showing a total of 180 project animals. Locally, the Essex 4-H Livestock Club had a total of 8 youth participate exhibiting a total of 22 projects including 4 beef, 1 swine, 3 lambs, and 14 goats. The club members had great success at the show, bringing home Grand Champion Feeder Heifer, Grand Champion Market Lamb, Grand Champion Feeder Steer, and Grand Champion Market Goat, as well as many club members placing first and second in their respective show classes.

# Meaningful Watershed Experience for Gloucester fifth-grade students held at Beaverdam Park April 14-18

By Krista Gustafson



VCE-Gloucester collaborated with Gloucester County Public Schools and Beaverdam Park to provide a Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience for fifth-grade students in Gloucester during the week after spring break. Each day, a different school visited the park, where students learned about the Chesapeake Bay Watershed through hands-on experiences. They collected and analyzed a variety of data and exercised their critical thinking in developing solutions to environmental issues.

Students learned to assess water health using macroinvertebrates with the assistance of Master Naturalists.

They identified trees and conducted a tree survey with the help of Master Gardener Tree Stewards. Fifth-graders also learned about the role of bees in the ecosystem, pollination, and bee conservation from Bee City/Clean Communities volunteers. Extension Agent Frank Long, the ANR Agent, led an exploration of the life cycle of the oyster and the importance of oysters as filters. With support from the 4-H team from Gloucester and the Jamestown 4-H Center, students participated in a chemical and physical analysis of water while gaining insights into how watersheds function.

Planning for next year's event has already begun!

## *Welcome*

## Meet our new Middlesex Summer Intern, Faith Lewis!



Faith is a junior at Clemson University and a daughter of a local Middle Peninsula producer. She is currently pursuing a degree in Plant and Environmental Science with a concentration in Agronomy. She has a strong passion for both agriculture and aquaculture and is excited to use this internship opportunity to gain valuable hands-on experience in agricultural outreach and community engagement.

Welcome Faith!



# Middlesex County Category 6 Prep Course a Success!

By Frank Long

Middlesex County hosted 14 county and VDOT employees from the Middle Peninsula to prepare them for VDACS examinations to receive the Category 6 or Right-of-Way pesticide applicator licenses. New applicators were educated on how to properly identify weeds, pesticide safety, and calibration methods to properly apply and use correct pesticide methods for public land and rights-of-way sites for their employers.

## *Sign up to be a Master Gardener!*

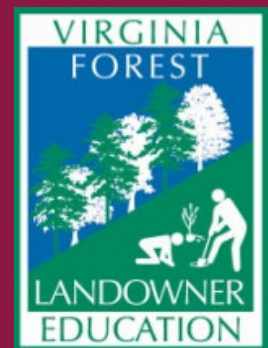
Applications are open for those interested in becoming a Master Gardener! Contact your local Extension Office for more information or visit the VCE website for more information.



**Extension  
Master  
Gardeners**

## Upcoming Programming

**VA Ag Expo – August 7<sup>th</sup> at  
Brooke Farms (33285  
Mason Road, Locust  
Grove, VA 22508) 7:00am –  
2:00pm**



Middlesex Farm Day: tentatively, September 24<sup>th</sup> 9am – 12pm with Middlesex Elementary and Homeschool Students (contact the Middlesex Office for more information)

Middlesex County Garden Series – see schedule for locations, dates, and times



**Want to successfully plan and prepare your home garden?**  
**Get research-backed Extension-based information that will give you the tools to succeed!**  
**Topics will include pest control, homesteading, harvesting, and everything in between!**  
**No registration is required. All sessions will be 5-6 pm. Please refer to the schedule below for topics and locations for upcoming sessions.**

**1. Let's Start a Home Garden – What, Where, and When to Plant for Success**  
**Tuesday, March 18, 2025, 5 PM, Middlesex County Public Library – Urbanna Branch**  
*(150 Grave Ave, Urbanna – 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM)*

**2. Garden Weeds – What Is It and how do I get rid of It?**  
**Monday, April 21, 2025, 5 PM, Middlesex County Public Library – Deltaville Branch**  
*(35 Lovers Lane, Deltaville – 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM)*

**3. Creating your own Plant Super-Food – Composting and Organic Matter Additions**  
**Tuesday, May 20, 2025, 5 PM, Middlesex County Public Library – Urbanna Branch**  
*(150 Grave Ave, Urbanna – 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM)*

**4. Garden Bugs and Beneficials – The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly**  
**Monday, June 16, 2025, 5 PM, Middlesex County Public Library – Deltaville Branch**  
*(35 Lovers Lane, Deltaville – 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM)*

**5. Pollinators – Build a Home for your Garden Friends – Presented by Jean Howard,  
Extension Master Gardner**  
**Tuesday, July 22, 2025, 5 PM, Middlesex County Public Library – Urbanna Branch**  
*(150 Grave Ave, Urbanna – 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM)*

**6. Gathering the Fruits of your Labors – Harvesting Basics**  
**Monday, August 18, 2025, 5 PM, Middlesex County Public Library – Deltaville Branch**  
*(35 Lovers Lane, Deltaville – 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM)*

**7. An Apple a Day... – Fruit Trees**  
**Tuesday, September 16, 2025, 5 PM, Middlesex County Public Library – Urbanna Branch**  
*(150 Grave Ave, Urbanna – 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM)*

**8. Let's Plant Something Wild – Specialty Crops**  
**Monday, October 20, 2025, 5 PM, Middlesex County Public Library – Deltaville Branch**  
*(35 Lovers Lane, Deltaville – 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM)*

**9. Living off the Land – Homesteading Topics**  
**Tuesday, November 18, 2025, 5 PM, Middlesex County Public Library – Urbanna Branch**  
*(150 Grave Ave, Urbanna – 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM)*

# The Middlesex Office is Moving to a New Location

We have moved from 125 Bowden Street, Saluda, VA 23149 to the old Sheriff's Office at 75 Oakes Landing Road, Saluda, VA 23149, just down the street! We are still available Monday to Friday 8 – 5. Please be patient as we get our new office set up and call us at 804-758-4120 before visiting in person.



## Contact Us!

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