

Cooperative Extension works hand-in-hand

By Debra Spurrier
Spotlight Contributor

In modern times, it is increasingly harder to find a so-called "free lunch". However, if you look deep in the Maryland Farm Bureau you can find one affiliate who's mission it is to disseminate the latest information at no cost to the public. That affiliate is the Maryland Cooperative Extension (MCE), represented on the board by Dr. James Wade.

MCE reaches across the state and is an informal education system embodied in the University of Maryland's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, as well as their Eastern Shore campus.

"Cooperative Extension has worked hand in hand with the Farm Bureau almost since the Farm Bureau's beginnings," says Dr. Wade.

Over the years, MFB has supported MCE with legislative issues concerning the public funds that are necessary for continuing the Extension programs in Maryland, explains Dr. Wade. "We are more and more relying on grants and contracts and Farm Bureau has always helped with that."

In return, MCE has used their research and educational programs to provide assistance to the farming community. "MFB has asked us to be an educator for legislators and other governmental officials with regard to regulatory issues," explains Dr. Wade.

MCE educational programs and problem-solving assistance are available to citizens and are based on the research and experience of land grant universities such as the University of Maryland, College Park.

In Maryland, MCE employs approximately 200 faculty and another 200 support staff and contractual employees located at the University of Maryland, College Park, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, 23 counties, Baltimore City, and four research and education centers.

Their infusion into many of the urban and suburban areas of Maryland has been positive for the image of Maryland agriculture.

MCE has worked extensively to help educate the non-farm public about the importance of agriculture in their everyday lives through their Family and Consumer Science programs, including 4-H clubs for non-farm youth.

"We have worked as collaborators with the Farm Bureau's members, providing education for the community," Dr. Wade said.

Their aim in the farming community is to build more profitable and efficient farms, as well as to offer assistance in the areas of nutrition and health, cropping assistance, financial education and many more issues associated with profitable farming, according to Dr. Wade.

"In addition, we provide education about agriculture to consumers not in the farming profession," Dr. Wade adds. "Cooperative Extension acts as a representative of the farming community in more urban and suburban areas."

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Grainger Stock No.	Description	Catalog Price	Special Price	Quantity Ordered
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2E511	Portable Oil Fired Heater	\$195.00	\$175.49	
3C999	Portable Blower	\$438.58	\$374.99	
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3E219	Portable Oil Fired Heater	\$370.00	\$332.99	
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6K610	High Torque Definite Purpose Motor Not pictured, see Page 106 in Catalog.	\$318.00	\$269.99	
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These demographic areas are where Dr. Wade believes MCE and MFB have the most potential for growth in their affiliate relationship.

"Farm Bureau and Cooperative Extension needs to continually recognize we are living more in an urban and suburban environment," he explains. "We have to find ways of incorporating that environment into our plans of action and working more with these communities."

Dr. Wade says MCE values the support MFB has given to the program in the past concerning state legislative issues and hopes the symbiosis continues for years to come.

He vows to do his part in cultivating this positive relationship by encouraging Extension to be visible and present at Farm Bureau activities and supporting their missions to the best of their ability.