Youth Safety Workshop Inspires Participants

Adapted from an article by written by Terri Leith with photography by Becky Kirkland from Perspectives, the magazine of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at NCSU.

“You never think it will happen to you.”

That was the haunting refrain behind the safety messages delivered at the Farm Safety 4 Just Kids workshop at the Johnston County Extension Center on March 12. There an audience of more than 80 participants heard about farm safety and health programs for children, youth and families at the event coordinated locally by North Carolina Cooperative Extension, N.C. Farm Bureau and Ashe/Alleghany Rural Community Safety 4 All Seasons. The workshop was sponsored by USDA Risk Management Agency through a grant to the Farm Safety 4 Just Kids (FS4JK) organization.

Leading off the event was speaker Edsel Beck, a farmer from Sparta, in Alleghany County. Beck described in vivid detail how he lost both his arms in an accident as he operated a hay baler. Beck, who endured 15 operations before he could get a prosthesis in place of one of his arms, told the group, “People couldn’t believe this happened to me, because I had done this [hay baling] for so many years, but sooner or later you’re careless or your mind is on something else.

Accidents may or may not be possible to stop, he added, “but we can remind people that the signs on the sides of machines are there for a reason.”

“The worst part of it was the hardship brought on my family. If you’re in an accident, it doesn’t just happen to you,” he said.

Robin Tutor, interim director of the N.C. Agromedicine Institute introduced the workshop presentations, which included Master Sgt. Kevin Bennett of the Greensboro Police Department, who spoke about ATV safety, and Sheila Higgins R.N., M.P.H., of the N.C. Division of Public Health, discussing kids and pesticide exposure. Also among other speakers and panelists were Shari Burgus, FS4JK education director, and Tyler Vacha, FS4JK chapter and membership coordinator.

Citing a 2006 National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health report, Tutor said, “Given that injury rates for household youths less than 20 years of age on U.S. farms is greater in the Southeast than in any other part of the country — 12.5 per 1,000 — we have a responsibility to address this issue as aggressively as possible.”

Bennett, who partners with N.C. Safe Kids, specializes in ATV safety programs. He spoke of the vulnerability to injury on the farm of youths under the age of 20, particularly between the ages of 10 and 15, and when it comes to ATV accidents, even younger.

“In 2007, 2,638 people went to emergency rooms due to ATV accidents, even younger. In 2007, we lost 35 people to ATV accidents, and 50 percent of these were kids in the 8 to 13 age range.

“What bothers us is this is preventable,” he said. “Our goal is to get the trends stopped and these numbers down.”

(continued on page 3)
Despite wind, snow, and below-freezing temperatures, the Southern Farm Show held February 4-6, 2009 at the NC State Fairgrounds was well attended. The annual event boasts five acres of indoor and eight acres of outdoor exhibits, making it the largest trade show in the Carolinas. Over 500 manufacturers display farming, landscaping and forestry equipment for operations of all sizes. Over 30,000 people from North and South Carolina and Virginia visit the show, including farmers, agriculture education teachers, Future Farmers of America members, Cooperative Extension agents, and others.

With the help of community partners, the NC Agromedicine Institute hosted two booths. Braving the elements outside were Charles Young, Area Agricultural Agent, NC Cooperative Extension, Ashe County Center and C.B. Marcom, Johnston County Farmer. The pair provided hourly power take off (PTO) safety demonstrations using straw dummies. The speed and severity of the PTO shaft entanglement grabbed the attention of observers. The Biological and Agricultural Engineering Department at NC State University provided the tractor used for demonstrations.

Inside, Agromedicine provided agricultural occupational safety and health information as well as blood pressure and blood glucose screenings and personal protective equipment (PPE) demonstrations. Health screenings were provided by AgriSafe-NC staff and outreach staff from Tri-County Community Health Center. Respirator and safety glasses demonstrations were provided by Joe Apple with Airgas/National Welders and Reed Schafer with 3M. Congratulations to Jason Rogers of Chadbourn and Marion George of Westfield, winners of the Harley Davidson safety glasses drawing provided by 3M.

Robin Tutor, Interim Director of the Institute, commented: “Exhibiting at the Farm Show allows us to expand Agromedicine’s grassroots reach.” For example, an Agriculture Education teacher attended the Farm Safety 4 Just Kids Youth Safety Workshop co-sponsored by the Institute, AgriSafe visited two farmers to assist with PPE, and one farmer participated in a pesticide applicator license session taught by Tutor. The ripple effect continues, as at least two of these contacts have led to links with Extension and commodity groups for further agricultural safety and health education events.

Plans are already under way for next year’s Southern Farm Show. We hope you’ll mark your calendar to join us at February 3 – 5, 2010 at the North Carolina State Fairgrounds.

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NC A &T’s Ibrahim Focuses on ATV Safety

All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) have become popular for work and recreation on many farms and ranches in North Carolina. Unfortunately, reported cases of serious injuries and deaths, especially among youth, have also increased. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, North Carolina ranked 10th in the nation among the states with a high rate of ATV related injuries and deaths. Children under 16 years of age are most at risk and accounted for 36 deaths from 2000 to 2004 and for 2,638 ATV related injuries requiring hospital visits in 2007. According to the Radiological Society of North America (RSNA), extremity fractures are the most common injury among children involved in ATV accidents.

Since the passage of an ATV safety law in 2005 in North Carolina, Dr. Jimo Ibrahim, an Extension specialist in farm safety at NC Agricultural and Technical State University (NCA&T SU), has made ATV safety a focus of his efforts. He is addressing ATV safety issues through education and training that emphasizes the appropriate age utilization of ATVs and the use of protective equipment.

In order to reduce and prevent ATV injuries, North Carolina Cooperative Extension at NCA&T SU and NCSU jointly conducted train-the-trainer workshops for extension agents across the State. Through a grant provided by the National 4-H Foundation and the ATV Safety Institute the collaborators conducted ATV rider instructor license training for five law enforcement officers. These individuals returned to their respective districts or counties to conduct ATV rider certification training programs for the general public. Additional instructor license training is expected this summer. For more information, contact Dr. Ibrahim at 336-334-7956 or jimo@ncat.edu.

ATV safety training is required by law.

Youth Safety Workshop Inspires Participants (continued from page 1)

To that purpose, Bennett has teamed with North Carolina 4-H, Cooperative Extension's youth education program, to offer training to ATV owners. “4-H is the leader in ATV safety in the United States,” Bennett said. “We're offering free training classes to ATV owners and seminars in schools and even TV spots to reach kids and owners.”

Among the lessons they're trying to teach are the importance of age-appropriate ATV sizes and the need for proper attire. “Riders must wear helmets and goggles,” Bennett said. “The leading ATV injury is to the eye and also to the ankle. ATVs are not toys. They will kill you; they will hurt you. There are 500,000 ATVs in North Carolina, and 3,000 sold every year.”

In 2005, North Carolina passed a law pertaining to ATV safety – about 25 years after other states did so, Bennett said. The law set 8 years old as the youngest age a child can ride a small ATV – 12 on the larger size – and mandated that every ATV operator born after 1990 has to have a training certificate. But that age threshold is still younger than safety activists like Bennett would wish, so they continue their crusade of education.

“All 4-H agents in North Carolina can help you set up ATV training programs,” Bennett said.

Workshop participants included “mainly educators,” said Bryant Spivey, Johnston County Extension director, who noted Extension agents and migrant Head Start staff, as well as Farm Bureau and N.C. Agromedicine personnel, among the attendees.

In addition to the speakers' information, a wealth of educational material was available at exhibits throughout the room. Exhibitors included Health Check/Health Choice for Children, N.C. Agromedicine Institute/AgriSafe North Carolina, the N.C. Farm Bureau Safety Program, Ashe/Alleghany Rural Community Safety 4 All Seasons, N.C. Safe Kids, N.C. Cooperative Extension, Student Action with Farmworkers and the Wilson County Farm Services Agency. Brochures and educational handouts covered ATV safety, pesticide safety, hearing loss prevention, creating safe play areas on farms, tractor rollover protective structures (ROPS), wearing sunscreen and hats -- and offered guidance in understanding the Agricultural Health Study.

Because seeing is believing, the speed and devastation of entanglement in a power take-off (PTO) shaft was demonstrated by Charles Young, Area Agriculture Agent, NC Cooperative Extension, Ashe County Center. At the end of the day, Tutor said, “The event was a tremendous success with numerous requests from participants for additional information and future workshops.”


October 13-16, 2009: 17th International Congress in Agricultural Medicine and Rural Health, From Theory to Practice: Occupational Health and Safety for Rural Populations, co-organized by the International Association of Agricultural Medicine and Rural Health (IAAMRH) and the Scientific Committee on Rural Health of the International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH), Cartagena de Indica, DT, Colombia, www.ruralhealth-colombia.com

November 30-December 4, 2009: Agricultural Medicine: Occupational and Environmental Health for Rural Health Professionals, an AgriSafe certified training in 2 sessions, co-sponsored by the NC Agromedicine Institute and the University of Iowa/I-CASH, Greenville, NC.