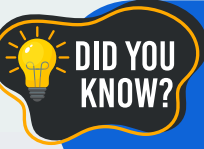


SIMPSON COUNTY REPORT TO THE PEOPLE 2024-2025



**DID YOU
KNOW?**

Heartland Chia is a farmer owned company in Franklin, KY, growing and marketing the **ONLY** chia seed grown in the U.S.A.

JUST A FEW OF OUR PROGRAMS:



Youth Programs



Home Horticulture



Nutrition Education



Crop &
Livestock Education



Front Row: NEP Assistant Amy Lawrence
Middle Row L to R: Staff Assistant Cristy Soyars, Staff Assistant Brooke Brown
Back Row L to R: Family & Consumer Sciences Agent Nancy Doyle,
Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent Jason Phillips ,
4-H Youth Development Agent Catherine Webster

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4-H Youth Development

For many years Extension leaders in Simpson Co. identified drug education & prevention as a top priority for Extension to address. The Simpson Co. 4-H agent taught Health Rocks to the 6th grade at FSMS for six years. 4-H Health Rocks is a curriculum designed to reduce tobacco, alcohol, and drug use among youth ages 8 to 14. In 2023 the agent and the middle school piloted using three 4-H teens to teach the program. This was a progressive experience and leadership opportunity for the teens. In 2024 six 4-H teens were selected and spent 12 hours training with the 4-H agent. They taught two hundred 6th graders over six days (30 hours) in the classroom. Their lessons included facts about tobacco, alcohol, other drug use, fatal vision goggles, a health fair with community partners, and stress/goal setting/decision making.

To end Health Rocks the teens organized an assembly for the 6th graders to see first-hand what happens if a student brings marijuana into school, using the Sheriff's Department & their canine. The assembly also included the school superintendent, school board, school resource officer, and principal. The goal of Health Rocks is to reduce youth smoking & tobacco use, help youth build life skills that lead to healthy lifestyle choices, and to engage youth & adults in partnerships to build positive enduring relationships that address & reduce at-risk behaviors of youth. Both 4-H Health Rocks & using 4-H teen teachers has been so successful the program is in its ninth year at FSMS and third year of being taught by teens. In 2024 60% of the students reported gaining knowledge & actively participating in the program and 73% learned what would happen thru the assembly.



“When I think of how 4-H has impacted me I think of the year I was selected to teach Health Rocks. I went into the classroom with the idea that I was only there to make an impact on the students’ lives. It was not until I reflected back at the end of the program that I realized how big of an impact they actually made on my life. I have been very blessed to grow up in a home with both my parents who care about my future and don’t use drugs. By the third and fourth Health Rocks lessons the students started to open up about their lives. Many of them had family members who abused drugs and alcohol. Some didn’t have a parent or older sibling to look up to. So as teens, we had to step up and be the role model for some of these students. Our job was to show them compassion, understand their position, and equip them with the knowledge, facts, & skills to make their own decisions.

The influence that I was able to have on their lives helped me to realize that I want to be able to impact more people.” Gandhi once said, “You must be the change you want to see in the world!” “This quote truly describes the difference 4-H has made in my life. 4-H has helped me to build a foundation of life skills. I am extremely grateful for the impact 4-H has made on me and the impact I am able to make on others through 4-H.”

Kate Ford, 2024-2025 Kentucky State
4-H Reporter from Simpson County

Community & Economic Development

The 2024 Leadership Franklin-Simpson Class was a collaboration between the Simpson County Extension Service and the Franklin-Simpson Chamber of Commerce. The program involved seven different monthly sessions with each taking an entire day. It is an intensive program that is designed to help participants strengthen their leadership abilities by learning more about themselves, the local community and working with others in their class. At the conclusion of Leadership Franklin-Simpson, the class is responsible for developing and implementing a community project.

The opening session helped everyone get to know one another and focused on participants discovering their own personality types and leadership traits. In the following sessions, the class traveled around Franklin to learn about business and industry, agriculture, local government, health systems, education, and non-profit organizations. The program closed with a meal and graduation ceremony. Several former leadership graduates served as facilitators of the various educational days.

16 individuals participated in and completed 2024 Leadership Franklin-Simpson. Based on surveys at the conclusion of the program 100% of respondents indicated that they have an increased understanding of their leadership style. 100% gained confidence in their overall leadership abilities and ways in which they interact with others. 100% also indicated that they plan to pursue some type of additional leadership role in the future. One participant stated, "The connections made will allow me to become integrated into a community that I fell in love with during my time with the program." Another participant wrote, "It was incredibly helpful to learn not only how our community works but also what it needs as it grows." The class recently made a presentation to the Franklin City Commission and with their blessing is currently researching and developing plans to implement a community splash pad and pavilion in the downtown area.



Agriculture and Natural Resources



The Simpson County Extension Agent for Agriculture helped to locate the Franklin-Simpson Farmers' Market on Main Street in Franklin. The previous market location was not visible which resulted in poor sales. The ANR Agent wrote a GOAP Grant and collaborated with local sponsors to construct a pavilion in downtown Franklin that is aesthetically pleasing and features highly visible selling spaces for vendors. Since construction vendors sales have dramatically increased.

The market requires operating expenses, maintenance costs, and funding for festivals, music and activities for long-term success. As a result, the Franklin-Simpson Farmers Market collaborated with the Simpson County Extension Service to host the Hometown Harvest Dinner. This dinner took place at a local agritourism venue called the Barn at Bethel Grove. It featured an outdoor pre-dinner festival during which ticket holders enjoy appetizers served and prepared by Farmers' Market vendors, event sponsor informational booths and live music. Then, attendees move into the Barn to enjoy more music and a great Kentucky Proud meal. This year's musical entertainment was provided by the Butler County 4-H Band. The event took place during National Farmers' Market Week in order to showcase a menu that features local food products primarily grown by the Farmers' Market vendors, highlight the importance of agriculture in Simpson County and our local community, and provide a great atmosphere for friendship and fellowship. The meal is prepared by the "Brickyard of Franklin", and local "celebrities" many of which are farmers serve the entire meal. The conclusion of the evening features a drawing for several door prizes donated from local businesses. This is the sole fundraiser for the F-S Farmers Market providing a full year of operational funds.

The market is able to flourish in large part due to funds raised at this event. Many vendors have reported an increase in sales due to products served the night of the Hometown Harvest Dinner. Each product's origin is denoted on the menu to help promote local farmers. Tickets cost \$55 per person or \$50 with the purchase of two or more tickets. 10 local businesses sponsored the event. In 2024, the dinner completely sold out of tickets for the first time selling a total of 150 tickets.

Nutrition Education



Programming for the Nutrition Education Program was in full swing in 2024! Continued partnerships for youth education included summer camp programming for Boys & Girls Club of Franklin-Simpson, winter classes for Head Start pre-K, and quarterly rotations through the 6th grade physical education classes. A new partnership with the Kentucky Courts resulted in cooking and nutrition classes for teens registered in the legal system. In total, 313 youth participated in age-appropriate nutrition curriculum. Exit statistics revealed a 95% improvement rate in youth diet quality.

With successful results from 2023 adult programs, renewed partnerships included the Simpson County Detention Center and Hope Haven Recovery Center. A new initiative to provide hands-on cooking and educational activities for families was offered through cooperation with Community Education and use of the Franklin Simpson High School culinary classroom. Two “Families in the Kitchen” series were held in 2024 with a total of 15 families participating in the 7-week classes. This series has parents and kinship caregivers working together with their children to develop kitchen skills with recipe preparation as well as nutrition messages. Exit data showed a 97% improvement rate in food resource management and a 96% improvement in diet quality. This series has been well-received by participants and will be continued in the coming program year.

Through partnership with grant funding from the University of Kentucky, the ANR agent and NEP Assistant collaborated with The Housing Authority of Franklin to establish a community garden. Eleven families enrolled to participate in raised bed gardening. Participants planted and maintained their beds with assistance from Extension staff. With the bountiful harvest came the opportunity to provide recipe demonstrations utilizing the fresh produce. This partnership is planned to continue with grant renewal for 2025.

Family & Consumer Sciences



As grocery prices continue to rise and economic concerns persist, more people are turning to food preservation as a means of achieving self-sufficiency and fostering a connection to local food sources.

In response to this growing interest, five Food Preservation Workshops were offered over the summer. These workshops provided participants with hands-on training in safe canning techniques, including both the Boiling Water Method and Pressure Canning Method. Attendees also received valuable resources, such as fact sheets and research-based recipes, to help them confidently preserve food at home. 17 adults and 24 youth attended workshops to properly prepare and preserve salsa and tomatoes in a boiling water bath canner. Seven participants attended a workshop that taught research-based methods to safely preserve non-acidic foods using a pressure canner. As well, 11 youth learned Jam and Jelly Preservation through boiling water bath canning.

The FCS agent, 4-H agent and a KSU agent worked with the individuals to preserve 56 pints of salsa, 20 half-pints of strawberry Jam and 14 pints of green beans. All participants were apprehensive about safely preserving their own food but felt confident after attending these workshops. In a follow-up survey, participants reported preserving 173 quarts of food, including tomatoes, salsa, tomato juice, ketchup, spaghetti sauce, and green beans. In addition to workshops an article on safe food preservation practices was submitted to the local paper with circulation to approximately 3,000 people and 2,000 more being delivered to stores in the area.

Cooperative Extension Service

Agriculture and Natural Resources
Family and Consumer Sciences
4-H Youth Development
Community and Economic Development

MARTIN-GATTON COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND ENVIRONMENT

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