

Karee Mackey

Karee Mackey has worked for the Watauga County Center of NC Cooperative Extension for 13 years. In that time, she has developed programs that have made a difference in the lives of many Watauga County youth. She constantly strives to stay updated on the latest information and goes to many county and state trainings and workshops throughout the year. The following information gives examples of her 2008 accomplishments.

In the Western North Carolina region, youth need opportunities to pursue agricultural interests, such as horses. The Blue Ridge Equestrian 4-H group planned and implemented their 4th annual Horse Fun Show. Karee provided technical assistance and support for the planning group. The event helps participants practice the skills of following directions, observation, decision-making and self-responsibility. The event brought in over 40 participants plus spectators, many from other regions. Over 35 people assisted at the event. As a result, many youth expressed an interest in increasing their involvement with 4-H horse programs, many received recognition, the group increased its sense of pride and won an award at the Farm-City Banquet, and visitors came to our county.

During the summer, youth not only need positive interaction with others but also constructive activities to do. Over 50 Watauga County youth participated in 4-H Super Summer workshops. These enrichment workshops provide meaningful activities during the summer. Youth experienced hands-on activities in topics such as electricity, aerospace, solar energy, gardening, nature and more. Parents reported their children shared something they learned at the workshops. Youth exhibited the abilities of following instructions, contribution to group efforts, measuring and observation. Karee coordinated these workshops and led most of them.

Agricultural literacy is a need in our society as many youth are isolated from where their food comes from. Youth also need encouragement eating fruits and vegetables. Karee collaborated with the Family and Consumer Science agent to bring the "Local Foods for Local Kids" day camp to Watauga County youth. The week involved a group of eleven youth in exploring the community for ingredients for pizza. They visited a dairy, cheese factory, mill, farms and gardens. As a result, 80% reported they tried a new vegetable or fruit. They made pizza from scratch; many commented they were surprised at how much effort goes into making their favorite food. 100% stated they learned something new about where their food comes from.

Karee led many 4-H activities throughout the year and provided leadership to several 4-H clubs, including a home-school club. She escorted 17 Watauga County youth to 4-H Camp at Betsy-Jeff Penn 4-H Center for six days of canoeing, climbing, swimming, etc.; collaborated with other Extension agents to provide the LEAD camp to involve middle-school girls in science and leadership skills; and assisted 4-H'ers in preparing speeches and presentations for County Activity Day (several went on to compete and win awards at the district and state levels). She secured \$1,000 in grant funds from United Way to help provide funds for these activities.

Karee networks and collaborates with many other agencies in the county and state, many times serving on their advisory committees and boards. Some of these include: Juvenile Crime Prevention Council, Children's Council, United Way, Latino Task Force, Project Green Community, and RAPP (Relatives a Parents Program). She provided a children's activity at the Unity Festival; developed a series of monthly workshops for after-school audiences at Hardin Park, Parkway, Valle Crucis, and Mabel Elementary Schools; provided embryology resources and technical assistance to two teachers; provided technical assistance to a Mountain Pathways teacher for implementing the solar sprint activity with students; helped the library arrange a program on bees for kids and families; and assisted Watauga Soil and Water with their Environmental Field Day by doing a session on how soils, composting/vermicomposting and water quality relate (over 250 youth participated).

We feel that Karee is very deserving of this award and hope you will consider her as the first recipient!