

NEWS FROM EXTENSION

Wood County | August 2025



Wellness Behind Walls

by Ka Zoua Thao, Bilingual Community Health Worker

For the past two months - Ka Zoua Thao, Bilingual Community Health Worker, and Hannah Wendels Scott, Nutrition Educator - led programming in the Wood County Jail to promote health and healing. This blend of physical activity, nutrition education, and mental wellness helped incarcerated individuals reclaim their health and build resilience.

Participants engaged in StrongBodies and Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention. These evidence-based programs are aimed for adults ages 18 and older. StrongBodies is a progressive strength-training program that builds confidence for everyday living. Complementing this was Tai Chi, which introduced gentle movement and mindfulness - helping reduce stress and improve balance.

Along with physical activity, nutrition education became an important part of programming. It empowered participants to make healthier food choices - both inside the facility and after release. Hannah shared simple recipes that participants could make using local produce and/or everyday foods. Participants learned about and tried new fruits and vegetables and discussed ways to buy, store, and prepare these foods for when they are back in their communities. These recipes included watermelon slush, berry salad, and fruit salsa.

WeCOPE, a mental wellness program, addresses emotional regulation, self-compassion, coping strategies, along with many other topics. Previous community participants said the program had a lasting positive effect on their well-being. Ka Zoua approached sensitive topics with care and allowed participants to open up around the topic of mental health. WeCOPE encourages participants to apply skills in real-world situations to improve emotional regulation and decision-making. Current participants in the Wood County Jail commented that WeCOPE helped them see the little positives in a not-so-good situation. It has helped them slowly change their mindsets to appreciate the little things in life.

Programming in the Wood County Jail has been a life changing experience not only for the participants, but also for Ka Zoua and Hannah. Being able to help others in this environment, not only enhances physical and mental health but also fosters community, trust, and hope.



Gearing up for Harvest

by Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist



In August, the cranberries have already set, and just need to size up and develop color. Extension kept growers up-to-speed with field updates, reviews of early season and late season herbicides, and cutting edge heat stress research throughout the growing season with the popular Virtual Brown Bag lunch series. Mid August through mid September is when growers take tissue and soil samples to inform their nutrient management. Extension makes tissue and soil test interpretation materials available year-round, but 1:1 discussions of test results are most common in August and February. Some troubleshooting of in-field issues are ongoing as well.

The Cranberry Summer Field Day, held on Friday, August 15th, also offers an opportunity for group outreach and personalized outreach. Hosted this year at Habelman Bros in Millston, the Summer Field Day will see 800+ growers and marsh staff for marsh tours, a facility tour (the host marsh processes fresh fruit on farm), as well as Extension Mini-Clinics from Dr. Jed Colquhoun, Dr. Leslie Holland, and Dr. Amaya Atucha. The presenters and their topics were requested directly by growers via the professional development committee. Extension worked actively to hear their requests and meet their needs. Topics will be current weed management research, protoventuria leaf spot management and virus testing, and current physiology research.

Programming takes a pause during September and October as growers bring in their crops, but resumes full-force in November for the winter education season.

Happy harvest to all!