





# LaRue County 2023-2024 REPORT TO THE PEOPLE



*McDougal Lake, Photo by Knob Creek Conservancy*

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## Cooperative Extension Service

Agriculture and Natural Resources  
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4-H Youth Development  
Community and Economic Development

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2023-2024

# 4-H

## YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

### 4-H Empowers Youth

Civic engagement is one of the focuses of the 4-H program. In the fall of 2023, several 4-H members were able to go to Frankfort and meet with their representatives and tour the Kentucky Capitol.



LaRue County 4-H members are pictured in Frankfort with their Senator, Jimmy Higdon.



### 4-H Project Clubs Teach Youth A Variety of Life Skills

4-H is offered in a variety of ways in LaRue County. School Clubs are offered to 4th through 6th graders and a monthly cloverbud club reaches five to eight year-olds. A Teen Club is offered for the high school age group, while a new after school club at LaRue County Middle School provides opportunities for 6th through 8th graders.

A group of project clubs offer hands-on skill building in specific content areas. Local volunteers lead clubs holding monthly meetings. Clubs elect officers, providing youth with leadership experiences. 4-H members may choose to participate in one or multiple project clubs based on their interests.

Project clubs offered in LaRue County include: Canoe and Kayak Club, Cooking Club, Dog Club, Gardening Club, Livestock Club, Shooting Sports Club, and the Wranglers Horse Club. One focus for all project clubs is community engagement. Each club selects and plans one or more service projects annually based on the needs in the community. Many of the clubs work on projects with the local nursing home. Nursing home residents enjoy interaction with 4-H members during their events.



The Wrangler's 4-H Horse Club held their awards recognition event at the Saddle Club where members competed in fun events and were recognized for their accomplishments.



4-H Shooting Sports Certified Coach, Mark Thurman works with 4-H member, Leo Falk on gun cleaning.





Gracie Cottrell balances on one foot while playing hopscotch which helps to develop motor skills as well as hand-eye coordination.

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# FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES



Laugh and Learn participants explore painting with cotton balls to make a rainbow with help from their caregivers.

## Laugh and Learn Playdates

Kentucky has reported that only 24.9% of children attending kindergarten in LaRue County are actually prepared and equipped to succeed. This means that 75.1% of children entering kindergarten annually are not prepared. In many Kentucky counties, limited resources or the environment may serve as barriers for healthy lifestyle choices related to early childhood development and physical activity.

As an innovative strategy to improve early childhood development skills and increase kindergarten readiness with LaRue County residents, the Family & Consumer Sciences Agent partnered with LaRue County Family Resources Youth Services to implement Laugh and Learn Playdates held monthly at the Extension Office. Through this program, participants work on improving early childhood development skills and increasing kindergarten readiness such as writing and spelling first name, counting to 10, identifying and recognizing alphabet letter names and sounds, knowing basic shapes and using child-sized school supplies such as scissors. On average, 12 adults and 15 children participated in this program, monthly. As a result of this program, 75% of parents/caregivers reported that their child can say and spell their full name, 80% of parents or caregivers reported using simple rules and routines in their home and 70% of parents/caregivers reported that their child(ren) can identify most if not all colors correctly. In regard to physical activity, 100% of participant's parents or caregivers encouraged their child to continue in tasks that were challenging. In addition to individual behavior change, 100% also reported that Laugh and Learn Playdates gave their child new opportunities to try new foods and that their family conducted activities learned from Laugh & Learn Playdates at home. At the completion of the program, participants shared that their child/grandchild loved Laugh & Learn Playdates especially the hands-on learning activities.



## Forage Testing

In efforts to combat costs associated with winter feeding of livestock there is need to put an economic value on forage production. Hay production is one of the largest input costs to any livestock enterprise. Historically, livestock operations have underestimated the nutritional value provided by storage forages fed to their livestock. Forage analysis will provide the nutrient composition of the forage enabling the producer to balance the ration and provide optimal nutrition for the specific class of livestock. The Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent was able to demonstrate proper sampling technique to producers at a field day held in conjunction with the LaRue County Conservation District. In the fall of 2023, the forage testing program collected 30 samples from numerous producers across the county. All producers provided feedback, majority of those said the analysis helped them to increase profitability and will continue to participate in the future. Forage testing is an Extension program that is offered to all LaRue County residents.



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# AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES



## Farmers Market

The LaRue County Farmers Market has experienced much success and growth over the past few years. Although it is a small entity, it creates a growing impact on the community. Cooperation between the Agriculture and Natural Resources and Family and Consumer Sciences Agents, the Extension Office administered the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Voucher Program. This program provided 120 senior citizens with vouchers to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from market vendors. By providing vouchers it was proven that families increased consumption of vegetables and fruits which contributes to improved diet quality and overall better health and prevention of chronic disease in these families.

