



Application for 2008 Outstanding County Program Awards

County (if multi-county entry, list all): Burke

Submitted by: Spring Williams-Byrd Title: County Extension Director

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The Association encourages electronic submissions. E-mail the application and project/program description to Todd McGee at todd.mcgee@ncacc.org. You can also fax your entry to (919) 733-1065 (attn. Todd McGee), or mail it to: NCACC, 215 N. Dawson St., Raleigh, NC 27603. Applications must be postmarked by **Friday, March 6, 2009**.

Projects/programs must have been implemented between Jan. 1, 2007, and Dec. 31, 2008. For additional information and category criteria, visit www.ncacc.org/awards/ocpa/about.html.

Project title: _____

Category (you may check more than one):

General Government Human Services Public Information/Participation

Address each of the following questions in a typed program/project summary in a separate Word document attached to this application form. Limit your responses to two pages. Use single-spaced lines and 12-point, Times New Roman font. Supporting materials may be submitted, but due to time constraints, judges may not review the materials.

1. What are the purpose, history, timeline and budget of the program/project? Will the county realize any projected cost savings? (For public information/participation programs, please try to estimate participation levels).
2. What makes the program/project unique? How does it differ from similar projects in your county or in other counties?
3. How well did the program use available resources, given the limitations on such resources?
4. Can this project be duplicated in other counties? If another county wanted to do a similar project, what advice would you give them to minimize obstacles and problems?
5. How did the project involve collaboration with other agencies, jurisdictions, nonprofits, businesses, etc.? How well did this collaboration work and is it on-going?

Burke County Cistern Project

1. The purpose of the cistern project was to provide a system for watering a twenty five bed community garden project, implemented through the Cooperative Extension Office at the Burke County Agricultural Building in 2008. Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners of Burke County saw a need to provide citizens with garden spaces and consequently constructed the gardens. However, with the extreme drought in Burke County, water conservation was on the minds of everyone involved. Soil and Water Conservation of Burke County came to Extension and the Master Gardeners in the spring of 2008 with a grant opportunity through the Community Conservation Assistance Program. This would pay up to 75% of the cost of putting in a cistern that could catch rainwater from the Agricultural Building roof to be used to water the gardens. With the guidance of Soil and Water, two 1200 gallon cisterns were purchased, to catch water from about 30% of the roof area. These would be installed underground for esthetic reasons and attached to the existing gutter system. A pump was to be installed, along with a water faucet so that the gardens could be watered by each gardener as needed. A total budget of \$2400 was proposed with completion of the project estimated at early spring, 2009. A projected savings of at least \$1500 per year is estimated for the county when the growing season begins.
2. This project is unique in that Burke County is the first county in western NC and perhaps the state to put in a system to be used for watering public vegetable gardens. The fact that the system cost Burke County taxpayers no additional funds is also a factor. The added advantage that this rainwater will no longer drain in to a nearby pond, but be used where it can do the most good is a major positive impact for the project. As long as we have some rain, the tanks will keep the gardeners supplied with the water they need to grow local, nutritional food to feed their families. Another unique thing about the cistern project is that Burke County is setting the example of being good stewards of the land and that they are willing to take steps to conserve our natural resources.
3. Burke County did utilize its resources at hand. We used an existing building to funnel the water in to the cistern and the tanks were purchased from a local source who used recycled products in their construction. General Services was willing to provide some labor and equipment to help with the installation and County Government was willing to give us the chance to make this project happen in a timely manner. Much of the labor was from Cooperative Extension volunteers who received nothing more than a thank you for their hard work.
4. This project could easily be duplicated in other counties. Given the people with an interest in seeing this project through to completion, the grant money is there for the asking. We were very concerned with conserving water and felt that the project was important to the future of the community garden and an ideal opportunity to educate the citizens about ways to conserve water, especially since water restrictions are very real to all drought communities. This is a method of dealing with those restrictions rather than complaining about them. To other counties that would like to try a similar project, make use of those employees who know how to get these things done. Give them the freedom to try new things and above all, show appreciation to all of your volunteers and to those

who allow us to try new things. Talk to others who have already dealt with cisterns and ask for sources of materials, know-how, etc. Ask for donations from local businesses. Businesses like to have their names associated with an upbeat project like this.

5. So many facets of Burke County government were involved! The County Manager and the County Commissioners was very supportive of the project. They encouraged other departments such as General Services to become involved. General Services saved us a lot of money by using their equipment to dig the hole for the cisterns and getting them down in to the hole. They also supplied the electrical work needed as well as equipment to dig water lines, etc. The Building Inspectors worked with us to make sure we were within local ordinances and of course, Soil and Water Conservation helped to design the system so that it work to our benefit. The North Carolina Cooperative Extension supplied many Master Gardener volunteers for manual labor as well as storage for supplies and other needs. Several local businesses provided discounted materials, discounted labor and advice. Everyone worked together without a hitch and there is definitely a sense of ownership to all of those who participated. This taught us we could work together and come out with a very good thing for the county and its citizens. It has helped the departments become better acquainted with each other's strengths and special skills and possibilities of other collaborative projects in the future.