

Virginia Cooperative Extension

Knowledge for the Commonwealth

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Situation Analysis FINAL REPORT

Frederick County Unit

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Introduction

The Frederick County Extension Unit and ELC conducted a comprehensive situation analysis during the calendar year 2004. Frederick County Extension has an active and supportive ELC, albeit a unique one to the VCE system. Frederick County's ELC is a county appointed committee and operates under the rules of such. The situation analysis process was led by the ELC and involved the development of a Frederick County Unit Profile, as well as gathering community and resident perspectives on issues and problems within the county. Data and information from interviews, open forums and stakeholder meetings are being analyzed by the ELC and issues were identified.

The Frederick County Extension Leadership Council is composed of nine members; a current Frederick County Board of Supervisors member is appointed by the chairman of the Board of Supervisors, one citizen member from each magisterial district is appointed by the Board of Supervisors and three members-at-large are recommended by the Virginia Cooperative Extension. The Extension Leadership Council (hereafter, ELC) was established to provide closer coordination between the governing body and Virginia Cooperative Extension.

The ELC met as a whole, four times during the situation analysis process. Subcommittees met more often as they were involved in the data gathering activities. At the first meeting, an overview of the situation analysis process was covered. An initial plan was developed that included tasks and timelines for ELC members and VCE staff. The first task was to collect data. Data sets were gathered from cooperating agencies, the VCE resource website, and current census data. Teams were organized to assist with stakeholder meetings and open forum sessions. Subcommittees met with area agencies and individuals to glean information and interview key leaders in the community.

At the second meeting, individuals shared the data and information collected and discussed areas where more information was needed. There needed to be clarification on the 1997 agriculture census data, since there are two differing sets of data for that year. Assignments were made among the committee to collect more details in some of the areas.

At the third ELC meeting, a rough draft of the information collected up to this time was presented with the results of the stakeholder meetings, public forums, and key informant interviews. The ELC members discussed and identified problem areas and separated those that did not pertain to Extension such as traffic, industrial and basic growth issues.

At the end of October, the ELC met again to group and prioritize the issues brought forth in the analysis study that may need to be addressed with future Extension programming. The completed study was revised and mailed to all ELC members and to key leaders and agencies.

Unit Profile

The situation analysis developed in Frederick County, Virginia is a compilation of clientele surveys, selected data from other agencies, current government census data, stakeholder group meetings, rural visioning sessions, and input from Extension advisory groups.

Frederick County, Virginia is located at the northern top of the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia and is the most northern county in Virginia. The county is bordered by West Virginia to the north and west, Clarke County to the east and Shenandoah and Warren Counties to the south. Frederick County contains a range of landscapes, exhibiting everything from suburban development in the east, around the City of Winchester and the Interstate 81 corridor, to rolling hills, farms, orchards, and wooded mountains to the west. The county covers 436 square miles and encompasses a land area of 243,122 acres, of which over 100,000 acres are in farmland and 129,262 acres in forested lands, including 4,000 acres of National Forest. Therefore 45% of the county's rural areas are used as farmland.

The little North Mountain divides the county into two essentially different agricultural sections. The valley section is about eight to ten miles wide by nearly twenty miles long and has a general elevation of 600 to 800 feet. To the west the county consists of mountains, ridges and valleys which belong to the Appalachian system. The average altitude of the hill section of the county is about 1,000 feet and mountains range up to 2,844 feet in height, with Pinnacle Knob being the highest point.

Data from the weather station in Winchester shows that temperatures average about 41 degrees in January and 87 degrees in July. The last killing frost in the spring usually falls around May 15th and the first killing frost in the fall about October 15th. The average growing season is around 185 days. The heaviest rainfall occurs in June, July and August, and the yearly average is 37 inches of rainfall. Average annual snowfall is 26 inches.

Frederick County was the fourteenth fastest growing county out of ninety-five in Virginia in the 1990's. The population of Frederick County in 2000 was 59,209. The 2000 population represented a 22.3% increase from 1990. On average, people living in Frederick County are getting older. Between 1990 and 2000, the median age of the population increased from 31 in 1980 to 36.7 in 2000. (The median age for Virginia is 35.7 years and for the USA 35.3 years). The population under the age of 18 has decreased in Frederick County standing at 31% in 1980, 29.3% in 1990 and 28.7% in 2000.

The gender of the Frederick County's population is evenly split having 50% males and 50% females. Diversity is becoming more important in the workplace. The Winchester-Frederick County area has become more diverse. From 1990 to 2000, the area's population has experienced increases in the Black, Hispanic and Asian populations. These local trends are reflective of national trends. 95% of the population is white, 2.6% black, 0.2% American Indian or Native Alaskan, 1.7% Hispanic and around 1% Asian (Source: Winchester/Frederick County Economic Development Commission, 2003 Report).

According to the 2003 population estimates released by “Demographics NOW”, it is estimated that the 2003 population of Frederick County was around 64,640. The estimate reflects a growth rate consistent with that of the past decade of 2.9%. The Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service projects that the 2010 population of Frederick County will be 72,300 – suggesting a slowing of population growth during the current decade.

Current projections from the Winchester Frederick County Economic Development Commission for 2010 indicate a continuation of past trends, an aging population increasing from 34.9% in 2000 to 42% in 2010. The population is projected to grow at a rate of 14.8% between 2000 and 2010. **All age categories are expected to increase in total numbers with the exception of the major labor force category (25 – 44).** Projections show a decrease in that population category of approximately six percent between 2000 and 2010.

According to the U.S. Census, Frederick County was home to 16,718 families in 2000. The median income for these families was \$52,281. This was \$1,888 less than the median family income for Virginia. The average number of persons within a household in Frederick County has declined over the past couple of decades. In 1980, the average household consisted of 2.98 people. In 1990, the average household size dropped to 2.78. In 2000, the average household size further declined to 2.64. The estimated average household size in 2003 remains consistent with 2000 at 2.64. Most houses are single family dwellings.

Year	Population of Frederick Co.	Number of Households	Average Household Size
1960	21,941	6,045	3.63
1970	24,107	8,570	2.81
1980	43,150	11,467	2.98
1990	45,723	16,470	2.78
2000	59,209	23,319	2.64
2003*	64,640	24,527	2.64
2008*	72,983	28,395	2.57

(Source: US Census Bureau, Demographics NOW, Winchester Frederick County Economic Development Commission. *Estimates)

Frederick County has 7.7% of its children living below poverty level, the average being 8.4% for the state. 17.4% of children are in single parent households. 2.5% of the children have difficulty speaking English compared to 1.2% in Virginia overall

(Source: Kids' Count).

In 2001, Frederick County enrolled 10,736 students in its K-12 educational programs. The Frederick County school system operates sixteen schools. There are ten elementary, three middle, and three high schools. Students taking SOL and SAT exams surpassed the state averages in both. Frederick County has a 13.3 student to teacher ratio in the elementary schools and an 11.9 student to teacher ratio in the secondary schools. 2.54% of the students drop out of school, whereas 81.7% of the graduates pursue higher education. Nearly 78% of the 2000 census population held a high school diploma or higher and 20% held a bachelor degree or higher.

Regional private and special education facilities include college preparatory programs, church affiliated schools, schools devoted to autism and mental retardation programs, job training, workshops and GED programs. Seventeen institutions of higher learning are within a 75 mile radius of Winchester/Frederick County, including Shenandoah University (2500 students), Lord Fairfax Community College (3400 students), George Mason University, James Madison University, satellite campuses of Virginia Tech and the University of Virginia and others.

Winchester Medical Center is a 408 bed regional referral hospital offering a full range of inpatient and outpatient diagnostic, surgical, and rehabilitative services. The Winchester/Frederick community has abundant healthcare resources, with over 200 physicians, 45 dentists, 24 other practitioners, numerous health advocacy organizations and support groups, and an active public health department. There are also six nursing homes, seven independent living facilities and a private, nonprofit retirement community.

Because of its strategic location, the Frederick County area has been a center of commerce and transportation since the eighteenth century. The Virginia Employment Commission states that employment within the private sector in 2003 was 15,310, an increase of 2% from 2002. 3,459 were employed within the public sector. Manufacturing continues to play a major role in Frederick County's economy. Employment within manufacturing has accounted for more than 35% of the total private employment in the county over the past decade. Manufacturing represents more than 4,000 jobs.

Health Status and Trends for PD7

Diseases that have lifestyle antecedents—heart disease, cancer, cerebrovascular disease, and diabetes—are among the six leading causes of death. According to the BRFSS (Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System) of 1996, a significant portion of residents are physically inactive, overweight, not eating fruits and vegetables five or more times a day, and have elevated blood cholesterol, all predisposing risk factors for chronic diseases. Many Virginians are not following the principles embedded in the USDA Food Guide Pyramid and balancing caloric intake with regular physical activity.

About one in two women and one in eight men will eventually develop osteoporosis, a highly debilitating disease. On a different front, the incidence of diabetes increased by 33% during the last few years. Therefore, prevention of both diseases is critical (VCE Report).

The leading causes of death in the United States generally result from a mix of behaviors; injury, violence, and other factors in the environment; and the unavailability or inaccessibility of quality health services. Understanding and monitoring behaviors, environmental factors, and community health systems may prove more useful to monitoring the Nation's *true* health, and in driving health improvement activities, than the death rates that reflect the cumulative impact of these factors. This more complex

approach has served as the basis for developing the Leading Health Indicators (Source: Healthy People 2010).

Leading Causes of Death, 1997

Heart Disease	31.4%
Cancer	23.3%
Stroke	6.9%
Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease	4.7%
Unintentional Injuries	4.1%
Pneumonia Influenza	3.7%
Diabetes	2.7%
Suicide	1.3%
Kidney Disease	1.1%
Chronic Liver Disease and Cirrhosis	1.1%

Leading Causes of Death, 1900

Pneumonia	11.8%
Tuberculosis	11.3%
Diarrhea and Enteritis	8.3%
Heart Disease	6.2%
Liver Disease	5.2%
Injuries	4.2%
Cancer	3.7%
Senility	2.9%
Diphtheria	2.3%

Nutrition

Unbalanced and inadequate diets with lack of physical activity and sedentary lifestyles are causative factors in ten of the leading causes of illness and death in the U.S. population. Nutrition and wellness programs provide education so those residents can make informed decisions and adopt food and nutrition practices, which will promote optimal growth, health, and productivity and reduce disease risks and health care costs.

According to the Center for Disease Prevention and Control in 1999-2000, an estimated 65 percent of the U. S. adults were overweight or obese, along with 15 percent of children and adolescents. Being overweight is a serious nutrition-related condition in the United States. To reverse this trend requires changes in individual and family behaviors, such as food intake, physical activity, and eliminating societal barriers to healthy choices.

- Health Dept. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System that Virginians:
 - ✓ moved from 59% sedentary lifestyle in 1989 as compared to 52% in 1994
 - ✓ increased from 25% being considered overweight in 1989 to 31% in 1994

- ❑ 64% of adults are overweight or obese (Source: CDC, 1999-2000). The total cost of obesity was \$117 billion in 2000.
- ❑ 35% of elementary school-age children eat no fruit and 20% eat no vegetables on a given day (Source: USDA, TEAM Nutrition, 1997).
- ❑ 15% of children 6-11 are considered overweight (Source: CDC, 1999-2000).
- ❑ Every \$1 invested in VCE food program saves an estimated \$10 in reduce health care COSTS (Sources: CBA Study, Dr. Cox).

Heart Disease Deaths (Rate per 100,000)

Location	2001
Clarke County	275
Frederick County	206
Page County	349
Shenandoah County	234
Warren County	250
Winchester City	323
Average for PD 7	273

Hypertension Hospitalization (Rate per 100,000)

Location	2001
Clarke County	30.51
Frederick County	21.20
Page County	25.87
Shenandoah County	30.68
Warren County	24.73
Winchester City	37.28
Average for PD 7	28.38

Diabetes is reaching near-epidemic proportions, affecting close to 18.2 million Americans, including 382,000 in Virginia and over 5,000 in the Winchester, Virginia area. Economically, diabetes direct and indirect costs will reach over \$132 billion this year. For a company with 300 employees these costs are estimated to be over \$1,000,000 annually. For approximately 40,000 employees in the Winchester area, this could mean costs in the excess of \$14 million (Source: American Diabetes Association).

Diabetes Hospitalization (Rate per 100,000)

Location	2001
Clarke County	76.27
Frederick County	55.45
Page County	103.47
Shenandoah County	58.58
Warren County	55.64
Winchester City	95.27
Average for PD 7	74.11

Poverty and Health

Low-income individuals are more at risk than other groups for chronic disease and other infections and illnesses, while being least able to afford the costs of medical care. Families are in need of information on basic food, nutrition and disease-prevention, and food safety methods (with lesson series), as well as other educational programs.

- ❑ There is a range of 8% to 47% of the students approved for the free/reduced lunch program (2003) compared with 12% to 25% of the students (1996) approved for the free/reduced lunch program in PD 7 (VA Dept. of Education, SNP Report).
- ❑ 3,244 WIC Participants (2003); this is down from 1998, whereby there were 3,694 WIC Participants (Source: Norma Gainsback, WIC, RD).

Food Safety

Residents need science-based information on food processing, preparation, and preservation of food in order to minimize the impact of food borne illnesses and financial loss caused by mishandling of food. “So food borne illness is still a problem in this county; one out of four people will become ill during the year, and one in 1000 will be hospitalized - the cost of illness is 6.5 billion a year”, reported Dr. Art Liang, Director, Food Safety Office, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Source: The Food Safety Educator Newsletter, USDA).

- ❑ In 2001, in the Northwest region of Virginia there were 333 victims of food borne illnesses (Source: VA Department of Health Epidemiologist report).
- ❑ In 2004, there are 757 food establishments and 670 other permits were issued (Source: Lord Fairfax Health District).
- ❑ In 1970, a bag of groceries cost \$10.00, in 1994, a bag of groceries cost \$18.11. To feed a family of four for a week cost \$115.00 in 1994, whereas, in 1975, \$50.00 would feed the same family.

Agriculture

The Census of Agriculture is conducted every five years by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) under the U.S. Department of Agriculture since 1997. Previous to 1997, the Census of Agriculture was conducted by the U.S. Department of Commerce. For the purpose of the Census of Agriculture, a farm is any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the census year. The \$1,000 value is not adjusted for inflation. Beginning in 1997, operations receiving \$1,000 or more in Federal government payments were counted as farms, even if they had no sales and otherwise lacked the potential to have \$1,000 or more in sales. This resulted in more operations qualifying as “farms.” This new method skews the data slightly because some farms that were included in the 1997 Census had not been included previously. NASS made additional changes to the 2002 Census of Agriculture. The changes include a new methodology referred to as “coverage adjustment.” This method seeks to account for farms missed or misclassified during the census. This resulted in inflated numbers in 2002 to accommodate for missing data. Consequently, it is difficult to compare the 2002 census data with previous census data sets. The new methodology used in conducting the census has been taken into account for this data analysis.

Farm Characteristics

Year	Farm Characteristics				Change Percent From Change 1987- 1987- 2002 2002
	1987	1992	1997	2002	
Number of Farms	555	536	568	720	165 30%
Farmland (Acres)	111,116	98,142	99,926	112,675	1,559 1%
Avg. Farm Size (Acres)	200	183	178	156	-44 -22%

The Census of Agriculture provides a much higher number of farms in 2002 due to the aforementioned coverage adjustment used in the 2002 census. The data for 1987 to 1997 is much more compatible. The number of farms in Frederick County has steadily

increased throughout the years although the amount of farmland declined by 10 percent from 1987 to 1997. This has led to a decrease in the average farm size at each five year interval.

Number of Farms by Size

Year	1987	1992	1997	2002	Change from 1987-2002	Percent Change 1987-2002
1-9 Acres	28	31	30	51	23	82%
10-49 Acres	141	147	146	231	90	64%
50-179 Acres	198	202	227	260	62	31%
180-499 Acres	137	106	120	138	1	<1%
500-999 Acres	40	37	35	28	-12	-30%
1000+ Acres	11	13	10	12	1	9%

The decreasing average farm size is further depicted by arranging the number of farms according to their size. The county has seen a steady decrease in the number of farms over 180 acres with an increase in the number of farms less than 180 acres. Coverage adjustment has inflated the 2002 numbers which exacerbates the discrepancy between the change in the number of large and small farms. The slow change is more clearly demonstrated through the 1987, 1992, and 1997 data sets.

Changes in Cropland

Year	Changes in Cropland					
	1987	1992	1997	2002	Change From 1987-2002	Percent Change 1987-2002
Total Cropland (Acres)	59,416	58,494	60,367	59,312	-104	<1%
Harvested Cropland (Acres)	33,940	34,585	34,668	37,344	3,404	10%
Percent Harvested	57%	59%	57%	63%	-	-

The acreage of cropland has remained constant since 1987 at about 60,000 acres. The percent of harvested cropland has remained at about the same level as well at 60 percent. For the last 15 to 20 years, farmers have not changed the amount of cropland used. The data set does not provide insight, however, into the intensity of cropland use. The total crop yield in a constant unit of measure is not available in the census.

Characteristics of Agricultural Products

Year	Characteristics of Agriculture (Products)					
	1987	1992	1997	2002	Change from 1987-2002	Percent Change 1987-2002
Cattle and Calves (Units)	17,799	19,078	18,234	20,113	2,314	13%
Corn (Acres)	2,762	2,644	3,053	3,254	492	18%
Forage (Acres)	18,458	20,030	19,665	25,530	7,072	38%
Orchards (Acres)	9,459	9,743	9,670	7,902	-1557	-16%
Apple Orchards (Acres)	8,602	9,068	9,017	7,442	-1160	-13%
Peach Orchards (Acres)	777	615	607	414	-363	-47%

The number of cattle has fluctuated by roughly five percent from census to census. Corn has steadily increased while the amount of cropland used for forage has also increased.

Frederick County is regularly the top apple producing county in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Frederick County ranks 18th in the nation in apple production. However, the county lost more than 1,500 acres of orchards between 1997 and 2002. Apple orchards accounted for the majority of orchards lost between 1997 and 2002, with acreage in apple orchards dropping seventeen percent during this period. Coverage adjustment would lead to the inflation of datum values, not a decline. This indicates that the loss of apple orchards has accelerated substantially between 1997 and 2002.

Frederick County is also the top peach producing county in the state of Virginia. Like apples, the acreage of peach orchards has declined rapidly. Between 1987 and 2002, Frederick County lost nearly half of its peach orchards.

Year	Market Value of Products vs. Production Expenses					
	1987	1992	1997	2002	Change from 1987-2002	Percent Change 1987-2002
Avg. Value of						

Products Sold per Farm (Dollars)	\$31,818	\$44,132	\$36,144	\$30,059	- \$1,759	- 6%
Avg. Production Expenses per Farm (Dollars)	\$27,118	\$36,508	\$31,363	\$29,401	\$2,283	8%

The data present a disturbing trend of dwindling product values accompanied by increased production costs over the long term.

Item	2000	1997*
Number of Farms	720	701
Land in Farms	112,675	109,186
Average Size of Farms	156 acres	156 acres
Estimated Market Value of Land & Buildings per Farm	\$489,205	\$422,155
Estimated Market Value of Land & Buildings per Acre	\$3,676	\$2,690
Estimated Market Value of Machinery & Equipment per Farm	\$38,203	\$37,162
Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold	\$21,642,000	\$21,025,000
Total Farm Production Expenses	\$21,198,000	\$19,326,000

Source: US Census 2000 & 1997* (Revised figures)

The acreage of apple trees in Frederick County has decreased being 7,371 acres in 1992, 7,169 acres in 1997 and 6,466 acres in 2001. However, total numbers of trees within the county increased from 559,510 in 1992 to 736,737 in 2001, reflecting the trend toward higher density orchard plantings (Source: 2001 Orchard and Vineyard Survey, VASS). Frederick County is by far the largest apple producer in Virginia having 56% of all the apple trees in the state and is home to three out of the top 25 largest acreage orchards in the nation according to American Fruit Grower, November/December, 2003.

Youth Profile

Frederick County 4-H has a proven record of programs to help youth become productive, contributing members of society and leaders of tomorrow. The Frederick County 4-H Program has provided programming to increase life skill development, to increase knowledge, and to develop leadership.

Frederick County is a wholesome community with strong family values. Much of the public's concern about youth focuses on specific strategies to prevent negative outcomes such as drug and alcohol use, teen pregnancy, teen crime and violence and school

dropout. The following charts give a snapshot of Frederick County in comparison to other counties in Planning District 7:

% High School Dropout (2001)

Location	2001
Clarke County	1.2
Frederick County	2.5
Page County	3.3
Shenandoah County	2.8
Warren County	2.1
Winchester City	3.3
Average for PD 7	2.5

Intake Cases Involving Juvenile Delinquency (Cases per 1,000 Juveniles)

Location	1999	2000	2001	2002
Clarke County	34	27	28	19
Frederick County	27	17	22	24
Page County	38	30	28	33
Shenandoah County	55	46	57	44
Warren County	32	25	28	33
Winchester City	95	104	82	111
Average for PD 7	46.8	41.5	40.8	44

Intake Cases Involving Juvenile Delinquency Ranking (2002)

In-State Rank	Location	Cases Per 1,000 Juveniles
4	Clarke County	19
12	Frederick County	24
37	Page County	33
37	Warren County	33
57	Shenandoah County	44
N/A	Winchester City	111

Juveniles Arrested for Violent Crimes

Location	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Clarke County	2	0	4	1	1	0
Frederick County	3	7	4	1	11	4
Page County	1	2	0	0	1	2
Shenandoah County	1	10	5	7	8	5

Warren County	4	0	0	1	2	0
Winchester City	5	22	7	8	9	15
Totals for PD 7	16	41	20	18	32	26

Juveniles Arrested for Violent Crimes Ranking (2002)

In-State Rank	Location	Juveniles Arrested
0 (best)	Clarke County	0
0	Warren County	0
41	Page County	2
61	Frederick County	4
65	Shenandoah County	5
N/A	Winchester City	15

Percent of Crime Committed by Juveniles

Location	2001
Clarke County	3.73
Frederick County	8.64
Page County	8.86
Shenandoah County	9.03
Warren County	9.50
Winchester City	11.63
Average for PD 7	8.57

Teen Pregnancy Ages 10-19 (Rate per 1,000)

Location	2001
Clarke County	17.8
Frederick County	24.0
Page County	36.8
Shenandoah County	29.0
Warren County	33.7
Winchester City	41.5
Average for PD 7	30.5

Teen Violent Deaths

Location	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Clarke County	1	0	0	0	1	2
Frederick County	2	0	0	1	1	3
Page County	2	0	0	0	0	0

Shenandoah County	0	0	1	1	0	0
Warren County	1	1	0	0	0	1
Winchester City	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals for PD 7	6	1	1	2	2	6

Key informant interviews were held with Board of Supervisors members, leaders of the United Way, Red Cross, Agency on Aging, Farm Bureau, Valley Farm Credit, and volunteer leaders with 4H, agriculture, and food, nutrition and health. Interviews were completed by ELC members and/or agents. The United Way completed a Community Impacts Survey using a nationally validated questionnaire based on the COMPASS model, followed up with two community open forums. The survey was distributed through businesses, area service providers, students, and seniors. It was also translated into Spanish to secure non-English speaking responses.

Community and Resident Perspectives

The data from the previous section was used to derive the following perspectives:

Youth Perspectives

Changing patterns of family and work life in recent years have left children and teens without the same level of adult support and interaction as in previous generations. With the increase of population, which is more diverse, changing family structures, and technology, the Frederick County 4-H program must stretch to meet the needs of all youth. During the situation analysis process, key informants, Extension Leadership Council members, and surveys stressed the need to continue the basic objectives while reaching out to more diverse groups. Local media has highlighted emerging gang activity in the area; however, this was not brought forth as an issue during this process. This may be a future issue to address.

Forum meetings were held in January and February of 2004 and three areas of importance were identified by respondents seventeen years of age or younger. These are: 1) education about substance abuse and its consequences (drugs, alcohol, beer, wine, and tobacco), 2) efforts to increase personal safety and reduce violent crime, and 3) short term or emergency shelter and clothing for those having needs (Source: United Way of the Northern Shenandoah Valley Community Impact Assessment Report, 2004).

During a round table discussion, thirty-five youth and thirty-four adults identified the following areas as main issues that affect youth: 1) drugs and alcohol, 2) peer pressure, 3) family development (family problems), 4) self-esteem, and 5) sex (Source: Frederick County 4-H National Conversation on Youth, October 20, 2001).

Family Perspectives

The top three areas of importance to senior respondents (65 years of age and older) are: availability of affordable transportation, safe and affordable housing, and programs to prevent abuse/neglect of older adults and disabled persons.

Information collected through family and consumer science groups indicates that nutrition education as it relates to cancer, heart health, and obesity is very much in the fore front of the general public. Financial management is also mentioned heavily in family education needs.

Agriculture Perspectives

Many farmers who attended the meetings expressed a desire to continue farming, but complained of a variety of trends that are making farming more difficult to do in Frederick County. These trends include rising input costs combined with flat or declining commodity prices, conflicts with new residential neighbors, the burdens of taxes and regulations, and the prospect of making more money from the sale of land for development than from farming.

Suggestions included increasing farm productivity and income. Potential ideas included higher intensity agriculture or specialty agriculture as well as increased agri-tourism. For farmers to continue farming it must be profitable. Therefore one of the primary questions to come from this study is “How do we help Frederick County farmers be more profitable?” Suggestions for increasing farm profitability included: reducing farm expenses, diversification of farming activities, and increased marketing of products produced on the farm.

Priority Issues

The Frederick County ELC met on two different occasions to ferret out the data and make decisions as to topics that were relevant for Extension programming. Many of the topics brought forth in the situation analysis concerned traffic or transportation and are not under the umbrella of Extension. The following issues were identified by the ELC as being important for Extension to address or readdress. Many of the following are being addressed through current programming, but have additional needs or need to be pursued at a more in-depth level.

AGRICULTURE

Issue 1

- **Increased ethnic diversity in the local population is creating a need for additions/changes in the types of livestock and crops being produced**

As the data has indicated, there is a large increase in the number of Hispanic and Asian workers in the area. This trend will likely increase, because there is a decline in numbers of the age group that are traditional workers in the community. Also we are a white collar community and there isn't labor elsewhere for the traditional blue collar jobs. These cultures purchase ethnic meats and vegetables and will create niches for some farmers.

VCE can aid with transitioning these workers into the workforce through educational programs that help them understand the knowledge and skills required

for the jobs. We can also help them as they transition into the community by teaching the children our culture and rules; and we can teach the “traditional” community about the incoming culture and their beliefs.

Issue 2

□ Trend toward smaller farms and niche marketing

This area is increasingly a retirement community, and many of the people in the community retire early to this area from the city. These people have come back to the land to enjoy their retirement and have a desire to earn money from their land. Also, the price of land prohibits a young person from going into farming on a large scale, should that be their choice of career, and they are forced to farm intensively on smaller acreage. These farmers need to understand marketing and need to be educated as to diverse opportunities to farm.

VCE can address this issue by educating farmers in marketing strategies and opportunities. We can also educate the farmer as to alternative products that may be produced in our region and how to produce these products.

Issue 3

□ Increased marketing information and strategies to merge the wants and needs of the population with the wants and needs of the local farmer

If the farmer can produce a product and make a reasonable profit, the farmer will continue to farm. If not, the land will be sold for development. Most farmers are in the business because they like what they do and they like being self-employed. They love the land and would enjoy it if their children could return to the farm and follow in their footsteps. Many times this doesn't happen because the farm isn't profitable enough to support multiple families.

VCE can address this issue by offering retirement and estate planning, along with the previously mentioned marketing education. We can work with farmers to become more profitable and to help transition the family farm to the next generation.

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCE

Issue 1

□ Increased education in nutrition for all ages and all populations

Adults and youth need to be educated as to healthy food choices in order to avoid obesity and health problems.

VCE can continue to offer programs for adults and children in nutrition education. We can collaborate with 4-H in offering youth programs that will develop good life long habits in nutrition.

Issue 2

- **Increased education in financial management, especially with regard to family health and nutrition for all populations**

As food and health expenses soar, and debts accumulate, families need to know how to manage money and make wise choices when shopping. They need to be proficient at budgeting and be taught how to save. They need ideas as to how to cut motor fuel and heating costs and how to live more efficiently.

VCE can work with families in groups and on an individual basis and teach them ways to reduce costs and live more efficiently. We can educate them as to wise spending choices and ways to save money without losing quality of life.

YOUTH

Issue 1

- **Increased diversity and cultural awareness in programs to reach underserved audiences**

As the data has indicated, there is a large increase in the number of Hispanic and Asian workers in the area. As the families of these workers increase in size so will the youth population. The world is at our backdoor and the youth of Frederick County need to understand and be sensitive to other cultures.

VCE can work with the youth in groups and on an individual basis to teach and expose them to other cultures. Also we can look for ways to include underserved groups in community clubs by using sensitive marketing strategies.

Issue 2

- **Incorporate more career exploration into programs**

Employment is a necessity for most individuals and families. Older youth need guidance and education regarding opportunities for post-secondary success, but this support is currently lacking. Teens need educational programs for: selecting a college or university, choosing and training for a technical trade, personal marketing skills, specific job trainings, etc.

VCE has the potential to be a significant partner in addressing this issue, but it will take the cooperation of the school system and community groups as well. Extension can promote career exploration. Collaboration in addressing this issue can involve the entire Extension unit (4-H, FCS, and ANR) plus the community at-large.