

Bloom at Your own Pace

Who are we?

N.C Cooperative Extension, Forsyth County Center, is committed to creating and embellishing opportunities that allow residents to bloom at their own pace. Our mission dictates that we strive to connect people to research-based information through workshops, field days, focus groups, conversations and class series.

Extension is a partnership between Forsyth County government and our land-grant universities ~ NC State and NC A&T State ~ in tandem with the United States Department of Agriculture/National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA/NIFA).

Our team members are dynamic, informed, enthusiastic and energetic. They are continually learning and growing to be the best in their areas of expertise.

Check out our impacts as we look to the future and discover new and exciting programs to engage in. We hope to hear from you soon!

Below are pictures with names of our staff along with their areas of expertise.



Kimberly Gressley County Director



April Bowman 4-H/Livestock Agent



Mike Bowman Soil & Water



Maria Brown Office Assist.



Chris Bryant STEM/Urban



Caila Cater-Edwards **EFNEP Program**



Rebecca Craps Ag & NR Agent



Taylor Darnell Commercial Hort & Field Crop Agent



Kathy Hepler Admin. Assist.



Alex Kiser



Rhett Kyle Soil & Water Wellness Produce Box



Virginia Lopez **Family Consumer** Science Agent



Derek Morris Horticulture Tech.



Will Parham **Technician**



Anika Parks Volunteer Coord.



Celine Richard

Agent



Leslie Rose



Matthew Scoggins Urban Horticulture Horticulture Agent Community Garden



A Message from the Forsyth County Extension Director



Dear Friends of N.C. Cooperative Extension,

I am so proud of our Forsyth County team! We have focused on hiring amazing, talented professionals who are consistently working on building their skills in serving the community, creating new and improved partnerships and making a positive difference in the lives of our citizens in the areas of Agriculture, Foods and Nutrition and 4-H Youth and Family Development.

Our staff members take ownership of their programs, listen to input from their advisory committees and examine data points so that N.C. Cooperative Extension, Forsyth County Center, will be identified as a trusted leader of applied research methodology.

Opportunities to Bloom at Your own Pace

1. Building Partnerships and Positive Collaborations

Through these partnerships we discover together our challenges, commonalities and opportunities for growth and celebration.

2. Listening and having Great Conversations

We all can make amazing differences in our community by working together as a team, listening and conversing in a positive direction.

3. Building Resilience

We reflect on our mission which is ever-changing to reflect a changing world. We look at this step as a way to fill in all gaps of service to ensure the well-being of our community.

In this year's Report to the Community, you will see our various programs highlighted by stories, data and innovative practices by our skilled staff, volunteers and youth leaders. We appreciate the Board of Commissioners, County Departments and various community supporters for their trust in our team to bring the best research-based programming to our clients.

Wishing you the very best!







Organizational Chart for N.C. Cooperative Extension Forsyth County Center



North Central
District
Extension
Director

Forsyth County
Extension
Director

Deputy County Manager





Administrative Team: Communications, Volunteer Teams, Business, Finance

Agriculture:
Horticulture,
Natural Resources
and Livestock

Food, Nutrition and Wellness 4-H Youth and Family Development

Forsyth County Residents/Clients



Forsyth County 4-H Youth & Family Development

April Bowman, Agent Monique Pearce-Brady, Former Agent

4-H is based on the mission of learning by doing. 4-H members enroll in clubs, school enrichment and outreach programs throughout the county. They have the opportunity to explore project areas such as science and technology, healthy lifestyles, animals, plant sciences, citizenship, leadership and civic engagement. 4-H volunteers assist by providing teaching, mentorship, guidance and leadership opportunities.

- 4-H reached 1642 youth through the engagement of STEM activities (not including embryology - reported separately) by partnering with public libraries, schools, and the parks and recreation department.
- 1169 4-H volunteers donated 2230 hours of service contributing an economic value of \$70,914 (per Independent Sector, 2023) to the department reaching 3703 individual contacts.
- 4-H supported Teen LEADS (Learning to Educate others About Doing STEM), Summer Adventures 2023, Tech Changemakers, #Passthemic, 4-H clubs, dog programs, Wildlife Habitat, Forestry, Presentations, Public Speaking, Talent Show, Large/Small Livestock, and a Teen Leadership program with community networks.
- 4-H club work is at the core of the 4-H program including 349 youth members and 104 youth participants in residential and day camping opportunities..
- Sent 2 youth to NASA Space Camp in Alabama; 3 youth to the Ignite Conference; and 1 youth to National 4-H Conference.
- 135 youth increased their knowledge of animals in agriculture.





- The Forsyth 4-H Forestry Team won the NC competition and placed fourth at the National 4-H Forestry Invitational.
- Forsyth County 4-H youth development Agents received \$22,988.43 in gifts in 2023.
- 2,275 students and 153 teachers and volunteers in 79 classrooms experienced 4-H Embryology and life cycle with 97% gaining knowledge in STEM.
- 77 youth participated in the first annual Dog Expressive Arts competition in Forsyth County.
- 3072 youth enhanced their knowledge of biological sciences or plant sciences through outreach programs provided to school-age youth.
- 31 youth participated in the #PasstheMic program in which they participated in topics plaguing our youth such as bullying, vaping, virtual bullying, gang relations, gun violence, and racism in school.
- The North Central 4-H Poultry Project provided an opportunity for youth to learn more about and become involved in the poultry industry. Fifty youth registered for the program and received birds. Forty youth completed the requirements for the project and showed their birds at the district show. Results reflected 97% of the participants learned responsibility, 89% improved their knowledge of record keeping, 69% demonstrated better financial management and 90% improved their public speaking skills.
- 4-Her's completed 419 hours of community service amounting to \$13,324.20 in volunteer service to the county.



Commercial Horticulture and Field Crops

Taylor Darnell, Area Agent

Field days, commodity meetings, pesticide certification, fit testing, seminars and other educational programs help agricultural producers and industry representatives with field crop work. Emphasis is placed on best management practices discovered through research-based test plots.

- Forsyth County hosted two pesticide safety schools in 2023 for 169 individuals receiving education on safe pesticide handling to prepare them to become licensed applicators.
- 273 horticultural professionals, arborists, right-of-way managers, and greenhouse growers received over 500 hours of continuing education facilitated by Extension.
- We have successfully recycled 353 pounds of agrochemicals and 2725 pounds of chemical containers! Pesticide container recycling is a service provided by NCDA&CS to reduce used pesticide containers from entering a landfill and are recycled into new chemical containers.
- In 2023, 82 farmers were trained in field crop education, commodity meetings, pesticide recertification, and fit testing events.
- Two Soybean On Farm Trials were conducted resulting in improved recommendations of fungicide use on soybean production in Forsyth County for 2023. By using foliar fungicides we increased yield by 4.5 bushels per acre.
- 18 tobacco growers in Forsyth and Stokes Counties have been recertified as GAP compliant with outstanding remarks for safety and quality.





Community Resource Development

Kimberly Gressley, County Extension Director

Community development is a planned effort to build assets that increase the capacity of residents to improve their quality of life. Programs are often developed and delivered in partnership with participants and "stakeholders" – organizations, individuals, and agencies with a stake in the existence and content of programs and the resources that support these programs.

- Our digital reach included: 305,745 views on our state-maintained website, Facebook and county-maintained websites. Personal client contacts equaled 83,552 interactions.
- Overall, the Volunteer Value of Volunteer Service including all program areas amounted to \$942,109 (Independent Sector, 2023).
- The Forsyth County Center brought in \$130,420.54 in 2023 to augment our programming and outreach to Forsyth County residents.
- The first year of the Wellness Produce Box Program, funded with American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars for two years brought nutrition information, physical fitness, container gardening, mindfulness, and cooking/safety education to well over 400 people in various Forsyth communities.
- Numerous partners, stakeholders and donors interfaced with our team in 2023 (refer to partnership page).



Consumer Horticulture

Leslie Rose, Horticulture Agent Will Parham, Horticulture Technician



Working with a team of over 140 NC State Extension Master Gardener[™] volunteers, Forsyth County's citizens benefit through educational programming for the home gardener. Educational gardens in Forsyth County managed by this Agent include The Arboretum at Tanglewood Park and the Demonstration Garden at the Agricultural Building.

- 1,353 community members attended one of 41 home horticulture programs.

 Programs were offered at a variety of days and times, with 21% occurring outside of the normal workweek.
- 784 community members gained knowledge about best management practices for the home landscape, lawn, and garden. 623 community members use Extensionrecommended best practices in these settings.
- 218 people used information they gained from Extension to select appropriate plants for their yard.
- Over 4 days in April 2023, 525 third grade students visited the Arboretum at Tanglewood Park to participate in the Youth Education program. 52 volunteers and staff contributed a total of 448 hours to make the program a success. Visiting students participated in hands-on lessons about plant science. 88% of the students correctly answered quiz questions to demonstrate their knowledge of soil and seeds at the end of the program. One teacher said, "All the stations fit in perfectly with our current unit of study."
- In 2023, 1,168 people viewed our "What's in Bloom" webpage, which highlights plants blooming in our gardens. 96% of website visitors reported that the page was helpful to them, with one visitor saying, "I see plants here that I may not have thought about planting myself."





Community Gardening

Matthew Scoggins,
Community Garden Coordinator

Community gardening supports residents in establishing and sustaining the gardens, primarily by developing local leader's skills in community organizing and sustainable horticulture. By growing gardens and garden leaders, we help residents improve access to fresh produce, enhance environmental stewardship and provide outdoor education for all ages.

- 2500+ transplants donated from local volunteers and small farms enabled gardens to save over \$10,000 when compared to retail costs.
- Over 4700 volunteer hours were logged in across the county from garden support amounting to a value of \$149,460 (Independent Sector, 2023).
- Over 100 community gardens across the county grew and donated over 11,000 pounds of produce to local food banks for our neighbors in need. Our gardens exist in neighborhoods, community centers, schools and other areas in which residents come together to network and socialize.
- Work continued for the 100+ community gardens throughout Forsyth County comprised of over 300 gardeners and 103 trained Community Garden Mentors. These mentors provide support, educational resources and seeds/inputs.
- 16 new gardens were started providing education, fresh produce and pollinator support in food deserts, at schools and community centers.
- The Tool Lending program assisted countless residents work in their home and community gardens in 2023.



Success Stories are a significant way we document impacts and outcomes. Here are just a couple to enjoy:

Forsyth County Agents collaborated to form the Spotted Lantern Fly Education Program. The program's goals are to increase awareness of the threat that SLF poses to agriculture and to train residents to identify and manage SLF. From June 2022 through March 2023, SLF information was included in 8 newsletters, 10 social media posts, 1 print article, and 4 online news stories; opens and views of these totaled over 33,000. Signs were displayed at the Extension office and public events attended by over 1 million people, as reported by hosts of each event. Agents made verbal announcements about SLF at gardening classes and during site visits with farmers and nurseries, reaching 288 individuals. 59 people attended workshops targeted at homeowners, professionals, and Extension Master Gardener Volunteers; workshops were evaluated through pre-and post surveys. The Forsyth County 4-H program distributed 100 SLF youth activity kits, with evaluation via feedback from those who completed an activity in the kit. Our team received national recognition from the

National Association of County Agriculture Agents for the SLF Education Program.





During the summer, the Ken Carlson Boys and Girls Club provided a safe, positive learning environment for 165 youth from K-8th Grade. Many of the students were from unique circumstances such as being raised by family members or they lived in a shelter. During the course of 4 days 64 youth in grades 3-8 and 6 adults were able to participate in various STEM activities such as coding, National Science Day and robotics. A quantitative evaluation was administered to the 64 youth participants. The results showed 70% of youth participants stated that they were able to work as a team to complete their STEM tasks, 80% stated that they were able to practice manipulating the code language SCRATCH to complete an event, 90% stated they were able to increase their knowledge of coding terminology and 90% stated that they felt comfortable to share what they learned regarding STEM with friends.

One volunteer stated, "This was the first time two of the youth participants participated in a STEM activity with robots". Additionally, the Salvation Army leadership team from headquarters was excited about the partnership and decided to continue to fund additional opportunities related to STEM for the youth.

Growing Impacts Everyday with our Partners:

We would like to extend a special thank you to the partners, donors and contributors below who worked with us in 2023 to better serve our community.

Alpha Graphics Anders Family Farm

Arbor Acres Assisted Living Bethany Baptist Church Carolina Classic Fair

Carolina Farm Stewardship Association

Carrigan Granite Quarry Church Childcare Center City of Winston-Salem

Cobblestone Farmers Market Ephesus Junior Academy

Forsyth County Agricultural Advisory Board

Forsyth County ARPA Funds (American Rescue Plan

Act)

Forsyth County Beekeepers Association

Forsyth County ECA Association

Forsyth County Extension Advisory Council

Extension Master Gardener Volunteer

Association of Forsyth County

Fair Share Farm

Forsyth Audubon Society
Forsyth County Farm Bureau
Forsyth County Government
Forsyth County Libraries

Forsyth County Parks and Recreation

Forsyth Soil and Water Conservation District Arboretum Volunteers & Educators at Tanglewood

Park

Garden Club Council of Winston-Salem and Forsyth

County

Grand Villa Assisted Living

Guilford Soil and Water Conservation District Habitat for Humanity of Forsyth County Happy Hill Neighborhood Association

Hanging Rock State Park

Head Start

Heritage Woods Senior Living Hispanic Resource Coalition His Path Day Care for IDD Historic Bethabara Park

Hope to Thrive

H.O.P.E. of Winston Salem Insight Human Services Julian Gibson Elementary Keep Winston-Salem Beautiful Ken Carlson Boys & Girls Club Kerner Ridge Assisted Living Latino Community Services Lewisville Community Center Memorial Industrial Community Dev. Corp. (MICDC)
Miracle Grounds Farm at Crossnore Communities

Mixxer Makerspace for Children NC Agricultural Foundation NC Native Plant Society

NC Piedmont Triad STEM Education Ecosystem

NC State Parks

NC State Pesticide Safety Education Program

NC Wildlife Federation New River State Park Northwest Ace Hardware Oaklawn Baptist Church Old Richmond Grange

Partnership for Healthy Forsyth

PeeDee Wildlife Rescue

Piedmont Environmental Alliance

Pilot Mountain State Park

Positive Wellness Alliance Food Pantry

Quality Education Academy

Redeemer School Rita Dee Alpaca Farm Rural Hall Garden Club Salem Montessori School Second Harvest Food Bank

Senior Services

SG Atkins Community Development Corp.

Shallow Ford Foundation

Southside Calvary After-school

Sprinkles Blueberry Farm St. Johns Lutheran School

Summit School Sungold Farm The Barn Loft The Fungal Network

The NC Leadership Academy

Tractor Supply

Triad Baptist Christian Academy

Una Benedicion (A Blessing) Food Pantry

Winston Lake YMCA

Winston-Salem Parks and Recreation Winston-Salem Rescue Mission Winston-Salem Fairgrounds

Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools

Winston-Salem Foundation

Winston Salem Permaculture Collective

Winston Salem Street School WSNC Radio/WBFJ/WTOB/WFDD Yadkin Valley Living Magazine



Family & Consumer Sciences (FCS) Foods & Nutrition

Virginia Lopez, Agent Caila Cater-Edwards, EFNEP

Because of our work:

- The North Carolina Extension & Community Association (ECA) volunteers continue to reach their communities with a total of 15,335 hours invested in volunteer work and 1761 people reached and amounted to \$487,653 in volunteer service!
- A new program called Extension Master Food Volunteer Program started in 2023 with 3 Volunteers who volunteered a total 420 hours and reached 799 residents of Forsyth County.
- First time program, Dining with Diabetes, reached 120 participants in Forsyth County.
- Youth nutrition reached 636 children who increased knowledge in fruit and vegetable consumption and physical activity.
- A new employee has been hired to perform Expanded Food & Nutrition Education.

The Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP-Ed), empower children and adults to live a healthy lifestyle through nutrition and physical activity. FCS programs focus on healthy food choices, active lifestyles, prevention of chronic diseases, resource management and environmental intervention. Materials are available in English and Spanish.





Livestock, Pastures & Forage Crops

April Bowman, Agent

Because of our work:

- 46 livestock producers increased knowledge in farm business, business planning, marketing and estate planning.
- 54 animal producers learned specific details of creating a farm management plan.
- 72 producers participated in learning more about pasture/forage management plans.
- 114 producers adopted Extension-recommended best management practices and production changes related to nutrition, ration balancing, mineral supplement, breeding, and reproduction.
- 51 producers adopted Extension-recommended best management practices and production changes related to quality assurance (vaccinations, castration, culling techniques, etc.).
- 103 producers increased knowledge of the strategies to promote animal health and welfare and reduce the potential for infectious diseases through proper use of vaccines, biosecurity, detection and identification of common diseases, appropriate use of animal medications, and mitigation of antimicrobial resistance transmission.

This program focuses on the husbandry of domestic livestock that provide meat, fiber, milk or food production, including but not limited to cattle, sheep, swine, equine, goats, poultry and specialty animals, as well as, the forages they consume.





Natural Resources & Environmental Systems

Rebecca Craps, Agent Phyllis Smith, Retired

This program focuses on the value and stewardship of our natural resources by promoting best management practices in the areas of soil, air, and water quality, wildlife management, native plant preservation, pollinator protection, and conservation of local ecosystems.

Because of our work:

- 207 participants received technical assistance for wildlife management including pest damage in lawns, bluebird nest box installation and monitoring, mammal control in garden areas, insect ID and management, snake ID and control, pollinator protection, fish pond management, and landscaping for wildlife.
- 152 beginning and advanced beekeepers received education on honeybee biology, behavior, diseases, Integrated Pest Management for varroa mites, colony management, and honey and hive products preparing them to take Certified and Journeyman level exams as part of the statewide Master Beekeeper Program.
- 40 residents and Park Managers participated in a Lake and Pond clinic to learn how to identify and control invasive aquatic weeds, prevent harmful algal blooms, and manage their lake/pond ecosystem to provide good quality water and high recreational value.
- 84 participants improved local water quality by receiving education, technical assistance, or programming in best management practices for storm water management, erosion control, streambank repair, rain barrel installation, rainwater harvesting, live stake installation, and pond

management.



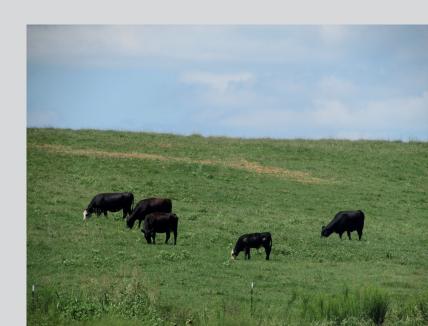
Soil & Water Conservation

Mike Bowman, Conservationist Alex Kiser, Conservationist

Because of our Work:

- Responded to a grant proposal amounting to \$1,000,000 from the North Carolina
- Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services on behalf of Forsyth County regarding four Watershed Dams located in the Town Fork Creek Watershed.
- Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) enrolled 21 farms with 1,317.33 acres bringing the county total to 158 farms with 9,249.88 acres.
- Five farms were awarded \$35,683 for best management practices through the Agriculture Cost Share Program.
- One farm qualified for \$17,786 in cost share funds from the Agricultural Water Resources Program for best management practices.
- The no-till drill was utilized by 13 farmers who planted 101.2 acres.
- The Forsyth Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors consists of three elected and two appointed individuals who administer the above listed cost share programs and give support to community events and activities.

This program focuses on assisting property owners in Forsyth County with conserving their soil, water, and other natural resources. This is achieved through planning, design, development and implementation of conservation practices. Technical and financial assistance are available to individuals, groups, schools and corporations on soil and water related concerns.





STEM & STEAM Programs

Science Technology, Engineering and Math Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math

Christopher Bryant, Coordinator Jeffrey Cates, Former Coordinator

Agricultural literacy equips youth to better understand the languages of the universe using the 4-H model of experiential learning. In schools, afterschool programs and public institutions like libraries, STEAM programming is offered to Forsyth County youth and families. Through these in-person conversations, attendees explore the principles that govern science, technology, engineering, art and math. National education standards are honored and reinforced through research based 4-H curriculum. Each session includes hands-on activities which deepen a love of learning.

- 387 Forsyth County youth and families participated in gardening classes. Class sessions were paired with garden workshops leading youth from seed to salad.
- 335 Forsyth County youth and families participated in workshops on STEAM: Topics ranged from ocean exploration, robotics, engineering, etc. Youth were often invited to consider specific careers in STEAM.
- 288 Forsyth County youth and families participated in workshops on STEAM Art: conversations about the languages of the universe that work in cooperation. Hands-on art activities allowed students to exercise those principles.
- 52 Forsyth County facilitators participated in training workshops focused on teaching in outdoor learning centers, irrigation, and other agriculture topics.
- 1100 Forsyth County youth and families were met in outreach events, promoting agricultural literacy.

Small Farms & Urban Agriculture

Celine Richard, Agent



Because of our work:

- 1298 community clients including food producers and food business owners, and home and community gardeners participated in programming spanning topics of vegetable, fruit, and other specialty crop production, management and distribution, gaining knowledge and/or skills related to local food systems, agriculture and food production.
- 138 individuals began food production by starting a vegetable or fruit garden with the help of our vegetable and fruit gardening programs.
- 13 aspiring new and beginner farmers were trained via the Forsyth County Urban Farm School Program jump starting their paths towards farm businesses or related career and volunteer options related to agriculture.
- 661 community members and new and established growers were connected to the most up to date information and resources about pawpaw at the Forsyth County Pawpaw Field Day. The event had a combined estimated economic impact of \$18,775 for regional commercial pawpaw growers.
- \$16,814 in grants were received by farmers and community organizations as a result of education and outreach provided by Extension.



This program provides educational programming for small and limited resource farmers, as well as, new urban growers and other residents about fruit and vegetable production on the farm and in home gardens. Extension works to provide technical advising on marketing of locally grown produce and food products to consumers through farmers markets, local stores and the Visit NC Farms phone application to help our local farmers and consumers.

Wellness Produce Box Program

Rhett Kyle, Coordinator



Providing educational programming for Forsyth County residents living in under served and under represented community areas focused on health, nutrition, exercise, mindfulness and wellness. This program is currently funded by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

- 66 unique families have been impacted by the program so far.
- Over 1000 pounds of produce have been provided for participants throughout the 3 program sessions (projected to be near 2000+ pounds of produce by the end of the fourth session).
- Over \$4500 has been spent in support of local agriculture that goes directly to program participants enabling them to prepare meals for themselves and their families containing less processed food sources on their tables each day.
- Over 400 individuals have been positively affected by the program (program participants, families of participants, program partners, farmers).
- All participants who have completed the program have indicated via an evaluation tool specifically created to measure impacts and outcomes from this program, that they have increased their fruit and vegetable intake.
- All participants who have completed the program say they feel more comfortable preparing healthy meals.
- Program evaluation utilizes target evaluations, pre- and post surveys and longevity evaluations from past students that measure behavioral changes regarding foods, exercise and wellness.
- Each class session lasts for 12 weeks. During the class a scheduled farm tour of the N.C. A&T State University has enhanced their learning exponentially.



Volunteer Development

Anika Parks, Coordinator

Because of our work:

Volunteer Hours & Dollar Value:

- Total: 26,740 hours, \$850,332 @ \$31.80 (Independent Sector, 2023)
- 4-H: 2230 hours, \$70,914
- Advisory Councils: 116 hours, \$3,689
- ECA: 15,335 hours, \$487,653
- EMGV: 8048 hours, \$255,926
- Other Areas: 1011 hours, \$32,150

Top Volunteer Impacts:

- 107 adult participants acquired the skills needed to serve as a volunteer.
- 28 volunteers reported taking on a new or expanded leadership position.
- 40 volunteers reported gaining a new skill that makes them a better volunteer.
- 52 volunteers reported that volunteering with N.C. Cooperative Extension, Forsyth County Center allows them to make a difference in their community.
- Because of the work of over 52 Extension Master Gardener volunteers (contributing 448 volunteer hours), the annual Youth Education at the Arboretum program reached 525 3rd-grade students and taught them about soil, composting, seeds, and carnivorous plants.
- Because of the work of Extension Master Gardener volunteers, 30 community members could join in maintaining the beauty of the Arboretum at Tanglewood Park during summer evening workdays.
- Because of every single 4-H Youth Development volunteer, many of our 4-H youth members gained and increased skills in leadership, social skills, confidence, teaching, kindness, organization, and more.
- Because of the commitment of the first Drone Team coach in Forsyth County 4-H history, our team won First Place at the first 4-H Drone contest!

Classes I want to take!

