



Environmental and Sustainability Education with UMD Extension's Baltimore County 4-H Program



COLLEGE PARK SCHOLARS

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One of the main challenges facing sustainability and environmental initiatives is the lack of public knowledge about the topics. Often this is due to inadequate resources and opportunities to meaningfully engage and educate the public. This challenge creates the need for science educators, who translate often technical and jargon-filled research into educational material easily grasped by people without scientific knowledge.

UMD Extension's Baltimore County 4-H Program aims to tackle this issue by hosting educational events, and creating and distributing instructional materials to schools and community organizations.

As part of the 4-H team, I assisted in creating a youth-focused curriculum including instructional lessons, information for parents, and interactive learning activities for children.

One topic we worked on was food waste in agriculture and consumers. It's estimated that up to 20% or more of produce is thrown out by farmers, processors, distributors, or consumers due to physical defects. Our goal was to educate consumers to reduce this waste.

The materials I created included;

- A brochure series on food waste
- Fun stickers for computers or water bottles
- Recycled food-based painting activities for younger children
- Lesson plans for schools to teach students about food waste



One of our activities for children at the Earth Day fair. This activity was the food waste-based paint activity.



An informational board at the Baltimore County Agriculture center. A demonstration garden was also hosted at the earth day fair, teaching home gardeners sustainable and effective methods.



Through this project, I learned about how significant food waste is to agriculture sustainability. If less food was wasted, less food would need to be produced to feed everyone, which would free up land that could be reforested or otherwise returned to its natural state.

I still work with 4-H, and right now we're working on a series of virtual reality guided tours of local farms integrating sustainable agriculture techniques. I'm also preparing for this year's Earth Day events at the Baltimore County Agriculture Center!

Site Information:

University of Maryland Extension Baltimore County 4-H Program

1114 Shawan Rd, Cockeysville, MD 21030

Supervisor: Vernelle Mitchell-Hawkins

Goals: Create educational materials and activities to engage with and teach people, ranging from children to senior citizens, about environmental sustainability in agriculture.



Acknowledgments:

Vernelle Mitchell-Hawkins
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Dr. Merck



SCIENCE AND GLOBAL CHANGE

UMD Extension's Baltimore County 4-H program's 2023 earth day fair is hosted annually at the Baltimore County agriculture center. The materials I created were used extensively in this event. I also had the opportunity to meet farmers and others in the sustainability and agriculture field.