

Woman forms new habits after program

“If I had not been in the [Weigh Down] program, I would never have known my blood pressure was elevated.”

NEWASSA HOUSE
Clay County resident

Newassa House recruited friends to join her in an Extension Service-sponsored program and as a side benefit, discovered her blood pressure was dangerously elevated.

House was a team leader for Weigh Down in West Point, a 12-week weight management program that saw its 98 teams lose a combined 5,613 pounds.

“We learned about nutrition, blood pressure, diabetes, body mass index, tobacco, portion size and food choices, and they gave us tips on how to cook food and do regular exercise,” House said.

At the initial weigh-in, program coordinators found House’s blood pressure to be high and referred her to her doctor. At her checkup, the doctor wouldn’t let her leave until they had her dangerously high blood pressure under control and a proper medication prescribed.

“If I had not been in the program, I would never have known my blood pressure was elevated,” House said.

House lost seven pounds and established new eating habits during the program.

“It’s a life change. Even if you don’t properly eat one day, you can always start over again the next day. The most important thing is that you feel better,” she said.



Jim Lytle

Growers get help staying current in tomato business



Marco Nicovich

“The market changed, and consumers realized that the best homegrown tomatoes weren’t perfect.”

PAUL MYRICK

Jasper County commercial tomato producer

Paul Myrick learned with tomatoes that a business must change with the times or lose its market.

Each year, Myrick has 500-700 plants in commercial tomato production in Stringer. He and his wife have been in the business for about 12 years.

Several years ago, the Mississippi State University Extension Service helped Myrick and other growers get a grant and loan to build a tomato packing facility.

“We had a state-of-the-art packing shed designed to pack uniform tomatoes to ship to northern markets. The market changed, and consumers realized that the best homegrown tomatoes weren’t perfect,” Myrick said.

Myrick and fellow producers closed the packing shed after seven years, but they continued to produce tomatoes for markets closer to home.

“We’re growing varieties for taste. Everyone is looking for varieties that are resistant to disease. Out of those, we try to choose those that taste the best,” he said.

The Extension Service helps them find those varieties and learn new methods to fight insects and disease.

“We plan a tour for our growers every year. We’ve toured every tomato growing area in the Southeast,” Myrick said. “Extension also offers two or three meetings during the year on topics that are important to tomato production.”

4-H helped secure a college scholarship

“4-H has gotten me a lot of places...the biggest impact is the people who’ve been involved in 4-H.”

REBEKAH CARSON
Forrest County college freshman
(shown addressing the Mississippi Senate)

It takes more than grades to earn a college scholarship, and Rebekah Carson used her experiences with 4-H to earn one.

Carson, 18, is a freshman from Hattiesburg majoring in music education at the University of Southern Mississippi. The daughter of Alton and Alyne Carson, she joined 4-H when she was 10.

Every summer found her at 4-H Club Congress at Mississippi State University competing in subject-area contests and honing her leadership skills. She is finishing out her 4-H career as president of the State 4-H Council.

“4-H has gotten me a lot of places,” Carson said. “The biggest impact is the people who’ve been involved in 4-H.”

She said 4-H gave her the opportunity to learn how to be a leader and got her involved in the community.

“I’ve been able to go further in life because of 4-H. My



Jim Lytle

scholarship at USM has a lot to do with 4-H,” she said. “It was partly based on some academics, but otherwise looks at leadership and community service. I probably wouldn’t have any community service and few leadership opportunities if I hadn’t been involved in 4-H.”

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CAS gives invaluable training at local library

“The [computer] classes were a big hit here because [she] was able to break the information down so that students—particularly our senior citizens—could understand it.”

SUSAN ALSBURY
Wesson librarian

Tiny Wesson Public Library’s lack of funds didn’t stop it from getting much-needed computer education courses brought right to the Copiah County facility.

This success story began with a visit to the library from Doug Carter, a Mississippi State University Extension Service enterprise and community resource development agent based in Leake County. That meeting led to librarian Susan Alsbury’s meeting with Extension instructor Marty Brock.

“Doug came into town making contact with the different communities, letting us know what he had available, and he gave us Marty’s name,” Alsbury said. “I called Marty, and she came down with all the equipment for computer classes. The classes were a big hit here because Marty was able to break the information down so that students—particularly our senior citizens—could understand it.”

During 2004, the library offered nine computer classes, and



Marcio Nicovich

Alsbury said she is still receiving calls from community members wondering when future classes will be offered. None have been scheduled due to a lack of funding in the Extension Service.

“The way this program was implemented was just wonderful. This was a tremendous hit because these are short courses with small enrollment, which allows for individual, hands-on help,” Alsbury said. “You have seniors who may not go to our local community college because they feel threatened, but they will come here to learn to use the computer.”