



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**University of Kentucky Extension Specialist Earns National Extension Award
from American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences**

Alexandria, VA – June 30, 2010 – Martha Huntsman Perkins, County Extension agent for family and consumer sciences, University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service, Bath County Office, received the American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences (AAFCS) Excellence in Extension Award for her research, "Mental Healthiness and Aging Initiative." The award was presented on Thursday, June 24, 2010, during the AAFCS 101st Annual Conference & Expo, *New Century for FCS: New Challenges, New Solutions* in Cleveland, Ohio.

The Excellence in Extension Award has a long history of honoring outstanding Extension system programs that enable people to improve their lives and communities through learning partnerships—partnerships that put knowledge to work in family and consumer sciences programs. This year's winning program tackled the difficult subject of mental health in older adults.

In Kentucky, the percentage of adults over the age of 65 with mental health issues has risen to 13.5, while resources available to treat such issues as depression, substance abuse, and dementia are particularly limited in Appalachian Kentucky. The Mental Healthiness and Aging Initiative, or MHAI, was created to spread knowledge about normal changes in mental health processes with age, increase resources available for managing mental health in elders, and educate the public about and when a senior citizen should access those mental health resources.

The MHAI program demonstrates that community interventions on mental health awareness and knowledge are possible in rural areas, with Extension agents as gatekeepers, promoting positive messages about mental health.

One of the first community mental health, aging awareness, and knowledge programs in the country, MHAI is also one of the first to be implemented in a rural region. A program like this is invaluable to managing mental health and substance abuse for the rural elderly.

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About the American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences (AAFCS)

Based in the Washington, D.C., area, AAFCS is the only association for family and consumer sciences students and professionals across multiple practice settings and content areas. For more than 100 years, AAFCS has focused its mission on providing leadership and support for professionals whose work assists individuals, families, and communities in making more informed decisions about their well-being, relationships, and resources to achieve optimal quality of life. AAFCS members provide research-based knowledge about the topics of everyday life to help create healthy and sustainable families. These topics include human development, personal and family finance, housing and interior design, food science, nutrition and wellness, textiles and apparel, and consumer issues. AAFCS members are located nationwide, and include educators, administrators and managers, human service and business professionals, researchers, community volunteers, and consultants who develop research-based information and deliver programs on essential skills to help individuals and families be better prepared to live, work, and succeed in today's complex and diverse world.

Field of Family & Consumer Sciences

Family and consumer sciences (FCS) draws from broad and diverse disciplines to develop and provide content and programs that help individuals become more effective critical thinkers and problem solvers. Through discovery and delivery of research-based knowledge, FCS professionals help individuals and families develop essential skills to successfully live and work in a complex world. Professionals in the field are uniquely qualified to speak on many critical issues affecting individuals and families, such as maintaining a healthy lifestyle, wisely managing personal and family finances, and creating supportive relationships with family members, friends, and co-workers. They are located nationwide in a variety of practice settings, including secondary schools, universities, government agencies, and businesses.

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