



# Virginia Cooperative Extension

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## Situation Analysis Report



## Mathews County

# 2018

### UNIT Extension Staff

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## Introduction

Mathews County conducted a comprehensive situation analysis during the calendar year 2004. This information was re-examined and updated in 2008, 2013 and again in 2018. The situation analysis process was led by the Unit Extension Staff and involved the use of a Mathews County Unit Profile, as well as gathering community perspectives on issues and problems in the county. Data and information from these sources were analyzed by the Unit Extension Staff and priority issues were identified. Using the provided report from the VCE Situation Analysis Resource website, VCE staff analyzed pieces of the data sets to tailor the survey to the community (based on the template from the VCE Situation Analysis Resource website). For the survey, the theoretical population was identified as community representatives. These representatives were accessible, as most were a part of local organizations. Community members were given access to both paper copies and a link to the online version of the survey so that those community members without access to the Internet would have the same opportunity to provide input. The findings from the unit profile and the community surveys were presented and discussed, and the top priority issues for Mathews County identified, including those that could be addressed with current VCE resources and those that were outside the scope of current VCE resources.

### Response to 2013 Situation Analysis

**In the 2013 Situation Analysis, the top five issues were:**

#### **Issue 1: Water Quality**

Water Quality was identified as a top issue facing Mathews County. Based on the comments on the community survey, this is mainly an issue of education and awareness. Due to the proximity of Mathews to so many sources of water and the sea level of the community, many people find it very important to know about and understand water quality. There are a few ways in which this can be addressed. The education of the public can be achieved with Extension resources. This would involve using university resources such as research and knowledge of individuals. Additionally, local government can be made aware of the many resources at the universities throughout Virginia regarding water quality. This would help ensure that local policymakers, decision-makers, and those running for local office might be well-informed of the issues surrounding water quality here in Mathews. Additionally, it was noted that using these University resources would be politically neutral and would bring pure research-based knowledge to the community.

#### **Issue 2: Obesity/Nutrition**

Obesity/Nutrition was identified as a second pressing issue in Mathews County. In terms of youth, the schools in Mathews have a focus on increase nutritional value of the foods served. Additionally, the High School is currently the provider of the meals for the Meals on

Wheels program in the community which provides nutritional lunches for needy residents of Mathews. Also, Hands Across Mathews is an organization which currently provides one-on-one mentoring for individuals throughout the community. This is an opportunity for Extension to provide “train-the-trainer” educational programming to those mentors so that they might be able to better serve the Mathews community. Extension can also address this issue by increasing the health programming in 4-H in order to reach the youth population of the community. This, in partnership with the train-the-trainer programming, would help reach multiple age groups which were mentioned in the community survey comments.

### **Issue 3: Parenting**

Parenting was identified another pressing issue in Mathews County. The comments in the community survey were primarily about other people’s children rather than individuals stating that they themselves would be interested in attending parenting classes. Based on past offerings, it seems that those needing parenting classes are less likely to attend even free classes. Therefore, it would be necessary to generate interest in programs prior to implementation. One way in which this issue could be addressed is to use the existing Parent-Teacher Associations as a starting point. These parents may be more willing to receive educational programming regarding parenting and could then generate interest in other parents in the Mathews community. Headstart in Mathews already has parent education, so it may be beneficial to determine if Extension programming can be implemented there.

### **Issue 4: Youth Issues**

Youth Issues was identified as a fourth pressing issue in Mathews County. Many respondents indicated that the various youth issues on the survey were considered important to the Mathews community. These included youth community involvement, youth development, and youth activities. The comments related to youth issues were generally about making fun and hands-on programming available to youth, as well as involving teens in community service activities. Because there is already a Teen Leader 4-H Club, this group could partner with the local YMCA Teen Leader group, as well as service organizations at Mathews High School in order to organize a joint community service project which would be publicized to the general Mathews community. This would allow the teens to show their community involvement and partner with other groups. 4-H should continue to partner with the Coalition 4 Kids. Additionally, there should be some 4-H involvement with the local Boys and Girls Clubs, as well as the schools in order to provide the hands-on programming that kids will enjoy. This would also address comments about preparing youth for the future.

### **Issue 5: Small Businesses**

Small Businesses was identified as a fifth pressing issue in Mathews County. Many comments on the community survey regarding this issue had to do with local government as well as financial literacy. It may be beneficial for a Chamber of Commerce to be organized so that local businesses can have one group to work with in order to be represented. This would

not be addressed with Extension resources, but it can be brought to the attention of local government. In terms of financial literacy, it would be beneficial to generate interest in financial literacy programs offered by Extension prior to offering the programs. In the past, attendance by small business owners has been low. The Extension Office can also use resources from other states' Extension Systems which meet the needs of small business owners.

## Unit Profile

Mathews County is located in the Eastern part of Virginia on the tip of the Middle Peninsula.

### Demographics and Data

The data indicated that the **population age 65 and older** is 30.8% of the total population based on census estimate reports from 2017. This is a 5.96% increase since the 2010 census. This is more than double the Virginia and National averages, because of this high number, it is important to look at community issues focused on this older population.

The **median income** of 2017 was \$63,622. This is less than the Virginia mean income, but better than the 2017 National median income of \$57,652.

The number of **sexually transmitted infections per 100k** decreased from 2013 to 2016 by 63.3 infections per 100k. There was a slight decrease (from 3 to 0 per 1,000 females age 15-19) of teenage pregnancies in that same time period.

The percentage of **children in poverty** decreased from 18% to 16.2% from 2013 to 2017.

The **unemployment rate** decreased from 5.1% in 2013 to 3.8% in 2017. However, the 3.8% rate of 2017 is comparable to the Virginia rate of 3.7.

The 2018 **graduation rate** was an impressive 93.6%.

## Community and Resident Perspectives

In order to reach a representative sample of the different areas of the Mathews County community, survey participants were selected using purposive sampling where community and organization leaders were chosen to participate. These participants were selected to represent the residents with which they most commonly work. For example, leaders from youth organizations would represent the youth issues in the community, leaders from organizations targeting seniors would represent the senior issues in the community, and so on.

## Priority Issues

Based on the unit profile and resident perspectives data from above, the following top priority issues (in no order) were identified for Mathews County.

### Issue 1: Aging Population

Due to the high senior citizen population in Mathews County which has grown almost 6% in the last 7 years there was a large focus on issues related to this section of the population. Some issues include requiring assistance with mobility, transportation, diet, and companionship. Comments from the survey included concerns for safe senior housing that allows residents who are aging out of being able to care for their homes to remain in Mathews. The current proximity of the Mathews Extension office and The Active Lifestyle Center (senior center) puts us in a unique position to be able to partner with this slice of the population and ensure that local seniors who attend programs there, including those put on by Extension Master Gardeners, are aware of other resources in the area. The area Meals on Wheels program is also run out of the senior center and is a method of aiding those in need in the community, particularly the elderly, but also raise awareness of Extension/community services through contact made with Meals on Wheels recipients and Volunteers.

### Issue 2: Water Quality & Environmental Issues

Once again Water Quality was identified as a top issue facing Mathews County. Based on the comments on the community survey, this is mainly an issue of education and awareness. Due to the proximity of Mathews to so many sources of water and the sea level of the community, many people find it very important to know about and understand water quality as well as how we can be better stewards of the local waterways. There are a few ways in which this can be addressed. The education of the public can be achieved with Extension resources. This would involve using university resources such as research and knowledge of individuals. Additionally, local government can be made aware of the many resources at the universities throughout Virginia regarding water quality. This would help ensure that local policymakers, decision-makers, and those running for local office might be well-informed of the issues surrounding water quality here in Mathews. Additionally, it was noted that using these University resources would be politically neutral and would bring pure research-based knowledge to the community. Many of the comments related to increasing knowledge of these issues through teaching youth appreciation of our environment in the schools/after school programs.

### Issue 3: Youth Issues

Youth issues that were marked as high in significance ran the gamut of topics including before and after school issues such as opportunities for meaningful activities during those periods during the day. Teen youth issues were also brought to the forefront through

comments about development of activities to promote high school graduation and prepare for job market, providing leadership skills, money management skills, and work ethic standards. There is an interest in further promotion and expansion of youth programs including after school, day camps and summer camps. The concern is that many students are in need of activities they can embrace, and grow from. Extension has a role in this issue through our 4-H program as well as our role in fostering collaborative programs through the Coalition 4 Kids which is the area youth services advisory board.

#### **Issue 4: Health & Nutrition**

The topic of health and nutrition issues came up in the survey with a focus on the education of youth & parents in food production/gardening, as well as good, safe health practices. In terms of youth, the schools in Mathews have a focus on increase nutritional value of the foods served. Extension's role in addressing this issue can be done through the Master Gardeners program reaching out to the public on home gardening practices including utilizing the demonstration and education raised bed gardens located at the office. The 4-H program can increase knowledge and skills of our youth in health and nutrition through our Spring Break Camp program which has a focus on gardening and local agriculture, our Food Challenge Day Camp program as well as integrating curriculum such as Health Rocks into after-school programming.

#### **Issue 5: Community Planning and Services**

Many of those surveyed ranked community planning and services as a top issue however they did not list ways this issue could be addressed. It seems that there is a lack of awareness of the resources in Mathews County. Many of the comments in the community survey indicated that individuals may not be aware of resources which already address the issues presented. Because of this, it may be necessary to promote resource marketing within the community. The Extension Office can begin to address this by attempting to reach many diverse members of the community in order to inform them of the resources available through VCE. Current efforts towards this include regular promotions of 4-H to all students, new social media pages highlighting the youth services advisory board and resource council offerings, and brochures of all services offered by Virginia Cooperative Extension to be distributed to residents and new community members.