

News

N.C. Research Campus, Kannapolis

June 7, 2010

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N.C. MarketReady to Expand Popular ‘Produce Lady’ Program with Grant

KANNAPOLIS, N.C. – [N.C. MarketReady](#), a program of N.C. Cooperative Extension, was awarded nearly \$100,000 in grant funding (\$91,937) from the N.C. Tobacco Trust Fund Commission to expand its popular [Produce Lady](#) program. The grant, focused on strengthening markets for farmers and educating consumers, provides funding through 2012.

The Produce Lady program is the brainchild of Leah Chester-Davis, coordinator of communications and community outreach for N.C. MarketReady, which is based at the N.C. Research Campus. Chester-Davis serves as director of The Produce Lady effort along with Brenda Sutton, who is The Produce Lady. Sutton is also director of Cooperative Extension in Rockingham County.

The Produce Lady will serve up new Web resources, healthy cooking demonstrations, an e-newsletter, online videos and printed materials that promote North Carolina fruits and vegetables and the farmers who grow them.

Visitors to www.theproducelady.org will find videos that provide tips on selecting, storing, preparing and preserving fresh produce items; healthy recipes that use fruits and vegetables; nutritional facts and advice; and an event calendar for The Produce Lady’s latest appearances. Additional videos and resources will be added in the coming months. Beginning this fall, a new monthly e-newsletter will harvest the latest updates in one place for subscribers.

Fruits and vegetables will go virtual as The Produce Lady offers online preservation workshops next year via live Web streaming technology. People can still see The Produce Lady in person as she travels across the state providing free, public cooking demonstrations at farmers markets. A blog offers her personal insight into these and other agricultural activities at theproducelady.wordpress.com.

“The Produce Lady is all about promoting North Carolina-grown fruits, vegetables and other farm products,” said Chester-Davis. “The Produce Lady has gained quite a following; many people visit farmers markets just to meet her. This grant will help us encourage even more consumers to buy from North Carolina farmers, which will benefit our communities, our economy and our health.”

The [N.C. Tobacco Trust Fund Commission](#) targets projects for funding that stimulate the agricultural economy in North Carolina communities through sales of local foods. The Produce Lady was a perfect fit according to the Commission’s chairman, Billy Carter.

“The Produce Lady is exceptionally valuable because she speaks directly to consumers and farmers in a way they can relate to,” said Carter. “The Tobacco Trust Fund Commission is excited to work with N.C. MarketReady to support and grow the wonderful resource that is The Produce Lady.”

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N.C. MarketReady, a program of N.C. Cooperative Extension based at the N.C. Research Campus in Kannapolis, coordinates The Produce Lady efforts, such as farmers market appearances; recipes; a video series for farmers and consumers; and other educational resources, which can be found at www.theproducelady.org. Watch for her on the Almanac Gardener show on UNC-TV networks statewide.

The **N.C. Tobacco Trust Fund Commission** was created by the N.C. General Assembly in 2000 to help soften the financial impact to farmers and tobacco-related businesses caused by the sharp decline of tobacco in the agricultural economy. Since 2002, the Commission has awarded grants to public and nonprofit agencies that meet the goals of strengthening the agricultural economies of North Carolina. www.tobaccotrustfund.org

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