

My Experience as a Summer '23 VCE Intern

Name: Sydney A. Hudson

County: Greensville/Emporia

About Me!

Hey y'all! My name is Sydney Hudson, and I am this year's Virginia Cooperative Extension intern for the Greensville/Emporia office. I am from Dinwiddie, VA, and am a junior at Virginia Tech majoring in Communications with a minor in Equine Science. At Tech I am the president of the Block and Bridle Club, an agricultural service organization that works closely with Virginia 4-H and Future Farmers of America; I am also a sister of the Sigma Alpha sorority and a Virginia 4-H All-Star. I grew up as an active member of the Dinwiddie 4-H chapter, competing in horse shows, public speaking competitions, and more. I developed a passion for all things 4-H and agriculture through these activities. Extension and 4-H made such a positive impact on my childhood and prepared me for the challenges and opportunities presented to me as a college student, so I am thrilled to be a part of these programs further. I am looking forward to working with the youth and families of the Greensville-Emporia community, learning from these experiences, and growing connections and friendships as a VCE intern these next few months.

My Summer Programs!

College Gameday Youth Day Camp:

While this camp was not able to actually take place due to low registration numbers, it was a fun camp to plan! The purpose of this day was to introduce high school students to various skills they would need in order to be successful in college, trade or vocational school, or the workforce. This would be done through creative activities and a theme modeled after the famous ESPN College Football Gameday series. The lesson plan includes skills such as public speaking, professionalism, basic personal finance, and the FAFSA application for college loans. Guest speakers from local businesses would have also come in to give presentations on finance and what they look for in future employees. This camp would be a great opportunity for the youth in the community to begin to plan for life after high school while learning in a fun atmosphere.

Day at the Stables Day Camp:

The Day at the Stables Camp was by far my favorite activity I planned for this internship!

With horses being my passion, it was amazing to be able to share my love for these wonderful animals with local youth, some of which had never been around horses before. For this day camp, we partnered with Dinwiddie County 4-H and traveled to the local Cockade Stables, where owner and manager Amy Grieco is a long-time Dinwiddie 4-H Horsekateers volunteer. The day started off with an equine safety lesson and classroom learning where we reviewed basic horse information while working through an interactive activity booklet I made for the kids. This information included basic terminology, breeds, colors and markings, health, and nutrition. We then moved into the arena for various hands-on activities with the horses to test the knowledge they had learned from the morning of the horse information review. In the afternoon they painted their own real horseshoes to take home, watched several different demonstrations of riding and training, and even got to ride the horses themselves! Virginia state delegate, Kimberly Taylor, even stopped by for a visit to check out the program and see the horses! Despite the heat, this was a great day that all the kids seemed to really enjoy. I was beyond thrilled to get to share my lifelong sport and hobby with these youth, and it is truly an experience I will never forget!



Group photo of all our lovely volunteers and participants!



Horse anatomy labeling with Mrs. Amy's horse, Blue!



Grooming my personal horse, Fritz, after his English riding demonstration!

Here's what's happening in the Greenville-Emporia office!

Week 1~ June 1- June 2: I can confidently say that my first week was a success! My first official day as a VCE intern in Greenville/Emporia was filled with exciting new opportunities. I started off the day working with our 4-H agent, Hannah Parker, touring the middle school and helping her unpack and organize new material for various summer learning programs through the school system. Back at the office, I was tasked with constructing a small hydroponic kit for the local 4-H groups and I also designed the camper and counselor t-shirts for our summer camp in July. Friday was yet another successful day, as I completed 4-H training, met and planned youth enrichment programs with the county's Junior MANNERS leader, and helped set up a community event for the following day. On top of all these accomplishments, I also began coming up with ideas for the two day programs I would be planning and hosting for local youth. I decided to focus one program on the skills necessary for students to become successful college students and employees, such as communication and personal budgeting. This will be an ESPN College Gameday theme because who doesn't love college football in the South! The other program that I began the plans for will be an equine-focused day for those interested, yet inexperienced with horses; I chose this because horses have been a lifelong passion of mine and I would love the opportunity to share this passion with others. That said, I also began contacting people for these events and completing a flier and registration for the college day. That concluded my first week, and I greatly look forward to the weeks to come!

Week 2~ June 5- June 9: My second week as an intern was undoubtedly busy, yet exciting as I continued to work on new tasks and learn more about Extension! I started off the week by attending the VCE internship training Zoom with state office intern, Kylie Howard, as well as attending my first employee meeting within the Greenville/Emporia office. To conclude the beginning of my week, I had the opportunity to sit in on a USDA informational meeting held in the office; guest speakers from various local agencies and agriculture departments came to speak with local farmers and landowners about the different resources available to them. On June 7, our ANR agent, Sara Rutherford, updated me on the Master Gardener program here in Greenville/Emporia to start off the day. That afternoon I joined our 4-H agent, Hannah Parker, in working with the afterschool program at Wyatt Middle School in Emporia, where the students created their own solar ovens to make s'mores! Thursday was spent on the road, as I joined Hannah again in teaching Wyatt Middle Schoolers about healthy food choices and assisting them in using smoothie bikes to make their own smoothie creations; we also traveled to a park in nearby Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina to help with the Greenville homeschool group fun day. To wrap up the week, I continued helping with

4-H camp planning, created materials for the College Gameday Youth Day Camp, and planned various camp counselor training activities.

Week 3~ June 12-June 16: This week was filled with planning and meetings! On Monday, I started off the day continuing to plan the equine-focused day camp, entitled Day at the Stables, then finished off the afternoon at Wyatt Middle School teaching the after-school program about food safety and making omelets. Tuesday I had the privilege of sitting in on a Unit Coordinator's meeting with our ANR agent Sara, where the district updates were discussed; later that afternoon I was also able to attend a meeting hosted by Dr. Mike Gutter, the Extension director. In this meeting, improvements for promoting Virginia Cooperative Extension and agriculture as a whole during the state fair were discussed, as were new technology changes. Wednesday I joined our 4-H agent, Hannah, in assisting with a community service project hosted by a local church, in which they were raising funds to help with the medical costs of a child in the community. Thursday and Friday were both training days for the 2023 4-H Camp counselors and counselors in training; I led both teambuilding and leadership activities for these events. Friday I also attended a Soil and Water Conservation meeting with Sara, where local improvements to conservation were discussed and debated.

Week 4~ June 19-June 23: My week started off on a Tuesday full of 4-H camp counselor and CIT training, as well as a site visit with our ANR agent, Sara. For the site visit, we traveled to nearby Southampton County to inspect pastures for a local horse breeding and training farm. Wednesday came with more day camp planning, and we published the flyer and registration for the Day at the Stables I am planning and teaching as one of my internship projects. I finished the week preparing 4-H camp paperwork, putting together embryology kits, and redecorating our 4-H bulletin board with updated pictures and information in the Extension conference room.

Week 5~ June 26-June 30: This week was filled with 4-H planning and events, especially as we are quickly approaching camp week for our 4-Hers in Greenville-Emporia! I was mainly working in the office this week updating 4HOnline records and preparing teaching materials for the Day at the Stables day camp that I will be teaching. I was also asked by the Dinwiddie 4-H to assist in teaching a Cloverbud horse camp on July 11th, which I happily agreed to, and I got to work making a flyer and registration to invite Greenville-Emporia youth to that opportunity. We wrapped up the week with a healthy living day camp at local Washington Park helping youth learn about MyPlate, healthy meal choices, smoothie making, and group exercise. I also attended the SAGEN 4-H Camp Week planning meeting with the Airfield Center, led by our 4-H agent, Hannah.

Week 6~ July 3-July 7: My week started out by finishing up my Day at the Stables materials and activities, continued 4-H summer camp preparations, and even site visits to local tobacco and cotton fields, along with the Fourth of July holiday. Thursday was a very busy day here at the office as we hosted 4-H camp volunteer and counselor training, followed by CPR training, in which some of the counselors attending camp and I earned our certification. That evening I hosted an equine safety meeting for the youth and parents attending my Day at the Stables camp in order to review basic safety, answer any questions, and get those waivers signed! All the kids seemed eager for the next morning when they would head to a local barn, where many would interact with live horses for the first time! Friday came bright and early, and was a day filled with lots of new information and experiences, crafts, and of course plenty of horses! Though the day was hot, it was a very successful day at Cockade Stables with our 4-H friends from Dinwiddie. For the full scoop on our time here, see the “My Summer Programs” section above!

Week 7~ July 10- July 14: We started off the week with lots of educational outdoor activities! Monday was filled with archery lessons at Wyatt Middle School, followed by a Cloverbuds camp on Tuesday. I was asked by Dinwiddie to help with this horse-themed day camp, where Cloverbuds learned basic horse information, interacted with live horses, watched a Parelli training demonstration, and made plenty of horse crafts. The second half of the week included camp preparations for the SAGEN Junior 4-H camp in Airfield. Preparations included packing counselor bags, arranging camp teams, making luggage tags and bank envelopes for each camper, and preparing team spirit bags.

Week 8~ July 17- July 21: This week was camp week! Our Greensville-Emporia campers and counselors enjoyed a week at Airfield 4-H Center alongside Accomack, Northampton, and Suffolk counties. Our theme for this year was “Camping through the Decades” and the youth enjoyed different classes and activities each day. These specially planned activities included a carnival night with different treats and water slides, a pool party and ice cream social, a talent show, and a dance. My responsibilities for the week were helping to oversee these activities, supervising the break room for our teen counselors, managing the camp bank for our county, and I was the photographer for the week! While it was a tiring week, this was a great experience to watch these kids learn new skills, make new friends, and have a great time outdoors!

Week 9~ July 24- July 28: This week was a camp cleanup week. I was tasked with organizing and storing away the extra snacks and drinks, going through camp lost and found items, and doing inventory and putting away camp supplies. I also organized our arts and crafts cabinets, researched lesson plans for our new hydroponic kits, and sorted through camp pictures for social media. I also helped with some research for our FCS agent, Jessica, who will be teaching classes on mindful eating. After reading through several articles and different scientific studies on the topic, I learned that mindful eating is learning to appreciate and fully analyze the food you are eating in order for your body to properly digest and absorb nutrients and limit overeating tendencies. Additionally, our 4-H agent, Hannah, and I hosted the last archery class of the summer at Wyatt Middle School for their summer enrichment program. Reflecting back to previous weeks and the planning of the College Gameday Youth Camp, due to low registration numbers the day camp was canceled; however, the lesson plans and activity planning are finished and may be used at a later date!

Family Vacation (July 31- August 4)

Week 10~ August 7: Today was my last day as the Virginia Cooperative Extension intern in Greenville-Emporia. We had our final office staff meeting of the summer and I worked on some additional 4-H Online uploads. I also went on a site visit with Sara, our ANR agent, to a farm in the southern part of Greenville county and to visit a historic peanut processing facility and road front store called Good Earth Peanuts. It was a perfect way to close out my internship! I could not have asked for a better group of agents to work with and in such a positive environment. Jessica, Hannah, Sara, and our office manager, Sammi, have helped me learn so much and truly grow in my communication, public relations, and planning skills amongst many other lessons and great experiences. I cannot thank them enough for such an amazing summer! I will miss these people and this job greatly!