



Melanie Southerland

Family and Consumer Sciences Agent I
Northwest Extension District

Profile

As an FCS Extension Agent I in Jefferson County, I plan, implement, and evaluate educational programs focused on chronic disease management, nutrition, and food safety. I provide programs where participants gain knowledge and skills to improve the overall health, well-being, and quality of life of clientele and improve community vitality.

I collaborate with the 4-H program to offer similar life skills programs to promote positive youth development.

I develop educational materials, tools, and resources to help clientele change behaviors to improve health and wellness

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Educational Programs

Improving Health and Wellbeing for Adults and Youth in Jefferson County: Obesity and chronic disease contribute to the leading causes of death and disability and contribute significantly to annual health expenditures. Many Floridians do not know how nutrition, unhealthy habits, lifestyle choices, and financial decisions impact their health, wellness, and quality of life. As of 2019, data shows that 70% of Jefferson County residents are at an unhealthy weight. Research shows that unhealthy weight can contribute to heart disease, cancers, complications from COVID-19 and diabetes. In addition, about 84% of adults in Jefferson County are insufficiently active or sedentary (2019, 2020 Florida Charts). It is my job to educate and equip Jefferson County residents with the knowledge to help make positive lifestyle changes that will enhance overall health and quality of life.

Promoting Food Safety and Entrepreneurial Development in Jefferson County: The Center for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that each year nearly 48 million people get sick from a foodborne illness (CDC.gov). It is my job to ensure youth and adults know the proper food safety and food handling practices to avoid foodborne illness. I teach ServSafe certification courses to help individuals become nationally certified in food safety which helps combat foodborne illnesses.

Experience

Family and Consumer Sciences Agent
UF/IFAS Extension—Jefferson County
2022-present

Extension Program Manager
UF/IFAS Extension—Taylor County
2017-2022

Education & Certifications

ServSafe Instructor & Proctor - 2023

Master of Public Health, Florida State University 2017

Bachelor of Science in Social Sciences, Florida State University 2016