Building individual and family life skills to make positive impacts in our community is the mission of Tennessee Extension Family and Consumer Sciences programs. Autumn Dabbs is the new Hickman County Extension agent with responsibilities for Family and Consumer Sciences programs. She grew up in Perry County. She received a Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees in Family and Consumer Sciences concentration in Dietetics from The University of Tennessee at Martin.

Previously Dabbs worked for Lifecare Center of Columbia for five years as the Director of Food and Nutrition Services. This background trained Dabbs to teach Hickman Countians skills in money management, family communication and parenting, and healthy lifestyle choices.

Since arriving in her new role as Extension agent, Dabbs has focused on building relationships and assessing the needs of the community.

She currently is serving as chair of the Hickman County Health Council, chair of the nutrition subcommittee of the health council, co-chair to the Head Start Policy Council and board member of the Hickman County Chamber of Commerce.

Her two state agenda focus areas for the year are Tennessee Shapes Up and Tennessee Choices for Better Health. Over the past year, Dabbs has conducted several Tennessee Nutrition and Consumer Education Programs (TNCEP) such as Farmers’ Market Fresh, Rudy Raccoon and Eat Smart, Live Strong.

She has conducted classes on Living Well with Chronic Conditions and Take Charge of Your Diabetes at the local senior center. Dabbs also provides education for two Family Community Education Clubs in her county.

UT Extension programs address everyday problems that families face and provide help through research-based education. Dabbs is committed to educating the people of Hickman County with programs that help them make wise decisions related to their health, food, family, and home.
University of Tennessee and Tennessee State University Family and Consumer Science Extension Agents provide educational programs for all ages in a total of five topic areas throughout the state.

**Tennessee Families**
This topic area has helped provide afterschool programming to more than 800 at-risk children across the state, and in those programs, children are presented experiential, “learn by doing” activities. Of participants surveyed:

- **42%** increased math and reading grades by a letter grade at the end of the year
- **39%** increased literacy levels
- **72%** significantly reduced the number of office referrals

**Tennessee Shapes Up**
Increasing fruit and vegetable consumption and decreasing consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks are key outcomes for this program area to help adults and youth in Tennessee improve health. Of participants surveyed:

- **59%** increased vegetable consumption
- **67%** increased fruit consumption
- **35%** decreased sugary drink consumption

**Tennessee Choices for Better Health**
This program area focuses on information that addresses the prevalence of chronic conditions such as obesity, diabetes, arthritis and cancer in Tennessee. Of participants surveyed:

- **70%** have maintained a regular exercise routine
- **55%** have had fewer doctor or emergency room visits
- **92%** plan to get age- and gender-appropriate cancer screenings

**Clean & Healthy Homes**
Because our home environments affect our health, this program area focuses on teaching about hazards, prevention and treatments for asthma, lead poisoning and household injuries. Of participants surveyed:

- **70%** learned how regular housecleaning can reduce health hazards
- **94%** learned the effects of environmental tobacco smoke on children’s health
- **80%** learned the importance of household moisture control

**Tennessee Saves**
Because Tennesseans spend too much and save too little, this program area focuses on financial planning activities like bankruptcy and homebuyer education and high school teacher training. Of participants surveyed:

- **99%** learned how to make a spending plan
- **96%** better understood credit reporting and scoring and wise use of credit
- **97%** increased their overall financial management skills

Programs in agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, family and consumer sciences, and resource development. University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture and county governments cooperating. UT Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.