



ERIE County

ERIE BASIN EXTENSION EDUCATION AND RESEARCH AREA

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STRENGTHENING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

- In 2013, Extension's Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) educator provided **financial outreach** at "Your Job Store" and at the monthly bankruptcy education, New Start.
- Beginning in 2014, OSU Extension in Erie County will provide **homebuyer education**. Homebuyer education can help a potential buyer with everything from solving current housing challenges to preparing for the responsibilities of homeownership. The Ohio Housing Finance Agency requires homebuyer education for anyone obtaining a conventional loan through one of their homeownership loan products or for anyone choosing to take advantage of their Down Payment Assistance or Grants for Grads products. Homebuyer education has been shown to dramatically reduce foreclosure rates, especially among low- and moderate-income families, according to a recent study by Neighborworks America.
- **County-wide nutrition education** helped more than 3,800 residents improve their health. An emphasis on eating whole grains, fruits, vegetables and heart-friendly fats and oils showed participants they can still make appealing food choices while reducing their risk for degenerative disease. A new curriculum introduced by the FCS educator titled "It's Personal: Your Health is in Your Hands" was offered in spring 2013. Fifteen county residents attended five monthly sessions from January through May, learning about chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes and stroke. The "It's Personal" curriculum featured "The 4 Ps" of the personalized medicine initiative: Predict, Prevent, Personalize and Participate.

- As the cornerstone of the U.S. Department of Agriculture nutrition assistance programs, **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed)** plays a vital role in helping to improve nutrition among the nation's low-income individuals. Ohio has been part of this program since 1992, with Erie County being one of 11 pilot counties to launch the program. The upcoming grant year will allow, for the first time ever, the SNAP-Ed OSU Extension program assistant to conduct educational outreach to children in elementary classrooms within the Sandusky City Schools district.

ENHANCING AGRICULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- This was a good year for tree fruit crops, with good weather, adequate rainfall and average to less than average insect and disease pressure. However, significant losses in small fruit crops were seen in brambles due to **spotted wing drosophila (SWD)**. This pest continues to develop as a severe problem for local fruit and vegetable growers. Even with a preventive spray program, significant losses were experienced including loss of contract sales in farm market, wine and baked good markets. Nine traps were monitored in five counties to assist growers in modifying control methods to save crops and making harvest decisions to ensure fruit quality and maximize crop value.
- The Erie County **Master Gardener Volunteers** roster increased to 45 active members. The new class is actively pursuing new volunteer projects within the community. One such project is with the Ohio Veterans Home (OVH), which



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has a greenhouse that has been idle for several years. The home's volunteer coordinator approached the Master Gardeners to explore a horticulture program within OVH that will provide fresh, local food for their cafeteria as well as engage residents in the process of growing these and other crops in the greenhouse. A small hydroponic system was designed as a proof of concept project. As the OVH staff have no horticulture experience, the Master Gardeners are providing mentorship and training to help the project get off the ground.

ADVANCING EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME OPPORTUNITIES

- The Erie County Agriculture and Natural Resources educator continues to partner with the Ohio Nursery and Landscape Association (ONLA) to provide **Pesticide Applicator Training and Recertification** to professional horticulturists in the county and region. Diagnostic walkabouts were expanded to cover the state from Toledo to Columbus, Akron, Cleveland and Sandusky. This partnership is also in the process of creating new training manuals for the garden center and greenhouse industries. This training enhances business opportunities and provides required educational updates for licensed pesticide applicators.

PREPARING YOUTH FOR SUCCESS

- Introducing youth to the opportunities available through the 4-H program was a focus of the **Erie County 4-H marketing blitz**. One aspect of the marketing program included older 4-H youth teaching a program titled "Mystery Mush" in local third-grade classrooms. Through this program, students experienced the essence of 4-H's "learn by doing" philosophy by getting their hands dirty and making a mysterious substance that sometimes acts like a liquid and sometimes acts like a solid. About 500 local students participated in the program and learned about the many things they can experience through 4-H.
- This was the second year that Erie County 4-H held an event specifically for youth with special needs to experience showing an animal at the fair. The event is open to any individual with special needs. Participants register and are then paired with a 4-H member who has an animal at fair. The two meet at the fair prior to the **Animal & Me Show**. Each pair spends time together with their animal. The 4-H members provide knowledge, guidance and hands-on learning about the animal. They teach the participants about the care of the animal and how to show the animal. After the participants have spent time getting to know the member and their animal, the show begins. Together the pair parade around the show ring and present their animal to a judge.

The judge visits with each pair and asks the participants about their animal and asks him/her to demonstrate something they have learned. At the conclusion of the show, every participant receives a trophy for something they did best. This year a total of 14 individuals with special needs participated in the program. Both the participants and the youth mentors benefit from the program. One mentor summed it up well: "It was a really great feeling to share my animal with someone who wouldn't get the chance to experience this. She was so excited to learn about my animal. I can't wait to do this again next year."

Erie County receives \$22,271 in federal funding for nutrition education for low-income people, thanks to Extension's local-state-federal partnership.