ENHANCING AGRICULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- The City of Ravenna, in cooperation with Portage County Extension and the Portage County Regional Planning Commission, was one of three Ohio communities to secure a two-year grant for $85,950 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Farmer’s Market Promotion Grant Program. In May 2012, the Downtown Ravenna Farmer’s Market opened in the U.S. Department of Agriculture-recognized “food desert” within the city of Ravenna. In 2013, the second year, Portage County Extension provided 14 educational programs for market shoppers throughout the season, reaching more than 300 residents on the topics of seasonality of produce, food safety, food label education, food budgeting, nutrition education, food preservation, farm to school and local food system and farm market education.

PREPARING YOUTH FOR SUCCESS

- Supported in part by a grant from the Ohio Soybean Council, five Portage County School classrooms participated in the 2013 chick embryology program using 4-H school enrichment curriculum and a visit from the Extension educator to lead discussions at the end of the project. The five classroom projects hatched seven dozen fertilized specified pathogen-free eggs into chicks. Students studied the chicks’ life cycle, learned how farmers care for their animals and learned about the role animals have in a food system. The program reached 110 students in kindergarten through eighth grade. Teacher evaluations have indicated a strong need for educational resources, such as the 4-H school enrichment curriculum, that meet state standards but offer educators a more creative approach to teaching and learning. Student assessments revealed that 100% of students who participated agreed that they learned the key components of the life cycle. The Portage County 4-H Program School Enrichment Fund provided three of the five classrooms with incubators, curriculum support materials and starter feed; the rest were supplied through the Ohio Soybean Council grant. The Portage County Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources Program, in cooperation with the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (OARDC), sourced the fertilized eggs and connected local producers with the schools.

- Youth ages 5–18 were encouraged to research how to raise and care for a rabbit. The youth then wrote a one-page essay about what they learned, and they entered the essays in a rabbit essay contest. Two children aged 8 and 9 were selected as the winners and were awarded young mini rex rabbits to raise in preparation for a rabbit project the following year. One recipient said he was “excited to spend time with Poppy (his grandfather) building a hutch for the new rabbit.” This proves that quality family time was an added benefit to the project.

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

- Partnering with Stark County Extension and Fame Fathers in Summit County, Portage County is part of a Children, Youth, and Families at Risk (CYFAR) Sustainable Community Project grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture. This five-year...
Portage County receives $45,644 in federal funding for nutrition education for low-income people, thanks to Extension’s local-state-federal partnership.