

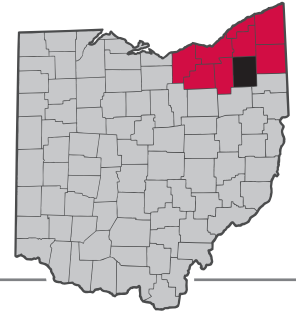


## PORTAGE County

### WESTERN RESERVE EXTENSION EDUCATION AND RESEARCH AREA

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#### 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

grant totaling \$560,000 started in late 2013 and funds the efforts that will address local concerns on the importance of active fathering and the nutritional health of youths and adults.

- The **Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)** is a free program made up of eight lessons designed to help families with children make healthier choices. The lessons are research-based and delivered with an interactive and hands-on approach. Participants increase skills in decision making related to nutrition, stretching food dollars, increasing physical activity, parenting, food safety and resource management. Each lesson includes a food tasting to encourage healthy choice options and recipes. Participants receive weekly educational enhancements that encourage skill implementation outside the classroom.
- EFNEP community partners include Portage County Department of Job and Family Services, Horizon House, Root House, Catholic Charities, Streetsboro Library, GED site, Randolph Library, TOPS, Freedom House and Coleman Professional Services. Working with these partners, OSU Extension EFNEP enrolled 123 adults into the program, impacting 477 family members in Portage County. In addition, EFNEP served four youth.
- The benefits of the program extends into the community. It costs less than \$210 in grant dollars to reach one EFNEP family with three to six months of intensive, practical nutrition education classes. Preliminary results of a cost benefit analysis in Virginia show that for every \$1 spent on EFNEP, there is a potential health care savings of \$2 to \$17 due to the delayed onset of nutrition-related chronic diseases and conditions among participants.

**Portage County receives \$45,644 in federal funding for nutrition education for low-income people, thanks to Extension's local-state-federal partnership.**