

2014 County Highlights



ERIE County

ERIE BASIN EXTENSION EDUCATION AND RESEARCH AREA

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STRENGTHENING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

- Finances are still a matter of concern for residents of Erie County. Regular **financial outreach** at the Ohio Means Jobs unit of Job and Family Services (Get Your Finances Going and Are You Job Ready?) and monthly **bankruptcy education** (New Start) are provided by the Family and Consumer Sciences educator. OSU Extension is also partnering with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to provide **financial training** to agency personnel in an effort to increase financial empowerment to participants of social service programs.
- Homebuyer education**, now available in Erie County, can help a potential buyer solve current housing challenges while 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.
- Countywide **nutrition education** helped over 4,000 residents make improvements to their health. An adult vocational education student shared the following success story: "Saying that your presentation had a profound effect on me would be an understatement. Between education of physiology from the program, a fellow colleague of mine assisting me, and your speech, I have utterly reshaped my

life. I have lost 75 pounds from the day you came in, to this day. I went from 270 to 195 in a few months by running 20 miles a week and leading a vegan lifestyle. I just figured you'd like to know that you helped add 20-plus years onto my life! Thank you."

- As the cornerstone of the USDA nutrition assistance programs, the goal of **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed)** is to improve the likelihood that persons eligible for SNAP (food stamps) will make healthy choices within a limited budget and choose active lifestyles consistent with the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans and MyPlate. Ohio has been part of this national program since 1992. The SNAP-Ed program assistant provides educational outreach to children in elementary classrooms, as well as to low-income adult participants of varied social service organizations. Participant feedback includes statements such as "our family is eating more fruits and vegetables." Nearly 900 Erie County residents participated in one of 60 classes taught by Extension's SNAP-Ed program.

ENHANCING AGRICULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- "Moderate to poor" describes the 2014 year for yields in some important fruit crops in the region. Winter temperatures resulted in close to a 100 percent loss of the blackberry crop, and a total loss of the local peach crop. Apple and pear crops were unaffected, but there was early ripening of some varieties. This office cooperated with FSA on a **federal program (TAP)** to provide funds for tree



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removal and replacement due to winter temperatures. The program required certification of loss, which was done through Erie County Extension for regional growers.

- Erie County Extension continued to monitor for spotted wing drosophila (SWD) activity. This year it was part of a larger study, with the data being collected for state and regional research. This year we also monitored brown marmorated stinkbug activity in orchards; this is a newer pest to our area that can cause significant damage to fruit, vegetable and ornamental crops. **Monitoring for new invasive pests** reduces crop losses and can prevent application of unneeded pesticides.
- The Erie County **Master Gardeners** roster has increased to 48 active members providing over 2,070 hours of service to the surrounding community. Projects include landscape information programs for the public, continuing education programs for Master Gardener Volunteers, youth education at local schools, and service work at the Sandusky Greenhouse. A hydroponic vegetable production at the Ohio Veterans Home (OVH) yielded its first crop of greens this year, providing several gallons of fresh greens that were used in the OVH kitchen for resident's meals.

- Research shows that youth who volunteer just one hour a week are 50 percent less likely to abuse drugs, alcohol, or cigarettes, or to engage in destructive behavior. Research also tells us that youth who participate in youth development and youth leadership experiences are more likely to do well in school, be involved in their community, and positively transition through adolescence to adulthood. In **Erie County 4-H**, youth have many opportunities to be leaders and develop leadership skills. When youth serve as leaders, the community benefits too. Teen leaders involved in 4-H as camp counselors, Junior Fair Board members, Marketing Awareness team members and 4-H CARTEENS instructors provided approximately 3,230 volunteer hours in 2014. Using the Ohio minimum wage rate of \$7.95 an hour, their contribution of volunteer hours translated to \$25,655 of service to Erie County.

Erie County receives \$34,249 in federal funding for nutrition education for low-income people, thanks to Extension's local-state-federal partnership.

ADVANCING EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME OPPORTUNITIES

- In cooperation with other Agriculture and Natural Resources educators, Erie County provided over 1,200 hours of **Pesticide Applicator Recertification** to regional farmers. Diagnostic training for commercial horticulture businesses was again provided through diagnostic walkabouts. This year a new location was added to the series, and we trained over 170 people in plant and pest diagnostics and proper selection and application of pesticides. The Agriculture and Natural Resources educator is currently working on a training curriculum for ornamental horticulture fertilizer application certification.

PREPARING YOUTH FOR SUCCESS

- "Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn." This Benjamin Franklin quote describes the Erie County 4-H approach to **STEM programming**. This year's Cloverbud Day Camp participants (ages 5–8) got hands on with giant bubbles, rockets and water to learn about gravity and force. Kids learned while being enclosed in a giant bubble and launching rockets with just air pressure and water. Participants were introduced to the concepts of altitude and velocity. Attendance for the camp increased 58 percent from the previous year.