

2014 County Highlights



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 USDA's Farmer's Market Promotion Grant Program. Portage County Extension provided educational programs for market shoppers throughout the season, teaching 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 Schools classrooms participated in the 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 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 animals' role in the food system. The program reached over 100 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. Assessments revealed that 100 percent 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.

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 USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture.
- Portage County receives \$30,577 in federal funding for nutrition education for low-income people, thanks to Extension's local-state-federal partnership grant totaling \$560,000. It 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, 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



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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, and Head Start. Working with these partners, OSU Extension EFNEP impacted 567 family members in Portage County. Graduates significantly increased knowledge and improved behaviors in diet quality (92 percent), food resource management (84 percent), and food safety (47 percent), resulting in healthier choices in Portage County.
- A Head Start program organized a father's nutrition education EFNEP class. One father from the group is married and has children ranging in ages from toddlers to teenagers. The EFNEP father works with troubled youth in a residential setting and he is a foster parent. This busy father was amazed by the change that EFNEP made in his food choices.
- The benefits of the program extend 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.

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