

2014 County Highlights



ROSS County

OHIO VALLEY EXTENSION EDUCATION AND RESEARCH AREA

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PREPARING YOUTH FOR SUCCESS

- Preventing Youth Offenders:** Almost 25 percent of Ohio's serious crimes are committed by 15- to 19-year-olds. Research shows that youth who volunteer just one hour a week are 50 percent less likely to abuse drugs, alcohol, cigarettes or engage in destructive behavior. In Ross County, 125 teen leaders are involved in 4-H as camp counselors, Junior Fair Board members, Junior Leaders club members, and 4-H CARTEENS instructors. These youth provided over 6,470 hours of volunteer service in 2014.
- Camp Counseling:** 4-H Camp Counselor Training provided teens with 24 hours of training in youth development, leadership, program-planning, teaching, risk management and communication skills. Teens participated in activities that helped them understand their roles as camp counselors; other activities helped the teens establish reliable work habits. The 48 teens who participated in the training not only hosted a successful camping experience for 278 campers, but also became more prepared to respond to the demands of continued education and/or the workforce.
- Traditional 4-H Club Volunteerism:** In 2014, 379 adults volunteered 22,135 hours working with the 4-H youth development program as club advisors, Junior Fair Livestock Superintendents, Quality Assurance Training trainers, clinicians and program teachers. The estimated value of these volunteer hours totals \$499,144. Additionally, 1,841 youth from 1,204 families engaged in formal and informal volunteering activities through their clubs and 4-H projects. According to the "Doing Good Is Good for You: UnitedHealth Group 2013 Health and Volunteering Study,"

the entire nature of the Ross County 4-H program promotes volunteerism; improves physical, mental and emotional well-being; reduces stress levels; and creates a deeper connection with the community.

- Enriching the Classroom Experience:** Interactive science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) programming enhanced 32 Ross County classroom curriculums. These activities not only empowered youth to increase their applied math skills, but also helped them work on their problem-solving, reading and writing skills as they completed the exercises.

ENHANCING AGRICULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- On-Farm Research Plots:** Working closely with cattle producers in Ross County, OSU Extension conducted research examining the effectiveness of RyzUp SmartGrass (Valent) at different application times to increase yields in pasture production. Using a replicated random plot design, the research showed that the product increased pasture yields by approximately 200 pounds per acre. The research also showed that too early of an application can have a negative effect on pasture growth. Ross County has 22,000 acres of pasture, which means this research could increase production by more than 2,500 tons of hay equivalents or \$150,000 annually.
- Grain Marketing Education:** Ninety six farmers from Ross and surrounding counties participated in a five-week grain marketing course delivered through distance learning. The course used grain marketing simulation software during



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which every participant had the same number of bushels to sell, but participants' sales income ranged from \$363,119 to \$519,262—a difference of \$156,143. Feedback from participants indicated they learned how to develop a grain marketing plan based on the financial risk capacity of their individual farm businesses.

ADVANCING EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME OPPORTUNITIES

- **Risk Management Education:** Thirty young and beginning farmers participated in a five-session workshop on risk management for family farms. Topics included risk management strategies for financial management, grain marketing, crop budgeting, legal issues on the farm and succession planning. Knowledge was gained on all topics with the greatest gain reported on steps to increase legal enforceability of a lease, and Limited Liability Company benefits and limitations.

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

- **Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP):** OSU Extension helps adults with children in limited-income Ross County homes to make healthier, safer and more budget-friendly food choices through EFNEP. After completing this eight-week series of classes, 88 percent of program participants had improved in one or more nutrition practice and had improved their food resource management practices (such as planning meals in advance or shopping with a grocery list).
- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistant Program Education (SNAP-Ed):** OSU Extension worked with 1,316 limited-income Ross County adults who participated in 167 SNAP-Ed classes in 2014. Six hundred youth at Summer Food Service Program feeding sites participated in 42 programs to improve both their physical activity and their use of MyPlate to make food choices. Pre- and post-evaluation with adult participants found that 64 percent are now using food labels to choose whole grain foods, and 78 percent have improved their use of MyPlate to make food choices on a limited budget when shopping.
- **Live Healthy, Live Well:** Utilizing social media, OSU Extension led three six-week online wellness challenges with over 590 adults from Ross County participating in 2014. Twice-weekly email messages encouraged respondents to increase their physical activity, improve their diet, purchase local foods and use coping techniques to reduce stress. Evaluations reported 79 percent of participants adopted one or more of the recommended practices to reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases, and 95 percent maintained or

lost weight. Participants commonly reported improved habits after completing a wellness challenge, as can be gleaned from the following participant comment: “By changing to more fruits and vegetables and walking every day, I had less time for junk food and have lost five pounds.”

- **Dining with Diabetes:** Increasing numbers of Ohioans each year need diabetes education programs to help manage and control the costly disease. The American Diabetes Association reports that diabetes costs Ohioans over \$5.9 billion in both medical costs and indirect costs such as absenteeism and lost productivity. Ross County Extension Family and Consumer Sciences responded by offering a series of three Dining with Diabetes classes and a new “Take Charge of Your Diabetes During the Holidays” class for Ross County residents during 2014. Participants of the Dining with Diabetes classes reported learning how to read food labels and learning new ways to reduce the “carbs” in their diets. Comments from these participants include, “I made the healthier foods we discussed in class, and my family loved them” and “I’m watching the salt in my diet more.”

Ross County receives \$123,400 in federal funding for nutrition education for low-income people, thanks to Extension's local-state-federal partnership.