

2014 County Highlights



WILLIAMS County

MAUMEE VALLEY EXTENSION EDUCATION AND RESEARCH AREA

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ENHANCING AGRICULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- The Williams County Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources educator has been working with a **Great Lakes Cover Crops Initiative grant** for three consecutive years. The work is focused on improving soil health by using no-till and cover crops with 42 area farmers who have planted more than 7,000 acres of cover crops following a cash crop. Farmers responding to a survey indicate a 54 percent increase in soil structure and crop yields after planting cover crops over the past three years. Improving soil structure helps with water infiltration that reduces surface water runoff and erosion, and improves overall plant health and fertility. Research from Michigan State University, one of the grant sponsors, states that using no-till with cover crops will reduce soil erosion by 340 pounds per acre and will reduce phosphorous runoff by 0.34 pounds per acre. This project, in 2013, would have reduced 1,200 tons of sediment and 1.2 tons of phosphorous from going into the Western Lake Erie Watershed. Funding from the Ohio Livestock Coalition allowed the Williams County Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources educator to organize and present additional information to agriculture business leaders on soil health and phosphorous. The Conservation Tillage Technology Conference provided a grant to test the hypothesis that breaking the stem of cereal rye by rolling it is better than chemical control for killing it after planting. The Williams County Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources educator, in collaboration with the Williams County Soil and Water Conservation District, is monitoring the test plot, and results are soon to follow.
- **Water quality** was the issue for programs in natural resources. The importance of water-testing for private well owners, water quality for owners of ponds, and the issue of water circulation in maple trees has been on the forefront. Well water-testing continues as less than one percent of wells in Williams County have currently been tested. Testing reports show arsenic is lower than EPA requirements, according to Dr. Anne Baird of the OSU Extension "Know Your Well Water" program. Water quality issues in ponds ranging from the application of the correct aquatic herbicide to concerns about algal blooms were addressed at the annual pond clinic, and Williams County residents' questions were answered by the Williams County Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources educator throughout the season.
- **Verticillium wilt**, which restricts the flow of water through the xylem of the maple tree, was identified but not confirmed in maple trees scattered through yards in Williams County. The specialists will monitor this issue through next spring for its impact on tree survival through the winter and the effect on canopy-thinning. The potential development of this condition in woodlots throughout the county will be of concern to the **Northwest Ohio Maple Syrup Producers** who produce an estimated 800 gallons of syrup each spring valued at over \$32,000 retail. Local maple syrup producers also offer to adults and children several different learning opportunities through the Youth Maple Educational Day and the Maple Syrup Festival each spring, where participants learn about evaporation of maple sap into syrup.



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- Gardening—whether landscaping for beauty around the home or growing vegetables for better health—is still an important activity in Williams County. In response to many questions, the Williams County Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources educator organized both the **Williams County Master Gardener program** for beginning individuals as well as the **Williams County Alumni Master Gardener program** for continuing education classes. The alumni members, under the direction of the Williams County Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources educator and the volunteer coordinator, organized this year's calendar for continuing education opportunities, trips and work hours. Through their efforts, both groups gave back to the county over 360 hours of volunteer time worth \$7,560 at \$21 per hour.
- In 2014, 94 students in Montpelier School District completed **Real Money, Real World**. This program allowed youth to select a career and live on regional average income rates while they made real-life decisions associated with housing, eating, travel, family life and other unexpected expenses for living on their own.
- **4-H CARTEENS** allows 4-H teen leaders to teach their peers about safe driving practices. First-time teen traffic offenders attending this program have typically been cited for speeding, stop sign violations, reckless operation or other similar moving violations. CARTEENS program topics include excessive speed, driving under the influence, seat belt safety use, consequences of unsafe decisions, dealing with peer pressure, understanding traffic law, and recognizing and reacting to traffic signs and signals. The Northwest Ohio 4-H CARTEENS program is a collaborative effort with representatives from Williams, Fulton, Henry and Defiance counties. In 2014, 38 youth from Williams County completed this course.

PREPARING YOUTH FOR SUCCESS

- One hundred twenty-seven adult volunteers were enrolled and trained by the **4-H youth development program** coordinator to organize and manage 24 community 4-H Clubs and serve as role models to the youth enrolled in 4-H. Thirteen new volunteers completed background checks and interviews to become new 4-H advisors. All volunteer advisors participated in at least one workshop to learn club management skills and youth development knowledge to enhance their volunteer service.
- One hundred six youth, ages 9–13, participated in Williams County **Junior Camp**, and 32 youth, ages 5–8, participated in **Cloverbud Camp** at 4-H Camp Palmer. Thirty-five youth were recruited and trained to serve as camp counselors and role models. Participants learned life skills for independent living.
- In 2014, 321 Williams County Junior Fair youth completed **Quality Assurance Training**. Participants learned proper identification of animals, recordkeeping and livestock drug use practices to produce marketable animals and animal byproducts for human consumption.
- In 2014, 321 youth participating in livestock projects completed an animal Skillathon station during the **annual livestock interviews**. As a result, youth were more prepared for showmanship questions at the county fair.
- In 2014, 586 youth were recruited and enrolled in a community **4-H Club**. These youth enrolled in a total of 1,021 4-H projects. An additional 215 youth were reached through special interest activities conducted by OSU Extension educators. Youth learned life skills and subject matter in team-building, agronomy, livestock husbandry, safety and natural resources.