

2015 County Highlights

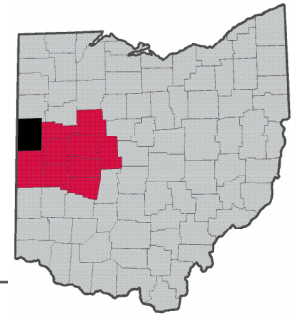
Mercer County

Top of Ohio Extension Education and Research Area

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ENHANCING AGRICULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- Providing educational requirements for farmers to meet Ohio Department of Agriculture licensing and certification requirements is a major focus for the county. Sixty-two farmers were recertified for their private pesticide license, and 143 completed Fertilizer Applicator Certification Training. A private pesticide license testing workshop helped 14 individuals prepare for testing in the core, grain, and cereal crops; and in the forage and livestock categories. Thirteen farmers completed the Animal Mortality Composting Certification requirements.
- Mercer County dairy production ranks second in the state in cattle numbers and milk production, so emphasis was placed on promoting the county dairy industry. A regional dairy meeting was hosted, helping 32 farmers prepare their dairy for the future. The program revisited the Dairy Margin Protection Program of the 2014 Farm Bill, emphasized best practices for quality milk production and included a milk quality audit at a local dairy farm. Also, a dairy housing tour was conducted with eight participants visiting five county dairy farms.
- Vegetable gardening is increasing in popularity in the county. A series of five classes was held for 26 participants. Classes emphasized practices to improve gardening success and satisfaction. Class topics covered soils and soil testing, plant nutrients and fertilizers, garden insects and diseases, backyard composting, and end of season best management practices for the garden. The National Plant Diagnostic Network First Detector Training Course was completed by the educator to assist in responding to over 78 inquiries and concerns pertaining to gardening and home horticulture concerns.
- The 15-member Agriculture and Natural Resources Advisory Committee held two meetings. Progress on department goals were evaluated, and new goals were established to continue meeting the program mission.

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

- The incidence of diabetes has continued to increase in Ohio, with nearly 1 in 10 having been diagnosed with the disease. To address this issue, OSU Extension collaborated with Mercer Health Community Hospital to provide a Dining with Diabetes class series consisting of diabetic education and cooking demonstrations. The participants reported making positive changes to manage their diabetes.
- Adjudicated youth from the Mercer County Juvenile Court learned to make healthy food choices and prepare healthy meals and snacks through a six-week cooking series. The students developed positive interpersonal relationships, leadership skills and life skills to become productive citizens.
- There is continual concern about the safety of our food supply. To ensure safe food, the National Restaurant Association's ServSafe training programs were completed by 107 food service managers and staff representing multiple county schools, health care facilities and restaurants. Participants reported an increased knowledge in the safe handling of food to prevent foodborne illness.
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed), a USDA grant-funded program, started in August in the county. The program provided nutrition education programs for 134 youth in 17 programs.

PREPARING YOUTH FOR SUCCESS

- An all-time record number of 236 4-H members, ages 9 to 12, enjoyed traditional camping activities during resident camp. The activity, held over two concurrent weeks, also featured the Water Windmill Challenge. This STEM-based engineering activity simulated the construction of a windmill capable of supporting generators while pumping ground water. The campers worked in teams of two to four people. The "winning" entry weighed 118 grams while supporting the necessary weight load. This effort was sponsored by a grant from the Monsanto Corporation.



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- Leadership in action could be witnessed in every department comprising the Junior Fair, as 44 teen Junior Fair Board members planned and conducted a variety of events during the annual Junior Fair.
- Five hundred nine livestock exhibitors completed record books and participated in a four-part Skillathon activity held prior to the fair. The Skillathon reinforced information presented to this audience at the spring livestock Quality Assurance Training sessions.
- One hundred eighty-six 4-H adult and teen volunteers completed required training about recognizing and reporting suspected child abuse and neglect.
- Eight hundred thirty-two special-interest 4-H projects were exhibited at the Junior Fair, at a completion rate of 93.99 percent. One thousand fifteen head of livestock were shown with the largest participation in the swine and rabbit departments.
- Sixty-three poultry exhibitors made the best of a disappointing fair season. With a statewide ban on exhibition of all fowl in Ohio, these exhibitors participated in an avian bowl, a multidivision cooking contest, a Skillathon and an educational display competition instead of the traditional poultry show with live birds. The cooking contest was such a big success that the plan is to repeat that event in 2016 even if birds are allowed back at the fair!
- Eighteen teens travelled to Flathead County, Montana, as a part of the long-standing tradition of Interstate 4-H Exchanges in Mercer County.