

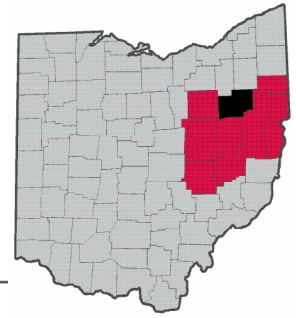
# 2015 County Highlights

## Stark County

### Crossroads Extension Education and Research Area

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### ENHANCING AGRICULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- Helping Stark County residents maintain their business income, jobs and family farms as well as increase environmental quality while ensuring employee and public safety, the Stark County Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources program provided more than 70 private applicators with recertification and continuing education.
- Stark County Extension and the Stark County Educational Services Center, representing 12 Stark County school districts, joined forces to introduce the Farm to School program to Stark County with a 2015 USDA Farm to School program-planning grant awarded in the amount of \$48,831. The project works with over 36,000 students across participating school districts to connect food, farms, schools and communities in a collaborative effort that establishes a consistent and sustainable plan for local foods procurement, nutrition, wellness, healthy choices, food system education and community food literacy. This service grant was one of 82 projects spanning 42 states that received funding.
- Widening concerns over water quality and recurring harmful algal blooms led to the creation of the new agricultural Fertilizer Applicator Certification Training program for producers applying commercial fertilizer on more than 50 acres of farmland. Stark County Extension contributed by training approximately 25 new fertilizer applicators and 50 private pesticide applicators in two separate educational programs in 2015. Ninety percent of participants reported that a) their knowledge about nutrient management was improved and b) they recognized that farm field phosphorus loss is a significant problem to our water resources.
- Stark County Extension works cooperatively with 11 other counties in the area to coordinate the East Ohio Women in Agriculture Conference. Conference participants (137), speakers, and vendors representing 27 counties participated in the daylong event held at the Kent State University, Tuscarawas Campus. The event consisted of 12 breakout

sessions covering four tracks: “Business and Finance,” “Production: Made/Grown,” “Production: Entrepreneurial,” and “Production: and Family and Community.” Seven of the sessions were taught by OSU Extension educators/specialists, and five sessions were taught by individuals or panels of professionals and agribusiness women. Ninety-six percent of participant evaluations demonstrated positive comments. For example, along with suggestions for future conference tracks and topics, one participant shared the following comment, “(I) Love this conference. It’s better each year!”

- Master Gardener Volunteers help Extension share research-based information with all types of gardeners and local residents through the Garden Information Line. The line is available to all county residents one day per week, March through October. In 2015, a mobile garden information line was utilized at eight farmers’ markets across the county to extend the reach of services. Over 70 volunteers serving this line delivered over 200 hours of service. More than 100 calls, emails, and walk-ins were assisted with home horticulture questions and extended educational outreach. Heirloom Seed Library is a collaborative project of the Stark County District Library Main. Master Gardener Volunteers secure seed donations from certified seed companies. The volunteers then sorted and labeled donated seeds into seed packets for distribution. Additional education is provided by Master Gardener Volunteers who instruct gardening and seed-saving programs offered through the library. In 2015, over 12,000 seed packets were distributed by the project and utilized for growing by the Stark County community and library patrons.

### PREPARING YOUTH FOR SUCCESS

- More than 1,290 youth experienced hands-on learning through more than 60 4-H Clubs and 4-H activity groups during which the youth participated in more than 2,250 projects and activities. The 4-H experience also provided a “safe, fun and educational environment.”



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- Life skills, problem-solving and decision-making techniques were fostered through the guidance of more than 188 dedicated volunteers, donating more than 90,000 volunteer hours. These 4-H volunteers help prepare our “leaders of tomorrow” to become productive, competent, caring and capable young adults.
- More than 635 youth completed Quality Assurance Training, a requirement for Stark County Junior Fair participation in market and lactating project areas. This program enabled 4-H and FFA youth to participate in the 2015 Junior Fair livestock auction, which provided Stark County with a record of \$854,406 in sales. This money was then reinvested locally by Stark County 4-H and FFA youth.
- More than 54 youth successfully completed the required horse safety and ethics program. The program was planned at the county committee level. Importance of safety, ethics and good sportsmanship were topics emphasized.
- WeGrill, a five-year USDA/CYFAR grant, started in late 2013. WeGrill funds the efforts that will address local concerns about the importance of active fathering and the nutritional health of targeted youths and adults in Stark County. More than 20 fathers and youth participated in a data collection activity to assist in designing the WeGrill project to meet the needs of participants in Stark and other counties throughout our project efforts and beyond. The project was implemented in communities during November and December 2015. Twenty fathers and adolescents were recruited to participate in hands-on learning activities to incorporate the following topics: awareness, responsibility, decisions and connections. Each of the main topics had a number of themes that were introduced and interwoven throughout. Themes included compassion, commitment, forgiveness, gratitude, identity, leadership, preparation, responsibility and respect.

## STRENGTHENING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

- Obesity, poor nutrition and physical inactivity disproportionately affect minority and low-income citizens. Of the estimated 375,432 residents living in Stark County, 19.4 percent of families with children live in poverty. In an effort to reduce this disparity and improve the health and well-being of Ohioans, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) teaches an eight-lesson nutrition education series to low-income families with children. EFNEP, funded by USDA-NIFA, contributed \$75,000 this year to our county, funding 2.5 FTE staff in the Stark County Extension office. In 2015, a total of 1,233 family members were impacted by EFNEP. The 166 graduates significantly increased knowledge and improved behaviors

in diet quality (86 percent), food resource management (78 percent), and food safety (44 percent), resulting in Stark County residents making healthier choices. Chronic diseases are largely preventable through a healthy lifestyle involving a balanced diet and regular physical activity. Over half of graduates increased their physical activity levels and fruit and vegetable consumption upon completing EFNEP. A total of 1,136 second grade through twelfth grade youth participated in EFNEP in 2015. After completing six lessons (100 lessons taught), youth reported significant increases in knowledge and positive behavior changes in the areas of diet quality (87 percent), food safety (61 percent) and physical activity (48 percent).

- EFNEP community partners include Alliance Children and Family, 12 INC., Pathway Caring for Children, Carnation Child Care, Genoa Elementary, Genoa YMCA, Hartford Middle School, JRC Learning Center, Alliance Head Start, Crenshaw Elementary, Lighthouse Ministries, Interfaith Childcare, Walker Elementary, Massillon YMCA, Lexington Elementary, Deliverance House, Refuge of Hope, William Mallory Center Head Start, Early Childhood Resource Center, Ohio Means Jobs, Kid’s Country, Glenbeigh, Domestic Violence Project, Alliance Christian Center, Sherrick Road Church, Child and Adolescent Garden Group, Project Rebuild, R.G. Drage, Alliance Navigators, RTC, Schreiber Elementary, Walker Elementary, Fairless Elementary, Webb Garden, Quest Recovery, Live Well Stark County, Sherrick Road Parent Group, Alliance High School, and Summit Academy.

**Stark County receives \$80,658 in federal funding for nutrition education for low-income people, thanks to Extension’s local-state-federal partnership.**