

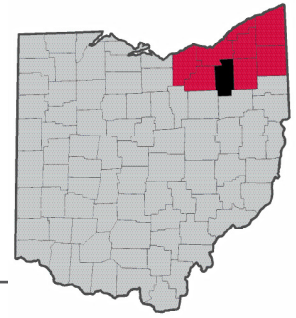
2015 County Highlights

Summit County

Western Reserve Extension Education and Research Area

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STRENGTHENING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

- Obesity, poor nutrition and physical inactivity disproportionately affect minority and low-income citizens. Of the estimated 541,824 residents living in Summit County, 10.9 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 \$80,000 this year to our county, funding 4.4 FTE staff in the OSU Extension office. In 2014, a total of 1,165 families were impacted by EFNEP. The 177 graduates significantly increased knowledge and improved behaviors in diet quality (91 percent), food resource management (91 percent), and food safety (71 percent), resulting in Summit 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 974 kindergarten through twelfth grade youth participated in EFNEP in 2014. After completing six lessons, youth reported significant increases in knowledge and positive behavior changes in the areas of diet quality (79 percent), food safety (50 percent), and physical activity (36 percent).
- RD is a young mother of two, currently bettering herself and her family by residing in a women's recovery house. She is eager to return home. She began attending EFNEP nutrition classes while engaged in recovery. She attended weekly EFNEP classes. After taking the classes, she learned that energy drinks were not the best healthy choice. She began drinking water. She also learned to read food labels during classes. By using the Nutrition Facts Label, RD

has been able to make healthy decisions for her and her family. Similarly, RD has been using the EFNEP cookbook to make fruit smoothies with the blender. RD has also been sharing the different deals she got at the grocery store by comparing unit prices.

- EFNEP staff members have active partnerships with 19 community organizations at multiple sites.

ENHANCING AGRICULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- Twenty-five new volunteers participated in training to become Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalists (OCVNs). OCVNs give back to the community by volunteering to teach environmental programs for parks, arboretums and museums.
- Over 130 seasoned Master Gardener Volunteers offered gardening advice and programming to thousands of community members through the horticultural hotline, farmers' market and fair booths, and large-scale public programming. Additionally, all active Master Gardener Volunteers participated in Child Abuse Recognition and Reporting training.
- During spring and summer 2015, 180 youth and adults participated in programs focused on sustainable gardening practices. Program topics included invasive species, pollinators and beneficial insects, and garden photography.
- The Master Gardener Volunteers are lifelong learners. They serve our community by promoting gardening education and service. Our 121 active members, 26 interns and 25 emeritus members contributed 8,031 volunteer hours, documented 3,223 continuing education hours and drove over 65,000 miles to provide support to county residents.
- In addition to the horticultural hotline service, Master Gardener Volunteers conducted 15 public educational programs at multiple sites including those at garden centers, farmers' markets at seven different locations and more.



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- The Master Gardener Volunteers funded four “partner grants” to elementary, middle and high schools as well as to The University of Akron.
- The Master Gardener Volunteers are preparing to host the State Master Gardener Conference in 2016.
- Summit County Extension is pleased to have a growing relationship with new and existing 4-H Clubs that serve youth with special needs. The individualization and flexibility of 4-H Clubs and projects has been a benefit and a joy to more than 30 Summit County youth, families and schools!

PREPARING YOUTH FOR SUCCESS

- Summit County 4-H provides youth opportunities for nontraditional learning experiences that develop the 4-H's: Head (knowledge); Heart (development of personal relationships and providing service to others); Hands (physical skills that come from learning by doing); and Health (an understanding and respect for the physical and mental health of others and self).
- In a highly urbanized county, it is sometimes a challenge to build traditional 4-H Clubs, which are historically connected to agriculture. We still boast 27 clubs with over 400 youth participants and 120 screened and trained adult volunteers. Our 4-H members participate in community service, develop leadership skills, and gain skills and knowledge in self-selected, project-based learning. (See **projectcentral.ohio4h.org** and the *Ohio 4-H Family Guide* online at **ohio4h.org/families/family-guide** for more information.)
- Summit County 4-H school enrichment programs engaged thousands of students in two hands-on science experiences: ChickQuest (a study of egg embryology growth and development culminating in hatching chicken eggs) and Rockets Away! (a study of force and motion culminating in rocket building and launching). All third and fifth graders in the Akron Public School District, and all third graders in the Coventry Public School District love these exciting learning experiences!
- 2015 presented two exceptional opportunities for learning and growth.
- In 2015, the threat of HPAI (bird flu) curtailed youth participation in poultry projects at the county fair. The Summit County Agricultural Society, the Ohio Department of Agriculture, the Ohio Poultry Association and Summit County 4-H collaborated to use this opportunity to help youth understand, reinforce and implement good biosecurity practices. Youth were also taught about personal responsibility and the fragility of our food systems.
- A new Child Protection Policy was implemented at The Ohio State University in 2015. Locally, this required the training of all OSU Extension volunteers and staff in the understanding, identification and reporting of suspected child abuse. What an incredible opportunity to help protect children!

Summit County receives \$198,991 in federal funding for nutrition education for low-income people, thanks to Extension's local-state-federal partnership.