



# Allen County

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## 2008 County Highlights

### Preparing Youth for Success

- **Youth Leadership**—Fifty-six older youth learned lifetime skills such as problem solving, communications, and confrontation management through 4-H Camp and Junior Fair Board. Fourteen camp counselors provided guidance, programming, and support for over 120 campers at Camp Palmer, a 20% increase in campers over 2007. Over 90% of campers indicated they learned something new and would return to camp next year. A new leadership opportunity, CARTEENS, will begin in 2009 as a peer-led driver education course for juvenile traffic offenders.
- **School Programming**—Our 4-H educator provided school enrichment programming to help ten county schools meet state standards. Topics covered included electricity, chick embryology, weather, leadership, science, agriculture, and self-discovery. He also partnered with three urban elementary schools in Lima to teach in their afterschool program biweekly to over 180 children, over half of whom are from diverse and low-income families. This curriculum teaches youth how agriculture touches their everyday lives.
- **4-H Volunteer Activities**—A total of 208 volunteers developed educational opportunities for 1,112 youth in 64 clubs. Volunteers also assisted youth to help complete 3,128 projects, which is a 50% increase from 2007. Our 4-H programming reached 3,693 youth through traditional clubs and school programming. This means that about 20% of Allen County youth have had a connection to the Allen County 4-H program compared to 12% in 2007.
- **Social Networking**—About 87% of youth 12–18 communicate on online social networks and the Allen County 4-H educator is researching the trend to determine how youth are using MySpace and Facebook. Only 30% of Ohio 4-H youth professionals understand that social networking can be used to communicate with today's youth if used positively in appropriate settings. Findings have been presented at international, national, and state conferences, as well as to a local university and 4-H youth. This research is currently being shared and taught in twenty states and three countries. In addition, the 4-H educator serves on a 20-member National 4-H Council Advisory board for new online social networking software called 4-H Access. The goal is to reach 1.7 million new youth with this software.
- **Real Money, Real World**—Real Money, Real World is an active, hands-on experience that gives young people the opportunity to make lifestyle and budget choices similar

to those they will make as adults. This experience helped some 900 Allen County middle and high school students to explore careers and realize the importance of family budgeting and how today's consumer economy works. More than 95% of the students felt this simulation gave them a new appreciation for saving money and for real world responsibilities. After completing the exercise, students stated: "I learned entertainment and clothes should be the last concern on my list." "I think that now I will be convinced to save my money and be financially ready before having kids." "I want to have a plan when I get older. And I want to further my education so I can get a good job and be able to cover all costs."

- **Science Education Outdoors**—The Children's Garden, designated a "Monarch Waystation," provides milkweeds, nectar plants, and shelter for monarchs throughout their annual cycle of reproduction and migration, conserving monarchs and ensuring the continuation of the monarch migration in North America.

### Strengthening Families and Communities

- **Successful Co-Parenting**—The dissolution of a marriage is stressful for all involved but if handled carefully by loving parents, sensitive teachers, and concerned relatives, many of the ill effects of divorce can be minimized. By attending a court-mandated parenting class, divorcing parents better understand the importance of communication and interaction with their former spouse for the sake of their children. After attending the class, more than 88% have planned to improve the way they interact with their children by giving them more emotional support, putting aside their own feelings and providing better stability to help children better adjust to the divorce.
- **Skin Damage Viewing**—As the #1 cancer in the United States, skin cancer kills more than 20 people each day. Skin damage viewing provided by OSU Extension partnering with the Melanoma Research Foundation and Carter's Crusade allowed participants to see their skin under special lighting that shows damaged areas. More than 300 families participated in skin damage viewing and sun safety education provided at industry health fairs. An industry physician was on hand to answer medical questions and referred many for additional medical testing.
- **Financial Education**—New Start, the debtor education class that must be taken after filing and before a bankruptcy is discharged, is being taught in Allen County. With referrals from local bankruptcy attorneys and the Consumer Credit Counseling Service, the curriculum

covers developing a spending plan, basic money management, wise use of credit, and accessing consumer information. In addition, Allen County Extension has worked with L.A.C.C.A. teaching “Managing Your Money in a Just Getting By World.” The four-week class taught participants the value of budgeting, understanding credit reports, and how to better manage money. As a result of this class, one participant saved \$2,000 and enrolled in a first-time homeowners program.

- **Healthy Families**—The Family Nutrition Program presents nutrition education classes to limited income participants throughout the county, reaching more than 800 families. With the majority of the clientele being mothers with young children, the focus this year has been on healthy eating habits and increasing physical activity to prevent childhood obesity. Local health fairs are helping to provide information on healthy eating choices and lifestyle changes to a broader audience.

### Enhancing Agriculture and the Environment

- **Master Gardeners**—Master Gardeners of Allen County logged more than 2,300 hours of horticulture-related educational activities in 2008 serving 3,619 people. Projects included The Children’s Garden, Art of Gardening Seminar, Farm Discovery Days, Brown Bag Series, Go Green Garden, Spencerville Environmental Learning Center, and Allen County Fairgrounds Entrance. The Allen County Master Gardeners were awarded more than \$7,200 in grant monies and donations to continue to provide educational and horticulture classes for children and adults.
- **Buckeye Yard and Garden Line (BYGL) Newsletter**—Green industry professionals, master gardeners, consumers, and Extension educators must keep informed about current horticultural problems, such as insects and diseases. BYGL provides timely horticultural information to the above constituents by publishing within two days from the time information is collected to provide “real time” feedback to the readers. Twenty-eight issues of BYGL were produced in 2008 with 96% of readers finding BYGL useful. Within that group, 71% report BYGL helped in answering client questions, 60% changed horticultural practices based on BYGL information, 61% changed pest management practices, and 55% report that information from BYGL resulted in improved customer service. Almost half (46%) of respondents to an end-of-year survey reported saving money or increased profit in their business by using information from BYGL. Of this group, 20% report up to \$500 in savings/profit, 40% report up to \$500–\$1,000 in savings/profit, 31% report up to \$1,000–\$5,000 in savings/profit, 5% report up to \$5,000–\$10,000 in savings/profit, and 4% report over \$10,000 in savings/profit.
- **Crop Observation and Recommendation Network (CORN) Newsletter**—The CORN Newsletter provides a weekly vehicle for timely crop production information to reach Ohio’s farmers and agronomic industry with forty to forty-one issues published annually. Survey work indicates that the CORN newsletter is an important component for producers and consultants in making timely crop management decisions. In Allen County, 114 farmers and agri-business professionals receive CORN directly from the Extension office and many more are direct subscribers to a list-serv. Those who receive CORN and follow its recommendations have saved hundreds of thousands of dollars in reduced input costs, well-timed pesticide applications, and modified agronomic decisions, while increasing corn, soybean, and wheat output.
- **Agronomic research** has had a significant public return on investment. Crop and livestock research coupled with Extension education has generated greater than a 40% rate of return on investment. Agronomic studies carried out in Allen County in 2008 include: Corn Rootworm Survey for new western corn rootworm variant; an evaluation of sticky trap types for monitoring the first year western corn rootworm variant in soybean fields; and the Western Bean Cutworm Survey.
- **Pesticide Re-certification Programs**—One hundred fifty-nine farmers obtained private pesticide applicator re-certification training, allowing them to legally apply pesticides for three years. Farmers increased their knowledge about new pesticides available for insect, weed, and disease pest management, changes in labeling of pesticides, losses of available materials for pest management, and personal safety in handling and working with pesticides.
- **Agricultural Outlook Meetings**—One hundred twenty-nine farmers, agri-business personnel, and bank financial officers attended Agricultural Outlook Meetings held in Allen County. Participants learned about grain marketing, future trends in input costs, land rental costs and values, grain prices, livestock feed costs, livestock prices, fuel costs, and insurance coverage. With current financial challenges facing producers, this information is critical.

### Advancing Employment and Income Opportunities

- **First Impressions Program**—An Allen County Extension educator assisted two Ohio communities, Covington and Spencerville, Ohio, in conducting a First Impressions Program, which assesses the positive and negative attributes of a community with fresh eyes. Based on these observations, each community can improve their presentation to outsiders, possibly leading to new investments in their communities.

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