



# Marion County

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## 2008 County Highlights

### Strengthening Families and Communities

- The Family Nutrition Program (FNP), which is in its 14th year, reached more than 1,500 adult residents of Marion County during the 142 programs offered. The goal of this program is to improve the nutrition and food security of food stamp participants and eligible non-participants. As a result of these programs 94 percent of the participants reported they learned new and useful information and 84 percent of the participants reported they planned to make changes in their behavior based on the information they learned. This program is completely supported by a grant from the Midwest Region Food and Consumer Services, USDA.
- Each month more than 400 households receive the Family Nutrition Program Newsletter and other printed materials with ideas for preparing low-cost, nutritious, and safe meals. This free newsletter features articles on nutrition, food safety, and thrifty shopping.
- Weekly programs are conducted for residents of the Turning Point Domestic Violence Shelter. Program topics include nutrition, food safety, and food shopping. A sample class reported that 100 percent of the participants learned new information and 100 percent of the participants planned to make the recommended changes they learned at this program.
- Educational programming continues four times a month to participants at the Marion Area Counseling Center West. Program topics include nutrition, food safety, and food shopping. A sample class reported that 100 percent of the participants learned new information and 73 percent planned to make the recommended changes they learned at this program.
- Educational programming continues at various sites around Marion County, including Marion WIC, low-income senior housing facilities, senior meal-sites, and local food pantries.
- Parents and children age one to three, identified as “at-risk” due to premature birth, health issues, or family issues are invited to a monthly parenting class. This class is a partnership between Help Me Grow, the Marion Public Library, and OSU Extension. Through parent and child interaction, parents are learning ways to help their child grow. Since the program’s start in May 2008, attendance has increased 250 percent. Parents have shared many positive comments including, “I never

realized I could use a simple child’s book to help my child learn to talk.”

- “Toddler Fun” was held for toddlers age one to three and their parents. This three-week series includes parent education, parent and child interaction, and age-appropriate activities. Ninety percent of the parents participating indicated they had learned new skills which they intended to implement.
- Residents at West Central Community Correction Center participated in seven different programs provided by the Marion County Extension office. Topics included nutrition, stress management, financial wellness, parenting, and balancing work and family. The goal of this partnership is not only providing educational programs that are beneficial to the residents, but also to introduce OSU Extension as a community resource for the resident when they return home.
- Monthly programs are taught to preschoolers at Tri Rivers Career Center Day Care. The interactive healthy snack lessons provide hands-on learning activities for the preschoolers. The high school vocational students also learn about using Extension as a community resource when they are employed in their career field. Eighty-seven percent of the preschoolers were able to correctly identify the healthy food choice when given two options.

### Preparing Youth for Success

- More than 1,200 children took part in the Marion County Family Nutrition Program’s educational program at the Summer Food Service Program sites. The children attending the free lunch at 11 different sites learned a different nutrition or physical fitness activity. One of the most memorable activities was when the children were able to make their own kites. The children learned that making their own and then being able to fly them was a great way to enjoy physical activity. Lunch participation at the sites remained high at all of the 11 sites throughout the summer. The children look forward to the Family Nutrition Program and enjoyed participating in the various activities offered throughout the summer.
- The 4-H Robo-Kids afterschool clubs are a hands-on learning program for 3rd–5th graders. This age-appropriate, project-based experience is designed to help

young students learn the fundamentals of engineering and robotics through math, science, and technology. During each meeting, club members work together in a fun, exciting environment using leading edge technologies to sample such disciplines as robotics, electronics, programming, and problem-solving. The students brainstorm ideas, solve problems, and build robots and other working models. Community funding to cover initial material expenses was provided for the three clubs in Marion County at Taft Elementary, Heritage Elementary, and Elgin West Elementary. Forty-four percent of the youth enrolled in this project participated in a culminating robotics challenge at the Marion County Fair. One participant said, "My teammate and I improved on our second try. We were able to see what didn't work on the first round and make adjustments."

- Marion County 4-H members participated in a five-day residential 4-H camp. Youth participating in this camp gain involvement in experiential learning opportunities, leadership activities, public speaking activities, and team-building activities. They also have the opportunity to interact and learn from their peers from throughout the county.
- Homeschoolers Exploring Recreation, Outdoor Education and Science (HEROES) Camp was held at 4-H Camp Ohio. HEROES is a one-day, hands-on, outdoor education experience designed specifically for home schooled families. The day camp was offered in the spring and fall. Session topics included stream study, wild edibles, pioneer studies, Native American studies, archery, adventure tower, high ropes, GPS Treasure Hunt, flying things, and more. More than 95 percent of the families said they would recommend HEROES Camp to others. One parent commented, "My son, especially, has been studying edible plants, archery, and tree identification mostly through books. He's been asking for help from real live human beings on these things."

## Enhancing Agriculture and the Environment

- Thanks to the support of the Marion County Commissioners, a part-time agriculture and natural resources program assistant was hired in May. This will again allow both the general public and the agricultural community to benefit from the research-based information provided through the Marion County Extension office.
- Spring of 2008 was very wet and cool. These weather conditions prompted a majority of the homeowners' 198 inquiries about the health of their trees and lawns. With the proper identification of the pest problem, the correct pest management programs were implemented by the homeowner. This information leads to a reduction of pesticides/fungicides entering the local rivers and streams.
- To address the many questions about improving the quantity and quality of the fruit being produced by the homeowner, this office in cooperation with Lawrence Orchards and Central Ohio Farmers Co-Op conducted a workshop on Backyard Fruit Tree Maintenance. The 13 participants who participated in this workshop learned about the yearly schedule for application of the proper pesticide and mechanical pest management practices. The workshop emphasizes the importance of the mechanical pest management practices as a method of reducing fungal and pest problems in fruit trees. Information on safe application, storage, and disposal of pesticide/fungicides was also discussed at this workshop.
- A Master Gardening program has been implemented to provide additional information about best practices for gardening to the public. During the fall of 2008 candidates for the Master Gardening program will be interviewed. In early 2009 these candidates will attend the 50-hour training course. Each Master Gardener will then volunteer at least 50 hours in the Extension office, answering clientele questions.

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