

Agricultural Business Enhancement Center

639 S. Dunbridge Rd., Suite 4
Bowling Green 43402, 419-354-6916, <http://abe.osu.edu>



2007 Impact Statements

- The OSU Extension Agricultural Business Enhancement (ABE) Center provides programs and services to agricultural producers in the areas of Beef Marketing and Management, Green Industry issues for Commercial Horticulture, Floriculture, and Hydroponic Vegetable businesses, as well as Ag and Hort Labor Education. The ABE Center works with local, regional, and state-wide Extension personnel to develop and disseminate information and programs to our clientele.
- The ABE Center received OSU Extension Program Venture Funds to develop a teaching module for the application of web-based technology for the distribution of Extension information to clientele in a time and location-independent manner. To date, over 70 Extension professionals have been trained in its use. An example of this technology in use may be found on the ABE Center's website (<http://abe.osu.edu>) by clicking on "Introduction to the ABE Center."
- The ABE Center also received funding through the North Central Risk Management Education Center to provide basic computer skills training to farm and green industry producers via quarterly workshops held throughout Northwest Ohio. In all, 40 producers will receive training on basic computer terminology, software applications, e-mail and internet.

Commercial Horticulture Program

- Nearly 200 industry professionals attended the 2007 Green Industry Summer Session, a program for educational and recertification credits for Pesticide Applicators, Ohio Nursery & Landscapers Technicians, and Master Gardeners. Over 95% of respondents indicated they will use the information learned either immediately or in the future. The predominant segments of the green industry (landscapers, garden centers, lawn care, and nurseries) were provided with several concurrent sessions to meet their educational needs.
- The Toledo Academy of Landscape Science and Arts (TALSA), a series of five day long interactive workshops, was a joint educational project with OSU Extension, ABE Center, Toledo Botanical Gardens, and OSU Extension State Specialists. Sessions included intensive hands-on training and walks to further enhance their learning experiences. Topics included in the seminars ranged from various aspects of botany, landscape design, plant identification, plant care and culture, diagnostics, and horticultural resources. The 36 green industry professionals attending the sessions all indicated that they planned to apply the information learned to their work.
- The turnover rate for teens employed in the green industry is traditionally very high. A full day program on Employment Success for Supervisors with New Teen Employees was designed to help the 10 professional attendees improve their understanding of teen thinking, motivations, communication, and team building. All attendees agreed that this workshop will help them improve their supervisor skills in managing

young employees to become consistently productive and high quality team members.

- The ABE Center performed diagnostic services for commercial horticulturists utilizing telephone, digital photography, site visits and the Wayne Ellett Plant and Pest Diagnostic Clinic. We were able to identify and develop strategies for management of plant disease, insect, and weed control problems that were confronted on a daily basis.
- Horticulturist provided educational programs for Master Gardeners in Erie, Huron, Lucas and Allen counties. Programs included Plant Pathology, and Woody Ornamental Plants and Identification for nearly 90 participants who will be serving in their communities to assist local county educators with gardening questions.
- The ABE Center participated in the Buckeye Yard and Garden Line (BYGL), a weekly update in the form of a horticultural related newsletter. It is written by OSU Extension Educators and Specialists, from a conference call held every Tuesday from April through September. BYGL is one of the key ways through which OSU Extension and the Extension Nursery Landscape and Turf Team provide ornamental plant information. Ninety-one percent of BYGL survey respondents agreed that BYGL was useful to their job and business. From their subscriptions, information from the BYGL is then further disseminated to over 800,000 additional persons through radio programs, newspaper columns and articles, Master Gardener Volunteers, students, and other green-industry employees. Twenty percent of companies receiving faxed copies of the BYGL newsletter responded to an end-of-season survey and showed that: 100% shared the newsletter with others, including customers and employees. 100% indicated BYGL was useful to their business and indicated it helped in answering client questions. 60% changed horticultural practices based on information in BYGL, and 80% indicated a change in pest management practices based on BYGL. 100% indicated it resulted in improved customer service. 80% indicated saving money from information in BYGL, ranging from \$500 up to over \$5,000.

Floriculture Program

- Continuing education is vital for greenhouse producers to remain competitive in the industry. The ABE Center in cooperation with The Toledo Area Flower and Vegetable Grower's Association developed three educational conferences for greenhouse producers in 2007. The Annual Winter Conference held in January, the Retail Workshop held in February and the Bedding Plants Clinic held in March assisted growers in improving production techniques of both annual and perennial crops and implementing current pesticide and fungicide recommendations. In all, nearly 80 growers participated in these events. In all, 24 hours of private pesticide applicator continuing education credits were also provided.

- Retail garden centers continually strive to provide unique experiences for their customers and must incorporate new ideas into their business every year. In 2007, over 70 retailers, growers and Master Gardeners from Northwest Ohio participated in a day-long bus tour to visit five Metro Detroit area garden centers. Retailers gathered new ideas and information to incorporate in their local establishments.
- The ABE Center produced RESOURCE, a regional floriculture newsletter, that was distributed to floriculture and hydroponic growers in the Toledo and Cleveland areas, to distributors and academia ten times per year. The newsletter focuses on current issues, research updates from OSU and abroad, and serves to announce OSU Extension programs and services. Nearly 400 copies of each issue of RESOURCE were distributed by mail. The newsletter is also available on the ABE Center web site in a searchable format as well as for download. Information is timely and valuable to growers' business needs.
- The ABE Center is active in local, regional, and state-wide industry organizations and serves on advisory boards and participates in meetings for numerous organizations including the Ohio Floriculture Association, The Toledo Area Flower and Vegetable Growers Association, and the Maumee Valley Growers.

Hydroponic Vegetable Program

- The ABE Center routinely provided information to prospective hydroponic businesses interested in starting a hydroponic greenhouse in Ohio. Economic, cultural and marketing information is provided by request.
- The ABE Center initiated a water quality project to assist hydroponic and floriculture growers in assessing the basic quality characteristics of water used for plant production. To date, nearly 30 producers have participated in this program. The water assessments identified key problems with some producer's fertilization programs, resulting in improved yield and plant quality.
- The ABE Center coordinated a conference call series linking hydroponic producers with experts in the fields of entomology, vegetable physiology, greenhouse construction and engineering. Ten producers participated in the monthly calls and obtained recommendations and information to immediately incorporate in their businesses.
- The OSU Extension ABE Center continually works with hydroponic growers throughout the state to diagnose insects, disease pathogens as well as nutritional disorders to maintain healthy, saleable crops.

Beef Marketing Program

- Livestock education for Ohio youth was one of the primary focuses of the ABE Center Beef Marketing Educator. Wood County youth excelled at the Ohio State Fair placing first overall. Additional training was provided to an all Ohio All Star team who are competing in national contests across the country. Wood County youth competed in the Keystone International Competition in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania where they placed seventh overall.

- Market promotion and enhancement of the Ohio Signature Beef brand is a primary responsibility of the Beef Marketing Educator. A promotional DVD for retail store managers and meat department personnel is being produced. The DVD is designed to tell the "Story" behind Signature Beef and help train personnel to better communicate the value of the Signature Beef program. An additional consumer DVD is also being developed to provide a short message to consumers as they shop.
- Beef production education throughout Ohio still requires most of the Beef Educators time. Classroom presentations were conducted at both OSU Main Campus and at the Agricultural Technical Institute in Wooster. Additional programs were held at field days across Ohio.
- On-farm visits by the Beef Educator and data collections for the marketing program help producers better sort genetics and evaluate their management and nutrition programs.

Ag & Hort Labor Education

- Ag & Hort coordinated with Michigan State University's Trevor Nichols Research Complex in Fennville, Michigan to provide a two-day Blueberry IPM Scout ADVANCED Training for Ohio blueberry growers and farm workers under a continuing Risk Management grant.
- Beyond the availability and legal status of ag labor, the health of a workforce is also essential. Ag & Hort continued involvement in health issues regarding Hispanic labor by networking with the Ohio Hispanic/Latino Health Coalition to monitor services offered in migrant clinics in Northwest Ohio counties and helping finalize a Henry County Health Department Needs Assessment for Hispanics. With the statewide Ohio Latino Health Coalition, Ag & Hort helped plan and develop the Health track for the 2007 Hispanic Convention centered on northern Ohio Hispanics.
- As Chair of monthly meetings of the FALCON interagency group, Ag & Hort provided leadership and direction to agency services and information centered on the issues and needs of Hispanic labor and their employers. The Program also contributed to a farm labor contractor training with the Texas Migrant Council and the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services (ODJFS), and an ODJFS session for their migrant outreach staff, regarding crop and flood disaster conditions and their effects on labor and harvests.
- The OSU Dairy Team received an RMA grant and developed a "Managing the Dairy of Tomorrow" program for dairy producers. Ag & Hort participated in planning and will be one of the instructors in education sessions planned for five counties across the state.
- In September, the Program traveled to Central Mexico to study rural agricultural settings and to interact with Mexican producers there. The OSU team also included university faculty, Comm Tech staff, Extension Educators and two green industry employers of Hispanic labor. Mexico's *Colegio de Postgraduados* hosted the group through its Rural Development Studies Department.

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Keith L. Smith, Ph.D., Associate Vice President for Agricultural Administration and Director, Ohio State University Extension

TDD No. 800-589-8292 (Ohio only) or 614-292-1868