



# Ashland County

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EXTENSION

## 2008 County Highlights

### Strengthening Families and Communities

- A partnership was developed with the Ashland County Health Department to provide the nationally recognized ServSafe food safety training and certification program. This program teaches measures for prevention of foodborne diseases and the latest food and health regulations. Upon successful completion of course and exam, participants will be certified in Food Protection training by the Ohio Department of Health. Restaurant employees, health care professionals, and school cafeteria employees in Ashland County have attended ServSafe. Each year the class has grown and local businesses such as Kingston Nursing and Rehabilitation Services have made plans to enroll at least two employees each year for ServSafe training. In 2008, twenty-two individuals participated in the class and 100 percent passed the certification test. The Ashland County Health Department has found this partnership to be vital to the county in order for this type of training to be offered.
- The Family Nutrition Program (FNP) is a nutrition education program funded by the USDA Midwest Region Food and Nutrition Service for those eligible for the Food Stamp Program within Ashland County. In 2008, the grant was \$31,707. This employed one program assistant at 60% time.
- Working with five low-income housing sites and a major food bank, the FNP program assistant reached 491 individuals with nutrition education. Program participants indicate that because of the outreach they better understand the importance of eating a variety of foods and many emphasize an effort to focus more on MyPyramid groups instead of junk food. Because many clients are struggling with obesity and/or other health-related issues, portion sizes and nutritional value have also become important topics. A group from a low-income housing unit has been, in addition to making better food choices, climbing stairs as a part of their exercise routine. Some report weight loss or lower blood pressure as the result of their endeavors. One woman summed it up by saying, "It was hard at first but now I always go. We all have fun and feel better."
- More than 17,000 educational materials were distributed via health fairs, schools, and cooperating agencies. Being visible in the media (radio and local newspaper)

gives the program great visibility and helps others to stretch food dollars. It also explores new ideas for good nutrition and reinforces the use of food safety practices. Because of these efforts, the program has been able to expand into another location in the county and reach more people at the lower income level. Also, in more than one instance, elderly widowers have been very grateful that someone can provide tips to help them "plan and cook a nutritious meal" now that they are living alone and taking care of themselves.

### Preparing Youth for Success

- 4-H Youth Development—Two hundred fifteen volunteer adult advisors and committee members provided leadership to 45 community clubs and nine subject matter committees serving 744 members this past year. Over \$175,000 is the value these volunteers bring to Ashland County. Twelve new volunteers were recruited and 100% of volunteers who are continuing with the program attended a two-hour training to remain certified. Advisors commented, "This training will help in preparing my members for judging activities," and "These sessions are always helpful because I learn new ideas I can use with my club right away."
- Youth have the opportunity to grow and learn in Ashland County 4-H by attending a variety of camps. A three-day Spring Break Science Camp was offered in March with 31 campers attending. They had the opportunity to explore science concepts each day. Participant comments included, "I never knew science could be so much fun," and "I learn a lot by experimenting with my own ideas." At least three youth went on to become first-year traditional club members. Forty 5-to 8-year olds attended our Cloverbud Day Camp held in June. Sixteen junior leaders were trained to work as group leaders for the three-day camp. In August, 74 youth attended 4-H Junior Camp, a five-day, four-night experience. Counselor evaluations included this statement from one counselor: "I can't believe how much work this took, but I felt capable of doing it because of my training and I know how important it is to be a good role model to the younger kids."
- \$38,223 is the value that teen volunteers donate to OSU Extension in Ashland County. This figure is based on 68 teen volunteers giving an average of 60 hours per year and 75 teen volunteers giving an average of 20 hours per

year at a value of \$6.85 per hour. Thirty-five youth were members of the Ashland County Junior Fair Board, seventeen served as camp counselors and fifteen were members of subject matter committees.

### **Enhancing Agriculture and the Environment**

- The agriculture industry is vital to the economic well-being of Ashland County. In 2002 the ag industry contributed \$402.3 million in output to the local economy. As input prices continue to increase at a dramatic rate, management of those resources becomes increasingly important to the financial stability of the farm. As a result, the farm management education that OSU Extension, Ashland County, provides in support of and development of a stronger agricultural sector is important to the community.
- In 2008 the first Annie's Project was held in Ashland County. Many times women are responsible for the financial recordkeeping, grain marketing, human resource management activities, etc., of the farm with little or no training in these areas. Annie's Project works to provide risk management knowledge and resources for women involved in agriculture. By helping women improve their risk management skills, Annie's Project helps to strengthen the farm economy.
- Annie's Project was offered in six counties throughout Ohio as part of a North Central Risk Management Education Center Competitive Grant. The total grant was for the amount of \$33,064 and \$6300 came to Ashland County in support of the program. Another \$650 was donated by local organizations in support of the program. Twenty-two women participated in the local program. Attendance at each class was nearly 100% and after completion of the class 77% of the class completed the evaluation survey. Survey results revealed:
  - 100% of respondents had gained new ideas to eliminate communication barriers that exist within their farm business.
  - 90% of the respondents believed a mission statement and goals are important to the success of their business.
  - 33% of the participants completed the six-month evaluation survey.
  - 100% of the respondents reported that they had set goals for the 2008 production year and planned to continue to set goals for 2009.
  - 60% of the respondents adopted at least one new risk management practice. Some examples included: contracting milk/crops, added some early and late production, and added crop insurance to their operation.

- After completion of the program a few of the comments women made were as follows: "I'm so glad I had the opportunity to participate in Annie's Project. I gained a lot of information that will help me better manage my farm." Another participant said, "Annie's Project helped our family begin the conversation and the process of transferring the farm to the next generation."

### **Advancing Employment and Income Opportunities**

#### **Northeast Ohio Agribusiness Forum**

- In 2005 OSU Extension and the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Ashland County began holding monthly breakfast meetings for local farmers and agribusiness professionals in the county. A speaker addressing a current agriculture related topic was included as a part of each meeting. The breakfast meetings were well attended throughout 2005–2008 and local participants commented several times that the breakfast was a great opportunity to network. They also found the presentations very educational and enlightening. April 2008 marked the first of an expanded version of the breakfast meetings. OSU Extension and NRCS partnered with the Small Business Development Center at Ashland University and BrainTree Center for Business Innovation to continue the breakfast meetings on a year-round basis and offer them to a regional audience. The monthly Northeast Ohio Agribusiness Forum has grown into a program that is recognized as a meeting of professionals from all ends of the agricultural industry. Farmers, agribusiness, and supporters of Ohio's agricultural economy have found value in the networking venue and many of the attendees can be found after each breakfast deep in conversation making new connections within the agriculture community. Participants have commented that they have utilized the forums as a meeting place to set up new partnerships and projects. They have also commented on the quality of each month's presenters and have stated that they learn something new about the business of agriculture every time they attend. The expansion of the breakfast forum from the 22 local citizens to the 60 regional citizens has allowed more supporters of agriculture and farmers to better understand each other's needs.

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