



Athens County

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2008 County Highlights

Enhancing Agriculture and the Environment

- New Economic Realities became a theme that captured what agricultural producers faced in 2008. In addition to steep increases in fuel, fertilizer, and grain prices, ruminant livestock producers faced forage shortages and record high hay prices as a result of the 2007 drought. In response, OSU Extension pulled together materials and speakers to present a two-evening (six hours) short course entitled: "Ruminant Livestock: Facing New Economic Realities." This course was offered in four locations in central and southern Ohio. Athens County hosted one of the meeting locations. Thirty-two livestock producers attended the Athens course. Producers attending the course indicated they had a better understanding of the changing economic realities and had been given some practical ideas to cope with the new economics.
- In an attempt to reach more livestock producers with information about the new economic realities and urge agricultural producers to adopt new management strategies, the Agriculture and Natural Resources educator used his bi-monthly general agriculture and beef newsletters to follow up on topics and ideas presented in the new economic realities short course. Over the 2008-year, more than 20 different articles relating to this theme were included in the two newsletters. The general agriculture newsletter reaches approximately 175 farms, while the beef newsletter is sent to approximately 85 farms.
- The Cline family farm was host to the 2008 Ohio Sheep Day on July 12. The underlying theme of the day was economics. The Agriculture and Natural Resources educator worked with the farm owner to use farm expenses and on-farm production information to provide the 160 participants with the economics of various production practices. For example, using data collected on the farm regarding pasture production, grazing efficiency, lamb gain and cost of pasture establishment, participants in Ohio Sheep Day learned that the cost per pound of lamb gain on the Cline farm averaged between 15 and 17 cents on permanent pastures, contrasted with approximately 40 cents per pound of gain if corn grain were to be used at \$5/bushel corn. An example of grid soil sampling and variable rate fertilizer application on two pasture fields showed an average savings of \$40/acre by using these management techniques.
- In 2008, the Agriculture and Natural Resources educator responded to more than 1,000 phone calls and

nearly 300 e-mails on agricultural, horticultural, and natural resource related topics. More than 40 farm and/or home visits were made to deliver information and/or diagnose/evaluate a problem. Close to 350 people walked into the Extension office seeking plant/insect identification, diagnosis of a landscape or garden problem, or information related to an agricultural, horticultural, or natural resource topic.

- Over 1,200 people attended public meetings organized, conducted, or facilitated by the Agriculture and Natural Resources educator in Athens County in 2008, while the Agriculture and Natural Resources educator made out-of-county presentations to an additional 355 people.

Strengthening Families and Communities

- Many international students bring their families with them when they move to Athens County to attend Ohio University. Students' families often arrive with little or no English and little understanding of the American culture. The American market system is often very different from their home systems, yet spouses are expected to prepare healthy, economical meals. Many of these otherwise very intelligent people find the experience difficult. "Food in America," a series of programs about American grocery stores, American food products, food preparation methods, home appliances, and food safety practices was offered to participants at the Athens Gateway ABLE "English as a Second Language" Program. As a result of this series, 71% of the participants indicated that they had learned at least one thing to help them shop more confidently and prepare a greater variety of the foods found in American stores.
- Experts in the field of health say that correctly washing one's hands is one of the best ways to reduce the incidence of infectious illnesses, including the common cold. Classes targeting correct hand-washing techniques were taught in Athens County in 2008 to pre-school children. Youth took part in a simulation activity that showed them how germs can remain on hands that are not washed correctly. The pre-school teachers whose classes took part in the hand-washing classes reported that 53% of their students improved their attitudes about and compliance with correct hand-washing procedures after the "shiny germs" class.
- Numerous American families currently find themselves facing economic difficulties. Preparing meals at home instead of eating out can increase a family's disposable income. However, many young homemakers lack the

skills needed to prepare meals that are acceptable to their families. Forty-two percent of participants in a series of programs aimed at helping youth and young homemakers learn to prepare basic, nutritious meals and snacks indicated that they now felt better prepared to tackle the challenge of preparing home-cooked meals.

- During the 2008 program year, the Athens County Family Nutrition Program offered classes in the areas of food shopping, nutrition, and food safety.
- Sixty-seven percent of clients who filled out end-of-program questionnaires after thrifty food shopping classes indicated a willingness to make changes to improve their shopping habits. Eleven percent indicated an intention to initiate more than one change in their food shopping behaviors.
- Fifty-one percent of clientele providing end-of-program data related to human nutrition reported learning new information with 11% indicating a desire to make multiple changes in food choices.
- Sixty-seven percent of those responding via questionnaire after attending food safety programming reported learning new information. Twenty-one percent of that group indicated a willingness to initiate significant changes in their food safety practices.
- The Kilvert Community Center, located near Stewart, Ohio, sought and received a grant to help participants reduce the salt in their diets after a Family Nutrition Program session regarding sodium's health risks.

Advancing Employment and Income Opportunities

- OSU Extension worked closely in an advisory capacity with the Athens County Regional Planning Commission to address concerns relating to the review and update of the current draft of the Countywide Comprehensive Plan. The Community Development educator serves as secretary of the committee. OSU Extension is active in assisting the Athens County Port Authority.
- As part of the Athens County Comprehensive Land Use planning process, the Community Development educator has served on the steering committee and has co-chaired the Parks and Recreation task force. This task force met 22 times to gather information needed to draft a land use plan chapter related to park availability and numbers of sites and recreation opportunities in Athens County and proposed specific land use recommendations.

Preparing Youth for Success

- 121 youth ages 8–14, 19 teen counselors, 14 OSU Extension and camp staff, and visiting program presenters participated in 4-H camp at Tar Hollow State Park.

Over four days, campers and counselors experienced the dynamic of group living, were educated about the importance of communication skills, citizenship, conservation, and the value of teamwork, and they participated in recreational activities while building lifelong friendships.

- Nineteen teenagers were interviewed and selected for potential 4-H camp counselors and counselors-in-training. They participated in 24 hours of mandatory training and planning to prepare for camp. Teens increased their knowledge about team building and leadership skills; teaching techniques, risk management, and youth protection; health, safety, and medical awareness; and decision making, communication skills, and program planning.
- 13 new 4-H volunteers were recruited for the 2008 4-H year. These volunteers were trained to improve their skills in working with youth. The 4-H educator conducted individualized education sessions for the new volunteers, and 221 volunteers received program and educational updates through newsletters and the county 4-H web site.
- 101 students expanded their knowledge of chick embryology, fish science, and life skills through “4-H in the Classroom” programs. Participants watched chicks hatch, took care of live fish, and participated in team-building activities. At these sessions, students explored the link between their home life and agriculture and conservation.
- Throughout the year, 4-H families grasped the value of integrating skills, knowledge, and competencies developed by 4-H members into all aspects of their lives. In 2008, the Athens County 4-H program helped 928 young people between the ages of 5 and 18 assume responsibility and follow through work ethics. Through wholesome social interaction and recreation, Athens County 4-H members practiced a healthier style of living.
- The 4-H Cloverbud Program for youth in kindergarten through second grade continues to grow. Cloverbuds are enrolled in an educational, activity-based, non-competitive program in a club setting. A summer day camp in July, “It’s in the Clouds,” reached capacity with Cloverbud members. Cloverbuds also enjoyed a fun and educational farm safety for just kids program during the County Fair.
- Athens County 4-H has an established endowed account with the Ohio State University 4-H Foundation. Earnings from the endowed account made it possible to provide more than \$1,000 for 27 4-H camp scholarships.

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