

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

January 5, 2010

City of Ann Arbor
City Clerk
Jacqueline Beaudry, City Clerk
100 N. Fifth, PO 8647
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Dear City and Village officials,

Enclosed is the November 2009 issue of "Bringing Knowledge to Life in Washtenaw County". This quarterly report highlights several local Extension activities in Washtenaw County. We hope this summary will help to better familiarize you with the educational programs and services provided by your local Extension staff.

Please share this with your City or Village Administrator and Mayor. If you have any questions, or would like any further information, feel free to contact me.

Best wishes for a happy and safe new year.

Sincerely,

Nancy D. Thelen

Nancy Thelen
County Extension Director



WASHTENAW COUNTY

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November 2009

Partnership helps Washtenaw County residents become homeowners

The Washtenaw Housing Education Partners (WHEP) initiative is committed to providing high-quality housing education for current, future and former Washtenaw County homeowners.

Washtenaw County MSU Extension was one of the founding members when WHEP formed in 2001. Through this partnership of non-profit agencies and county departments, people receive education and counseling to become homeowners.

MSU Extension is a Michigan State Housing Development Authority-certified counseling agency, the only HUD-certified agency in the county, and has been providing pre-purchase home buyer education since 1990.

Meeting with MSU Extension staff is the first step of the WHEP process. Everyone interested in housing funds must complete a six-hour pre-purchase homebuyer education class, which covers a variety of issues and considerations for purchasing a home with the goal of better informed consumers.

From April to October, 211 households completed the pre-purchase classes. Of these, 163 completed a survey after finishing the classes.

The results of this survey showed:

- 95 percent of participants wanted to learn more about the home buying process
- 83 percent took the class to meet the requirements of a mortgage or down payment assistance program.

Nearly a quarter of the participants felt they were financially ready to purchase a home immediately. Forty three percent expect to be ready in one year and 33 percent reported they felt they would be ready in two or more years.

Seventy-eight percent indicated that they understood how to avoid predatory lending practices and 80 percent reported understanding how to prevent foreclosure and felt that this class had helped them determine that homeownership was right for them.

In April, WHEP implemented the use of the Fannie Mae Home Counselor Online database to track households through the process. From this information, WHEP will get a better idea of how many succeed at purchasing and keeping their homes.

Contact: Terry Jones, 734-222-3943

Partners work to bring seniors downtown to meet, greet and buy eats

Washtenaw County MSU Extension and the Washtenaw County Public Health Department came together this summer to create senior identification with the Downtown Ypsilanti Farmers' Market.

To do this, the organizations sponsored Senior Project FRESH (Farm Resources Expanding and Supporting Health) and four Senior Appreciation Days at the Downtown Ypsilanti Farmers' Market.

Senior Project FRESH is free for adults at least 60 years old, who live at or below 185 percent of poverty. Participants receive coupons worth \$20 to purchase fresh Michigan produce. They also receive nutrition education to learn the value of consuming a variety of fruits and vegetables and how to select, prepare and store the produce.

Nearly 285 coupon books were issued to eligible seniors and to disabled persons who are at least 50-years-old and living in senior and disabled housing. More than 100 Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels recipients also received the information and produce.

Continued

Senior Project FRESH—continued

For the second summer, Meals on Wheels purchased and delivered fresh produce to vulnerable seniors on its regular delivery routes. Access to sources of fresh food is often limited for this clientele.

Senior Project FRESH participation requires a 2:1 local match. In the partnership's first three years, MSU Extension and Washtenaw County Public Health worked together to raise the funds. To insure a fourth season of Senior Project FRESH, the two organizations received a \$4,000 grant from the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation.

The foundation's match dollars leveraged an additional \$2,000 from the Michigan Office of Services to the Aging. This brought a total of nearly \$6,000 in fresh produce into the shopping bags of seniors. These dollars stay in the community to help support the Ypsilanti Farmers' Market and other local vendors.

Senior Project FRESH works to increase food security and promote healthful eating among low-income seniors. It also supports local farmers and vendors by providing them income and helping build their customer base.

Previous program surveys indicated nearly half of Senior Project FRESH participants were concerned about having enough food during the past 30 days. A vast majority (93 percent) of recipients reported traveling more than a mile to buy groceries. Transportation is a major difficulty, as only about a quarter of the participants say they can drive themselves to grocery stores.

In addition to Senior Project FRESH, Extension and the public health department offered four "Senior Appreciation Days" at the farmers' market to further encourage seniors to visit the market. Participants enjoyed food demonstrations and sampling, nutrition education and other education aimed at senior health and wellness.

Surveys collected after the 2009 Senior Project FRESH and Senior Appreciation Days showed overwhelming satisfaction with the activities, as well as significant changes to participants' knowledge and attitudes about eating fresh fruits and vegetables.

Of the 173 participants, 88 percent enjoyed tasting the featured recipe and 86 percent responded they were either "very likely" or "somewhat likely" to try the featured recipe at home.

More than two-thirds of participants planned to purchase fruits or vegetables at the market to make the featured recipe. Three-quarters reported learning something new about fruits and vegetables during the nutrition education portion.

Senior Project FRESH and Senior Appreciation Days demonstrate the power of cooperation. As a result of the efforts of MSU Extension, Washtenaw County Public Health, Growing Hope and the Ypsilanti Food Cooperative, the Downtown Ypsilanti Farmers' Market (in its fourth season) gave area seniors a place to meet, learn and enjoy shopping for fresh food. The senior customer base for the market is invaluable to its success and its sustainability.

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Conservation Stewards explore natural resource management, volunteerism

Protecting the environment is a critical issue in Washtenaw County. To educate residents about natural resource management and encourage them to volunteer in local efforts, Washtenaw County MSU Extension offered the Conservation Steward program this spring.

The focus of the course is to teach students conservation practices that they will be able to put to use in volunteer projects. One student developed a plan for native plantings around a county lake to promote biodiversity. She said she would not have accomplished any of this conservation work if she had not attended the program.

"I am more informed about the importance of biodiversity and how my imprint with choices that I make day-to-day impacts the environment around me."

Students working closely with area conservation organizations volunteered more than 600 hours to local conservation efforts. They helped with plantings in native areas, invasive plant removal, prescribed burns, site assessments and planting rain gardens.

They also prepared presentations for county parks, wrote conservation plans, rebuilt bridges over streams and for a newly designated park, compiled a habitat inventory and developed a trail system.

One participant said the program training made her think more broadly about not only the immediate surroundings, but about people's behavior in the park (when planning for restoration) and to include people in the process.

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