I hope each of you had a great Easter weekend! In a few short days, the month of April will be here with planting not too far behind. It is looking like we might have an early planting season which will be a nice change of pace from our previous few. I hope each of you are taking some time to spend some quality time with your families over this spring break week in Ashtabula County. Have a great week!

David Marrison, Ashtabula County Ag & NR Educator

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Ashtabula County 4-H Pancake Breakfast to be Held on Sunday, April 10, 2016
The Ashtabula County 4-H Advisory Committee would like to invite you to a 4-H Pancake Breakfast which will be held on Sunday, April 10, 2016 from 7:30 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. at the 4-H Expo Building at the Ashtabula County Fairgrounds located at 127 North Elm Street in Jefferson, Ohio. All proceeds from this benefit will be donated to support the Ashtabula County 4-H Camp Counselors!

This event is an all-you-can eat pancake breakfast complete with sausage, eggs and beverages. The cost for the event is $7.00 per adult and $5 for Seniors. Children under 6 are free. Tickets can be purchased at the Ashtabula County Extension office at 39 Wall Street in Jefferson, Ohio. Tickets are also available at the door. For More information call the Ashtabula County Extension Office at 440-576-9008.

Report: Farmers Doing Too Little to Cut Lake Erie Phosphorus

Cutting phosphorus runoff into Lake Erie enough to prevent harmful algae outbreaks would require sweeping changes on the region’s farms that may include converting thousands of acres of cropland into grassland, scientists said in a report released last week.
The study released by the University of Michigan Water Center found current efforts to keep phosphorus, which is found in livestock manure and artificial fertilizers, on fields instead of flowing into the lake are falling drastically short of results needed to achieve a 40 percent drop in runoff — a target set by the U.S. and Canada in February.

Excessive levels of the nutrient are the leading cause of increasingly massive blooms, which in 2014 left more than 400,000 people in Toledo, Ohio, and southeastern Michigan unable to consume tap water for two days because the bacterial algae produce a toxin. Another bloom last year was the largest on record. Phosphorus also causes a "dead zone" in Lake Erie's central basin with so little oxygen that fish cannot survive.

Using computer modeling, a team of scientists tested different combinations of best-management practices that could bring the algae under control. Some are already in use, such as planting vegetation buffers between cultivated fields and waterways. Others include applying phosphorus-based fertilizers beneath the land's surface instead of on top, where it's more likely to wash away, and planting cover crops such as winter wheat.

Ohio and Michigan rely largely on voluntary compliance, but too few farmers are participating, the report found. "Our results suggest that for most of the scenarios we tested, it will not be possible to achieve the new target nutrient loads without very significant, large-scale implementation of these agricultural practices," said Don Scavia, a University of Michigan ecologist who led the study.

The study focused on the Maumee River watershed, which includes 17 counties in northwestern Ohio and smaller sections of Michigan and Indiana. High phosphorus runoff from farms in that area is the primary cause of toxic algae in western Lake Erie, it said. Policy alternatives described as "most promising" by Jay Martin of Ohio State University, the report's co-author, included widespread use of the best-management practices and conversion of some croplands to switchgrass or other grasses. One called for removing nearly 30,000 acres in the watershed from production. That's equivalent of 6,300 farms, as the average farm in the area consists of 235 acres.

Jeff Reuter, past director of Ohio Sea Grant and a Lake Erie specialist who wasn't involved with the study, said some cropland is so overloaded with phosphorus that turning it into grassland or wetlands is the only way to stop runoff. Such a requirement could drive some farms out of business, said Joe Cornely of the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation, who criticized the study for focusing only on the Maumee basin and agriculture instead of other phosphorus sources such as sewage treatment plants.

"Yes, agriculture's got some things we need to do," Cornely said. "But to give the idea that a single sector of our economy or a single geography is the only way to attack this ... runs the risk of raising unrealistic expectations among the public." Government could pay subsidies to farmers who convert their land to protect water quality, Scavia said. "This study is a strong affirmation that we can once again restore the health of Lake Erie, but it cannot be done with half-measures and a piecemeal approach," said Jack Schmitt, deputy director of the Michigan League of Conservation Voters.

Tri-County Grape Growers 2016 Steak Dinner to be held on Thursday, May 5, 2016
The Tri-County Grape Growers Association is pleased to announce they will be hosting their second annual Steak Dinner on Thursday, May 5, 2016 beginning at 6:00 p.m. at the Harpersfield Community Center. All are Welcome - Grape Growers and Wine Makers will be available to answer questions, problems, and/or concerns anyone may be having in their home garden vineyards or basement wine making. Meet and socialize with other growers, buyers, and suppliers of the Regional Grape Industry.

The guest speaker for this event will be: Donniella Winchell, Executive Director of the Ohio Wine Producers Association. Ms. Winchell will be speaking on the history of grape growing in Northeast Ohio and the impact on the region. Donniella Winchell is Executive Director of the Ohio Wine Producers Association and chair of their Vintage
Ohio Wine Festival. She is the recipient of several state and national awards and serves on numerous state and national wine, tourism and economic development boards. She contributes wine articles to many regional publications. Donniella graduated from Allegheny College and taught in Ohio public schools. She and her family own a marketing agency and an entertainment complex in Geneva-on-the-Lake. She and her husband have three grown children and eight grandchildren.

Pre-sale tickets are required with each ticket costing $30.00 per person. The ticket price includes a one-year membership in Tri-County Grape Growers. Please RSVP by April 29th to guarantee seating. All are welcome to attend. Tickets may be purchased from the OSU Extension Office in Jefferson, Ohio (440-576-9008), John Linehan (440-466-3207) or from any active Tri-County Grower Member.

**AmeriCorps Vista Member for Community Gardens & Healthy Foods Sought**
The Ashtabula County Community Action Agency is excited to announce they were awarded an AmeriCorps VISTA position for the upcoming year. The VISTA member would be involved with promoting community gardens and encouraging people to eat more healthy, local food. The ideal candidate will be capable of planning and organizing work, managing multiple functions, and prioritizing tasks as necessary. They will display original thinking and creativity and meet challenges with resourcefulness. They should be proficiently skilled in general computer use including word processing and email. They must be able to follow both verbal and written directions and have the ability to work as a team member, listen; work with frequent interruptions; and demonstrate a professional attitude.

They should possess the ability to communicate with a diverse group of people and if possible have experience working with programs designed to end or alleviate poverty, promote economic stability, enhance the community, and improve quality of life. Knowledge of gardening or agriculture will be a plus but is not required. The work location will be at the Ashtabula County Community Action Agency located at 6920 Austinburg Road, Ashtabula, OH 44004.

All applicants must apply on-line through the AmeriCorps VISTA website: [http://www.vistacampus.gov/how-apply-americorps-vista-listing #65081](http://www.vistacampus.gov/how-apply-americorps-vista-listing #65081). In the Advanced Search page enter: Program Type- AmeriCorps VISTA, State- OHIO, Program Name- Ashtabula County Community Action Agency; click “search”

**National Cover Crop Survey Being Conducted**
A nationwide survey of farmers on cover crop use is seeking insight from growers around the country — whether or not they plant cover crops. “This survey provides us with a great perspective on why farmers do or do not plant cover crops, what they expect to gain from the practice, and what their concerns are,” says Chad Watts, project director at the Conservation Technology Information Center (CTIC) in West Lafayette, Indiana, which administers the survey. “Results from the survey help guide policy, research and education on cover crops. In recent years, data from cover crop surveys has been used in testimony on Capitol Hill, featured in the New York Times, and cited in academic journals. People are very eager to hear how farmers view cover crops.”

The survey can be taken online at [http://tinyurl.com/ccsurvey2016](http://tinyurl.com/ccsurvey2016) until May 1, 2016. All answers to the survey are anonymous, Watts points out. Participants who complete the survey — an easy process that takes no more than 15 minutes, and even less depending on your crop rotations and diversity — have the option of entering into a drawing for a $100 gift card.

The project is the fourth annual cover crop survey conducted by CTIC in conjunction with USDA’s Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program, and the American Seed Trade Association (ASTA) with help from Penton Media. Sponsors within ASTA include Albert Lea Seed, CHS, The CISCO Corporation, LaCrosse Seed, Mountain View Seed, Allied Seed, Curtis & Curtis Inc., Grassland Oregon, Justin Seed and Seedway.
Got Backyard Wildlife Problems? April 14 Workshop in Cortland has Solutions
A key to handling backyard wildlife problems, from smelly skunks to ravenous raccoons, hungry deer to messy geese, is making your backyard a worse place to be. “If you can identify the component of the habitat that’s attracting an animal to your yard — usually it’s food or shelter — and then can modify or eliminate it, you’ll go a long way to solving the conflict,” said Marne Titchenell of The Ohio State University. She’ll share that and other remedies in a workshop April 14.

Titchenell is a wildlife program specialist in Ohio State’s College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences. The workshop, called The Good, the Bad and the Hungry: Controlling Nuisance Wildlife in the Home Landscape, is from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. in the Trumbull County Agriculture and Family Education Center in Cortland in northeast Ohio.

The Ohio Woodland Stewards Program is the event’s sponsor. The college’s outreach arm, Ohio State University Extension, runs the program. “We’ll talk about fencing, trapping, repellants, resistant plants and habitat management, to name a few,” said Titchenell, who’s a member of the program. “That last one, habitat management, is an important tool for dealing with any wildlife conflict.”

Urban coyotes, which are spreading, and skunks, which are testy right now because it’s their mating season, will be topics of special interest, she said. Deer, geese and woodchucks will be on the docket. So will bats, moles, voles, rabbits and raccoons. Registration for the workshop is $35, includes lunch and is needed by April 8. Volunteers in Ohio’s Master Gardener program can earn five hours of continuing education credit by attending.

You can register online at.go.osu.edu/April2016NuisanceWildlife. Or you can register by phone or get more information at 614-688-3421. A schedule of other Ohio Woodland Stewards Program workshops is at woodlandstewards.osu.edu.

Six Facts You Should Know Before Deducting a Charitable Donation
Source: IRS

If you gave money or goods to a charity in 2015, you may be able to claim a deduction on your federal tax return. Here are six important facts you should know about charitable donations.

1. Qualified Charities. You must donate to a qualified charity. Gifts to individuals, political organizations or candidates are not deductible. An exception to this rule is contributions under the Slain Officer Family Support Act of 2015. To check the status of a charity, use the IRS Select Check tool. This tool is located at: https://www.irs.gov/Charities-&-Non-Profits/Exempt-Organizations-Select-Check

2. Itemize Deductions. To deduct your contributions, you must file Form 1040 and itemize deductions. File Schedule A, Itemized Deductions, with your federal tax return.

3. Benefit in Return. If you get something in return for your donation, you may have to reduce your deduction. You can only deduct the amount of your gift that is more than the value of what you got in return. Examples of benefits include merchandise, meals, tickets to an event or other goods and services.

4. Type of Donation. If you give property instead of cash, your deduction amount is normally limited to the item’s fair market value. Fair market value is generally the price you would get if you sold the property on the open market. If you donate used clothing and household items, they generally must be in good condition, or better, to be deductible. Special rules apply to cars, boats and other types of property donations.
5. Form to File and Records to Keep. You must file Form 8283, Noncash Charitable Contributions, for all noncash gifts totaling more than $500 for the year. If you need to prepare a Form 8283, you can prepare and e-file your tax return for free using IRS Free File. The type of records you must keep depends on the amount and type of your donation. To learn more about what records to keep see Publication 526.

6. Donations of $250 or More. If you donated cash or goods of $250 or more, you must have a written statement from the charity. It must show the amount of the donation and a description of any property given. It must also say whether you received any goods or services in exchange for the gift.

Each and every taxpayer has a set of fundamental rights they should be aware of when dealing with the IRS. These are your Taxpayer Bill of Rights. Explore your rights and our obligations to protect them on IRS.gov.

**Lowering the Risk of Infection with Grapes**

By Sandra Avant

Eating grapes may help obese people decrease certain types of fats in their blood that are linked to heart disease and lower their risk of infection, according to a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) study. Susan Zunino, a molecular biologist with the Agricultural Research Service’s (ARS) Western Human Nutrition Research Center (WHNRC) in Davis, California, studies phytochemicals—natural compounds found in fruits such as grapes and strawberries. Her recent work suggests that phytochemicals from grapes may have a positive effect on the immune system of obese individuals.

Hospital and clinic documentation of viral and bacterial infection has shown that obese people are at a much higher risk for developing infections after surgery, according to Zunino. About 35 percent of Americans are obese, which puts them at a higher risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, and bacterial and viral infections. In the study, obese participants drank either a mixture of water and grape powder made from freeze-dried table grapes or a placebo twice a day for three weeks. The two groups switched to the opposite mixture for the next three weeks. Blood samples were analyzed to measure the effects of grapes on blood lipids (fats), blood markers of inflammation and cells of the immune system during the study. Compared with the placebo group, the grape powder group had reduced plasma concentrations of low-density lipoprotein (LDL), known as “bad” cholesterol, which is associated with heart disease.

When scientists stimulated immune cells from blood with a bacterial component, they found an increase in the production of proteins—cytokines—that are instrumental in fighting off infections. In previous research, Zunino discovered that one of the same cytokine proteins was produced when obese individuals consumed strawberry powder.

However, obesity leads to more inflammation in the body, according to Zunino. Therefore, more studies are needed to find out if the increase in cytokine production, after grapes and strawberries are eaten, contributes to more inflammation or is beneficial in reducing infections.

ARS is USDA’s principal intramural scientific research agency. Read more about this work in the March 2016 issue of AgResearch at: [http://agresearchmag.ars.usda.gov/2016/mar/grapes/](http://agresearchmag.ars.usda.gov/2016/mar/grapes/)

**Joe Bodnar Memorial Northern Classic Steak & Heifer Show to be held on Saturday, April 16, 2016**

The Ashtabula County Cattlemen’s Association will be sponsoring the 19th Annual Joe Bodnar Memorial Northern Classic Steak & Heifer Jackpot Show on Saturday, April 16 at the Ashtabula County Fairgrounds in Jefferson, Ohio. This good old fashion jackpot show will start promptly at noon. The show is open to all youth under the age of 21 and will begin promptly at noon. An entry fee of $25 per head if pre-registered by April 7, 2016 and $30 per head thereafter.
Cash prizes will be awarded to individual class winners and to the Champion Steer, Reserve Champion Steer, Champion Heifer, and Reserve Champion Heifer. In addition to the open show, a Showmanship class and an Ashtabula County Class will be held. Local residents are encouraged to come out and watch this show. A registration flyer can be found at: [http://go.osu.edu/ne-events](http://go.osu.edu/ne-events). More information about this program can be obtained by calling the Ashtabula County Extension office at 440-576-9008 or by emailing David Marrison at marrison.2@osu.edu.

**Ashtabula County Agricultural Scholarship Applications Being Taken**

OSU Extension and the Ashtabula County Agricultural Scholarship Committee are pleased to announce the scholarship committee will be presenting a minimum of ten scholarships for the 2016-2017 school year to Ashtabula County students enrolled in either an accredited full four year college or an accredited two year technical institute.

Scholarships awarded this year will include: two $1,000 Ashtabula County Holstein Club, two $1,000 Western Reserve Farm Cooperative, $1,000 Allan C Jerome Memorial, $1,000 Lester C. Marrison Memorial, $1,000 Service-Jerome, $1,000 Harold & Dick Springer Memorial, $500 Lautanen Family 4-H, $500 Jim Baird Memorial, and at least one scholarship worth $1,000 from the committee itself.

Both graduate and undergraduate students who are studying agriculture, natural resources, home economics, and environmental sciences are strongly encouraged to apply. The scholarships are for a one year period. Prior recipients of a scholarship may apply. Those receiving scholarships from this fund in any two previous years are not eligible. Application forms with complete instructions for applying are now available and can be received by stopping in at the Extension Office or by calling 440-576-9008. Applications can be accessed at: [http://go.osu.edu/agscholarship](http://go.osu.edu/agscholarship). The application deadline is May 1 and no late applications will be considered.

**Ashtabula County Beef Scholarships Applications Available**

OSU Extension and the Ashtabula County Cattlemen’s Association are pleased to announce they will be awarding two youth beef scholarships for the 2016-2017 school year. One $1,000 scholarship will be awarded to a deserving 2016 High School Senior who will be attending an accredited full four year college or an accredited two year technical institute in 2016-2017. In addition, one $500 scholarship will be awarded to a current College Student who is currently attending an accredited full four year college or an accredited two year technical institute.

Applicants must be resident of Ashtabula County. The first preference by the Ashtabula County Cattlemen’s Association is the scholarships be awarded to deserving students who have been involved in the beef industry as a youth. Examples of this could include: working on a family beef operation; involved with a beef project through 4-H or FFA; or works on a local beef farm. The second preference for the scholarship recipients would be awarded to students who are currently or will be studying a beef related field in accredited full four year college or an accredited two year technical institute. Previous winners of the $1,000 High School Senior Scholarship are eligible to apply for the $500 College Scholarship. However, the $500 college scholarship can only be received once by a student during their college career.

Applications must be received by the Ashtabula County Cattlemen’s Association by May 1, 2016 for consideration for the scholarship. No late applications will be considered. The application can be obtained at: [http://go.osu.edu/ne-events](http://go.osu.edu/ne-events). Additional information can be obtained by calling the Ashtabula County Extension office at 440-576-9008.

**Brant’s Apple Orchard to Award 2016 Youth Scholarship**

Brant’s Apple Orchard has announced it will be offering a college scholarship to a deserving Ashtabula County Senior Student who will be attending an accredited full four-year college or an accredited two-year technical institute in 2016-2017. The student must be resident of Ashtabula County. Approximately $500 in scholarships will be awarded. The first preference would be given to a student pursuing a career that is agriculturally related. Brant’s Apple Orchard must
receive applications by May 1, 2016 for consideration for the scholarship. The application can be obtained at: http://go.osu.edu/ne-events Please mail your application packet to: Brant’s Apple Orchard Scholarship Application 411 Woodside Avenue Jefferson, Ohio 44047.

John F. Wilson Memorial Scholarship Fund Applications Being Taken
The John F. Wilson Memorial Scholarship Fund is established to provide financial assistance to students seeking to enter college and pursue a course of study in a natural resource field in the memory of John F. Wilson. John F. Wilson served as the first District Conservationist for the Ashtabula Soil and Water Conservation District after being established in 1949. John dedicated twenty-eight years of his life to assisting the agricultural and urban communities with their conservation needs until his retirement in 1978. The Ashtabula Soil and Water Conservation District will annually award $500 scholarships to high school graduates pursuing or college students majoring in a natural resource field. Scholarship Applicants must be a resident of Ashtabula County and have applicant must have a cumulative high school grade point average of 3.00 or better. College applicants must be maintaining 3.00 grade point average. Candidates will be evaluated on academic achievement, involvement in community activities and course of study. More information about this scholarship can be obtained by contacting the Ashtabula County Soil & Water Conservation District at 40-576-4946 or ashtabulaswcd@gmail.com

PLEASE SHARE...this newsletter with farmers or others who are interested in agricultural topics in Ashtabula & Trumbull Counties. Past issues can be located at: https://go.osu.edu/ag-news. Please tell your friends and neighbors to sign up for the list. CONTACT: marrison.2@osu.edu

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