



**College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences**  
**Ohio State University Extension**  
**Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center**

**News and  
Media Relations**

216 Kottman Hall  
2021 Coffey Road  
Columbus, Ohio  
43210-1044

614-292-2011  
(fax)614-292-2270

203 Research  
Services  
1680 Madison  
Ave.  
Wooster, Ohio  
44691

330-263-3780  
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**4-H STEM Scholars' Program Launched**

By Martha Filipic  
(614) 292-9833  
filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu  
Sources: Bob Horton  
(614) 247-8150  
horton.2@osu.edu  
Lynn Elfner  
(614) 488-2228  
oas@iwaynet.net

COLUMBUS, Ohio -- More than 200 fifth- and sixth-graders in seven central Ohio school districts have joined the Young Buckeye STEM Scholars program, developed by the Ohio 4-H Youth Development Program and the Ohio Academy of Science.

"The clubs have gotten started on technology lessons, and in September, they'll begin inquiry-based science projects," said Bob Horton, 4-H educational design and science education specialist for OSU Extension. "They'll examine an issue, break it down, and use their knowledge to take it as far as they can, and develop new knowledge in the process. The focus isn't really on getting the right answer, but on understanding the process."

STEM stands for science, technology, engineering and math. The \$700,000 after-school program, funded by the Ohio General Assembly last summer, is designed to spark interest in those areas among Ohio's youth by capitalizing on 4-H's emphasis on experiential-based learning. Each district participating in the project has started a new 4-H club with up to 25 fifth- and sixth-grade students participating. Two teachers in each district act as club advisors. The program is scheduled through August 2009, when students will have the chance to participate in the Ohio State Fair.

"The central concept of Young Buckeye STEM Scholars is that 4-H provides students with communications, teamwork and leadership skills that help students succeed in STEM careers and as effective citizens," said Lynn Elfner, chief executive officer of the Ohio Academy of Science. STEM education integrates science, technology, engineering and mathematics through student-focused, problem- and performance-based curricula and teaching that link well to other subjects, especially communications, and to creativity and innovation that may come from the arts and the humanities, Elfner said.

Two districts in Delaware County -- Big Walnut and Buckeye Valley -- are participating in the project. Laryssa Hook, the 4-H youth development educator for OSU Extension in Delaware County, said she saw a lot of enthusiasm among the teachers and participants at the introductory meetings.

"A small handful of the students involved have some 4-H experience, but most are new to 4-H," Hook said. Some of the teachers also have a 4-H background, which will be helpful as the clubs get off the ground, she said. "There is some good potential for some successes here," she said.

Ron Sanderson, the 4-H educator in Marion County, said most of the River Valley students involved are also new to 4-H, but the teachers involved both have some 4-H experience. "I think they're

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on the right track,” he said. “Anything you can do to excite elementary and middle school students in science, technology, engineering and math -- that could translate in helping them decide what their favorite subjects are and eventually what career track they take.” The project has been good for the 4-H program, as well, he said. As part of introducing the STEM Scholars program to the district, the middle school library set up a display of STEM-related 4-H projects. “We heard, ‘I didn’t know 4-H did this’ a lot as a result of that display,” Sanderson said. “We’re getting new 4-H members even outside of the STEM Scholars program.”

Beth Boomershine, the 4-H educator in Franklin County, said she attended an initial meeting of students at Brookside Elementary School in the Worthington City School District. “The kids had a lot of fun looking at all of the 4-H project books,” she said. “They just couldn’t decide which ones they wanted to select.”

The Ohio General Assembly appropriated more than \$12 million for STEM schools and STEM programs of excellence. Additionally, The Ohio Academy of Science received \$700,000 for Young Buckeye STEM Scholars, the first such partnership program in the nation.

All 5th and 6th grade students in the eligible school districts could apply to be STEM Scholars. The Academy did not use tests of intellectual ability, measures of achievement or aptitude to select students. Openings for alternates are still available.

For more information about Young Buckeye STEM Scholars program, contact Bob Horton, (614) 247-8150 or [horton.2@osu.edu](mailto:horton.2@osu.edu), or the Ohio Academy of Science at (614) 488-2228, [oas@iwaynet.net](mailto:oas@iwaynet.net), or on the Web at <http://www.ybstems.org/>.

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**Editor:** Local 4-H contacts for the Young Buckeye STEM Scholars program are:

- Delaware County: Laryssa Hook, [hook.26@cfaes.osu.edu](mailto:hook.26@cfaes.osu.edu), (740) 833-2030. Big Walnut Local School District (led by teachers Marina E. Hoge and Ryan J. Parrish) and Buckeye Valley Local School District (led by teachers Terri Fling and Mark W. Jackson).

- Franklin County: Beth Boomershine, [boomershine10@ag.osu.edu](mailto:boomershine10@ag.osu.edu), (614) 866-6900, ext. 216. Worthington City School District (led by teachers Sandra J. Cobb and Deb Monroe at Brookside Elementary School; Michael S. Miller and Stephanie Riedmiller at Colonial Hills Elementary School; and Christopher Andersen and Deb K. Todd at Slate Hills Elementary School).

- Marion County: Ron Sanderson, [rsanderson@cfaes.osu.edu](mailto:rsanderson@cfaes.osu.edu), (740) 223-4040. River Valley Local School District (led by teachers Tad A. Douce and Cheryl S. Slack).

- Pickaway County: Judy Conrad, [conrad.67@cfaes.osu.edu](mailto:conrad.67@cfaes.osu.edu), (740) 474-7534. Teays Valley Local School District (led by teachers Melissa J. Adkins and Marie A. Hammond).

- Union County: Karen Gwilliams, [gwilliams.1@cfaes.osu.edu](mailto:gwilliams.1@cfaes.osu.edu), (937) 644-8117. North Union Local School District (led by teachers Sharon G. DeGarmo and Amy L. Wilson).

- Wyandot County: Brenda Young, [young.9@osu.edu](mailto:young.9@osu.edu), (419) 294-4931. Upper Sandusky Exempted Village School District (led by teachers Jill W. Eyestone and Teresa J. Harris).