Biographical Statement

In April 2014, I became the OSU Extension Educator II, 4-H Youth Development in Lawrence County specializing in After-school Enrichment. I serve as the only Educator in the county with a full-time Office Associate operating on an average county budget of $75,000 per year. In addition to the 2018 county budget provided by our County Commissioners, the office leveraged approximately $130,300; $71,300 through Federal & State Educator Match Funds, EFNEP and SNAP-Ed Program Assistants, $59,000 in 4-H grants and gifted program funding in support of OSU Extension, Lawrence County.

In July 2018, I became the Lead Steward for all stewardship areas of Resource Management and Planning; the Government Relations Steward for Commissioner Relations and Budget Development Proposal and Legislative/Government Affairs areas; the Marketing/Media/Supporters Steward for Stakeholder Relations and Extension Advisory Committee areas. I serve as Back-Up Steward to the Office Associate for all other stewardship roles.

Based on the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau, Lawrence County population is 62,450; of the population 95.5% are white, 16.2% are 5-18 year old youth. The 2017-2018 ES237 report indicates Lawrence County 4-H served 674 youth through 33 4-H community clubs with 137 4-H certified volunteers. Lawrence County 4-H also served an additional 588 youth through school enrichment, special interest, and after-school programs. This is a 23% increase of 4-H community club members and a 180% increase of 4-H youth in additional programming since my first year as the 4-H Educator.

Major Accomplishments: Extension Programming, Teaching and Creative and Scholarly Works - Areas of Focus

Innovative Program Approaches

Many county-wide opportunities have become available to our youth through innovative program approaches such as; Generation Rx, Tech Wizards Mentoring Program, 4-H Yoga for Kids, Real Money – Real World, and a county developed, Fit Family Fun program.

Most recently, Lawrence County 4-H innovative programming has been focused around grant funded opportunities such as Generation Rx and Tech Wizards. In 2018, OSU Extension received $21,885 in funding to implement Generation Rx. This grant opportunity created a new school partnership with South Point Middle School, serving approximately 300 non-traditional 4-H youth with safe use of prescription drug education. The program was implemented with a hired Generation Rx Student Assistant, as well as twelve 8th grade Generation Rx Teen Leaders, and myself.

In 2016-2017, Lawrence County 4-H received grants totaling approximately $30,000 for Tech Wizards. The Tech Wizards Mentoring Program provided an after-school partnership with Chesapeake Middle School and the Ironton Youth Empowerment Action Group. As part of the program, I provided STEM and Healthy Living education to a new audience of twenty youth and their mentors.

The Tech Wizards Mentoring Program created the opportunity to host a multi-county regional Maker Festival held at Shawnee State University. At the festival, I presented the Ohio 4-H STEM Pathways – Hay Swift Kick activity to youth participants. Our work surrounding the planning and implementation of the Maker Festival, “4-H Joins the Maker Movement” was presented at the 2017 NAE4-HA Conference.

The 4-H Tech Wizards Mentoring Program allowed for professional development training in 4-H Yoga for Kids. In 2018, my certification and the new South Point Middle School connection allowed for a new program opportunity. I offered 4-H Yoga After-school weekly for a semester to an average of six girls. Of these youth, 75% indicated yoga helped them to relax and learned it is a fun way to exercise. Beyond the exercise, after a few weeks of practice, these youth were introduced to leadership and communication skills as they individually led the routines. School Administration was impressed by the program’s ability to have a student on the autism spectrum leading her peers in the 4-H Yoga poses.

Beginning in 2016, three middle school partnerships were established offering Real Money, Real World in Lawrence County. Of the 555 surveyed participants over the last three years, 96% indicated they believed the program would help
them in the future and 97% indicated the program gave them a better idea of what was involved in earning, spending, and managing money.

In 2015, while working to develop county 4-H partnerships and a reputation for quality programs; the EFNEP program assistant and I teamed up to create and deliver a “Fit Family Fun” program to youth and caregivers with an existing EFNEP community partner. The 4-H program focused on providing healthy living education, and physical activity and basic cooking skills. Participants indicated they would spend less time on electronic devices and choose healthier snacks. The program continued into 2016, with $5,600 of provided support to target underserved families in Lawrence County. Fit Family Fun was showcased at the 2015 OSU Extension Annual Conference as a poster presentation.

Based on county need and personal interest, many of the innovative programs focused around the Healthy Living topic introducing my desire to serve on the Ohio 4-H Healthy Living Design Team. Service to the design team began in 2017, allowing for the opportunity to write the peer-reviewed, “Happy Heart” lesson for the Ohio 4-H Health Officer Blog published February 2018. The Health Heroes statewide initiative success created a need to expand the state training regionally providing me the opportunity to become the 2018 – 2019 Southeast regional contact.

Also, as part of my passion in implementing innovative programs on the county level, I became involved with the NAE4-HA After-school Task Force. I have served as the 2015 - 2018 Ohio 4-H state contact for this task force. In 2017, I was asked to serve as the NAE4-HA task force chair during the 2017 conference and continued this role throughout 2018.

Livestock Education

The Lawrence County 4-H program has always had a strong livestock presence, but continuous improvement to quality education and programs offered is a sustained need. After the 2014 livestock season I created and implemented an evaluation used with the 4-H and Livestock Committees. The evaluation technique, “Taking Time to Reflect” and “Fair is Over…Now What?”, was presented at the 2015 Ohio Fair Managers Conference and the Ohio 4-H Volunteer Conference.

Through program reflection, county needs are determined each year. For example, in 2015, a need to update our county quality assurance facilitation was discovered. In 2016, I implemented club based trainings with more hands-on activities. Over the past three years, on average, 96% of youth indicated they gained knowledge they can use with their project, 95% learned something important about the 3 good production practices, 98% believed activities were useful to their learning experience, 94% believed it was fun and interactive, and 95% plan to use the information to complete their project.

Another program reflection example is in 2017 specie specific fact sheets were developed to keep our livestock members informed of project expectations and requirements.

To support the county efforts in providing high quality livestock education programs, the Ohio 4-H Foundation provided $2,950 in 2016 funding. Funding assisted with providing training and curriculum to 4-H club advisors; as well as other livestock initiatives such as a county wide livestock bowl competition at the county fair.

In 2017, I became the Lawrence County Livestock Judging Team Coach of the two newly formed judging teams. These teams have competed for two years at the Ohio State Fair and in the 2018 Ohio Beef Expo, in which a team placed 5th overall. Through my coaching involvement with the Lawrence County Livestock Judging Team and assistance at the 2018 Ohio State Fair Livestock Judging Contest, I was asked to serve on the 2019 Ohio State Fair Livestock Judging Contest Advisory Committee.

Teen Leadership

As the county 4-H Educator, I serve as the Junior Fair Board coordinator which averages approximately 25 youth per year. I also provide leadership to our county camp counselors; our number of camp counselors has grown each year with a total of thirteen in 2018. Results from the 2017 and 2018 surveys include; 100% feel they are learning different leadership styles for different situations, 96% gained skills to be a leader among their peers, 92% feel they have opportunities to lead and conduct program activities, 88% feel they are prepared to help other teens lead a group activity, 88% feel they are learning to delegate or share responsibilities with others, and 88% feel they are involved in the 4-H planning of activities from their involvement in monthly leadership opportunities.
The lessons developed and used with the Lawrence County 4-H Teens have been shared throughout state curriculum and national presentations such as; co-presenting “Utilizing Teen Leaders in the Residential Camping Program” at the 2015 4-H Camping and Environmental Education Institute, “Counselor College Engaging Youth at all Levels of Experience” at the 2015 NAE4-HA National Conference, and publishing “Faces of the Counselor” lesson in the double blind peer review Ohio 4-H Camping Program Volume 2.

On a regional level, I have served as the Co-Director of Canter’s Cave 4-H Camp’s Counselor College for 4 years. In 2016, Counselor College received the state NAE4-HA award for Excellence in Camping for the 2015 camping year. Each year, impact data collected from Counselor College indicates an increase in workforce readiness, critical thinking, communication, team work, problem solving, and leadership skills.

4-H Community Clubs

Supporting the 4-H club volunteers and members is a priority in Lawrence County. The implementation of “Protecting Our Minors” created an opportunity to meet with the volunteers on a yearly basis. These yearly trainings have provided a more personal environment for open communication, idea sharing, and conflict resolution. These relationships have provided for co-presentations at the 2018 Ohio 4-H Volunteer Conference and the 2019 Ohio Fair Managers Conference, “Tough Stuff” alongside regional colleagues.

In 2016, Lawrence County was one of the first Ohio counties to pilot the 4-Honline.com family enrollment system. Due to limited volunteer training and lack of internet access in family homes, a county-wide enrollment event was created. The Lawrence County 4-H Meet, Greet, and Enroll was implemented in conjunction with the yearly volunteer training, in which volunteers and families were provided support in operating the online system. Many projects were showcased to newly recruited elementary and middle school youth from across the county, giving Lawrence County 4-H an opportunity for growth, as these youth were able to observe 4-H in action for the first time. The increase of 4-H Community Club members has created a need for volunteer club resources and training. The Ohio 4-H Foundation has funded over $5,000 to date to support these initiatives.

The “4-H Meet, Greet, and Enroll” promotional flyer received the 3rd place Creative Works – Professionally Assisted Epsilon Sigma Phi Alpha Eta Chapter/Ohio JCEP award. The county’s 4HOnline volunteer training and family resources package was shared at the 2017 State 4-H Professionals Update Roundtable, “4-HOnline: Overview of Moving to Family Enrollment”.

To prepare 4-H volunteers for the use of the online system, the Ohio Valley 4-H EERA created “Unpacking the 4-H Charter: Online Volunteer Training” modules. As part of the 2015 module package, I authored the “4-H Volunteer Screening” video training module, with downloadable handout, questions, and quiz. As a co-presenter of an ignite poster, for the 2016 Ohio State University Extension Annual Conference, these modules were presented.

Other Notable Service

I was nominated by Ohio Valley EERA peers to serve on the Ohio 4-H Internal Advisory Committee for 2017 and 2018.

I was elected by the Canter’s Cave 4-H Camp Board to serve on the executive committee beginning in 2017 as the President-Elect, 2018 as President, and 2019 as Past President. During this time, I have also served on the Marketing, Personnel, and Finance Committees.

Plans for the Future

In the coming years, I plan to continue “making the best better” in Lawrence County by evaluating needs, seeking professional development opportunities in these areas, and implementing research-based programs in my focus areas. For example, based on the 2018 county needs assessment, my goals beginning in 2019 are to provide innovative education around workforce prep for teens, opioid prevention, and parenting education. Funding has been secured for the teen workforce prep and parenting education initiatives; along with hopes to continue and expand the Generation Rx opportunity. I will also continue to share my successes on a county, regional, state and national level through professional development, presentations, and collaborative partnerships.