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Ohio State University Extension—Cuyahoga County Receives \$152,571 through USDA’s Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Grant Program as part of Wholesome Wave’s \$3.77 Million Grant

(Cleveland, Ohio) Today, Ohio State University Extension—Cuyahoga County, the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition, and Countryside Conservancy celebrate USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack’s announcement of \$31.5 million granted through the Food Insecurity Nutrition Program (FINI). National nonprofit Wholesome Wave received a \$3.77 million FINI grant, of which Ohio State University Extension—Cuyahoga County, as a subgrantee, will receive \$152,571 to be used to support increased access to fruits and vegetables for the food insecure of Northeast Ohio, while also benefitting small and mid-sized farmers in the region.

“This award marks significant progress in increasing the accessibility and affordability of healthy food in Cleveland, Northeast Ohio, and statewide. With this grant, Ohio State University Extension—Cuyahoga County, the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition, and Countryside Conservancy will be able to test and implement innovative and promising strategies that promote healthy eating, urban agriculture, and local farms,” says Nicole Debose, Executive Director of Ohio State University Extension—Cuyahoga County.

Ohio State University Extension aims to improve the lives of Ohioans through research-based education programs in the areas of agriculture, nutrition and family and consumer sciences. Ohio State University Extension—Cuyahoga County is a co-convenor of the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition, whose mission is to promote a just, equitable, healthy, and sustainable food system in the City of Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, and Northeast Ohio. In nearby Summit County, Countryside Conservancy works to expand healthy food access and stimulate the local economy by operating three farmers’ markets and preserving the agricultural legacy of the region through support of local farming. The grant issued to Ohio State University Extension—Cuyahoga County will expand the capacity of the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition’s Double Value Produce Perks program and Countryside Conservancy’s Carrot

Cash program, two incentive programs offered at participating farmers' markets that provide customers receiving food assistance benefits with a dollar-for-dollar match up to \$10 and \$15 respectively to spend on fresh fruits and vegetables. This will allow for the development of a statewide network of farmers' markets offering incentive programs and will ultimately increase affordable access to fresh fruits and vegetables for SNAP consumers in Cleveland, Northeast Ohio, and statewide while also supporting local agriculture.

“The logical next step for us is to look at expanding the Produce Perks program in Cuyahoga County operated by OSU Extension and Carrot Cash program operated in Summit County by Countryside Conservancy to the regional and statewide level so that we can make sure healthy food is within reach of as many Ohioans as possible,” says Nico Boyd, Program Coordinator of the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition.

The timing of this award comes on the heels of the tenth anniversary season of Countryside Conservancy's farmers' market program. “Equitable access to the foods our farmers bring to Countryside's markets has always been a high priority for us, and our Carrot Cash program helps both customers and farmers make connections that wouldn't be feasible otherwise. In 2014 our markets reached over \$1 million in annual sales, highlighting the importance of farmers' markets and their economic impact on the communities they serve,” says Beth Knorr, Farmers' Markets Manager at Countryside Conservancy.

Ohio State University Extension—Cuyahoga County received this award as a subgrantee on a larger \$3.77 million grant, which nonprofit, Wholesome Wave, obtained from the USDA to support their national network of nutrition incentive partners. Ohio State University Extension—Cuyahoga County is one of 32 community-based organizations that will join Wholesome Wave in this Large-Scale FINI Project. Wholesome Wave's network is a robust community of innovation and learning, linking incentive programs through uniform data collection and evaluation to support the expansion and adoption of incentives through policy. Wholesome Wave's project is one of many that received support as part of the total \$31.5 million granted by USDA in this cycle.

With the award from Wholesome Wave, Ohio State University Extension—Cuyahoga County will implement incentive programs at 27 farmers' markets and one mobile market. Other sub-grantees in the state of Ohio include Ohio State University Extension—Hamilton County and the Special Improvements District Public Services Association. These organizations will implement and grow regional farmers' market incentive programs in the Cincinnati and Columbus areas.

“We are thrilled to be working with such a diverse and competent group of incentive operators across the nation. This network brings together organizations ranging from a flourishing farmers market group to a large scale nonprofit, capitalizing on the grassroots expertise of community leaders, while also building regional and national impact that allows us to enact the kind of large-scale policy change we see in legislation like FINI,” says Wholesome Wave founder and CEO, Michel Nischan.

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Ohio State University Extension brings the knowledge of the university directly to you. We fulfill the land-grant mission of The Ohio State University by interpreting knowledge and research developed by Extension and other faculty and staff at the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center, Ohio State main campus, and other land-grant universities – so Ohioans can use the scientifically based information to better their lives, businesses and communities. No matter which county you visit, you can find people who are helped by the four major OSU Extension program areas: family and consumer sciences, 4-H youth development, community development, and agriculture and natural resources. These program areas – and many other special topics – are continuously being evaluated and updated to meet the changing needs and issues facing each community.

The Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition was formed in 2007 to help bring about public and private policy-based changes that foster an all-around healthier food system. The Coalition has based its work on assessments of how food can impact the health of individuals, communities, the economy, and the environment. The Coalition facilitates policy-based changes by convening issue-based working groups, building coalitions around new projects and programs, helping conduct research, convening quarterly forums, partnering on special events, and communicating online and disseminating information. To learn more about the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition, visit www.cccfoodpolicy.org or call 216-429-8200.

Established in 1999, Countryside Conservancy connects people, food, and land. We manage three thriving farmers' markets; offer educational programming for farmers, backyard gardeners, and home cooks with our Countryside U courses; and through our Countryside Initiative program have reestablished working family farms in Cuyahoga Valley National Park. To learn more visit www.cvcountryside.org.

Wholesome Wave is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that strives to create a vibrant, just and sustainable food system. By making fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables affordable and available, we enable underserved consumers to make healthier food choices. Our innovative initiatives are improving health outcomes among low-income families, generating additional revenue for small and mid-sized farm businesses and bolstering local and regional economies. Our initiatives are implemented nationwide in collaboration with community-based partners at farmers markets, community health centers, hospital systems, food hubs, and retail outlets. Each year, our initiatives reach more than 50,000 underserved consumers and their families, as well as thousands of farmers. To learn more about Wholesome Wave visit www.wholesomewave.org or call [203-226-1112](tel:203-226-1112).