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Released on Sept. 13, 2007

**Young Buckeye STEM Scholars: Ohio 4-H Helping  
to Spark Interest in Science, Math**

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COLUMBUS, Ohio -- A new \$700,000 two-year project that will involve 225 fifth- and sixth-grade students is aimed at sparking a long-term interest in science, technology, engineering and math.

Leaders hope the program, Young Buckeye STEMS (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math Scholars), will provide a template that teachers and community leaders across the state can emulate, eventually boosting enrollment in these fields as the students prepare for high school and enter college. They'll be doing so under the new Ohio Core curriculum that requires four years of math and English and three years of "inquiry-based" laboratory science.

The program, funded in Ohio's state budget passed this summer, is being led by the Ohio Academy of Science, with Ohio State University Extension's office of 4-H Youth Development a key partner. Nine schools in seven central Ohio school districts will be involved.

"Much of this project involves establishing some best practices," said Bob Horton, the 4-H educational design and science education specialist for OSU Extension. "I hope we can find methods that can be easily transferred to any 4-H program and any after-school program to interest and excite kids about science, technology, engineering and math."

Students involved in Young Buckeye STEMS will be involved in after-school and summertime programs that will operate as new 4-H clubs, Horton said. Teachers, who will undergo training and be paid a stipend, will act as club advisers. They will lead the students as they develop their 4-H projects, which will primarily focus on science and technology -- including projects such as "Rockets Away," "Exploring Our Insect World" or "Investigating Electricity." The students will display and discuss their completed project at a county fair, public library, or other public venue.

Students also will keep journals, updated at least every other week, to enhance their skills of observation, note-taking, documentation, written communications and self-reflection.

In addition, each of the nine STEMS groups will conduct a year-long club technological design project. Horton is designing a special "challenge event," similar to Odyssey of the Mind, for the 2009 Ohio State Fair for the STEM Scholars.

After completing their standard 4-H project, STEM Scholars will go a step further, Horton said. They'll take their original 4-H project or choose a new project and modify it to meet the meet the

## Buckeye STEMS — 2

OAS guidelines for inquiry-based projects participating in science fairs.

Another element of the program is teaming STEM Scholars with mentors from private business and industry, academia, or governmental science- and technology-based agencies. The mentors will act as role models and provide career-related field trips for the students in summer 2008, Horton said.

Finally, a capstone event in summer 2009 will take place at the new Nationwide and Ohio Farm Bureau 4-H Center on Ohio State's campus, scheduled to open by the end of 2007. "We're excited about using the new 4-H center as an incubator for new ideas," Horton said.

Applications for teachers in the participating school districts are available by e-mailing the Ohio Academy of Science office at [oas@iwaynet.net](mailto:oas@iwaynet.net). The districts that will be participating are:

- Big Walnut and Buckeye Valley in Delaware County.
- North Union in Union County.
- River Valley in Marion County.
- Teays Valley in Pickaway County.
- Upper Sandusky in Wyandot County.
- Worthington City Schools in Franklin County.

Other partners in the project are Ohio State's College of Education and Human Ecology, TechColumbus and local libraries.

For more information on Young Buckeye STEM Scholars, contact Lynn Elfner at the Ohio Academy of Science at (614) 488-2228 or [oas@iwaynet.net](mailto:oas@iwaynet.net), or Bob Horton at (614) 247-8150 or [horton.1@osu.edu](mailto:horton.1@osu.edu).