



Allegan County

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

BY THE NUMBERS



1,968 Allegan County youth involved in 4-H and other youth development programs



202 Allegan County residents participated in health and nutrition programs



233 Allegan County residents participated in agriculture or agribusiness related workshops or sessions



219 Allegan County families utilized the MSU Extension Remote Learning Resources



41,329 MSU Extension webpage visits from Allegan County residents

MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR

Once again I am delighted to share the results of another successful year of partnership between Allegan County and Michigan State University (MSU) Extension. Because of your continued support, we've been able to make a difference in the lives of youth, families, businesses, and communities.



The 2020 programming year has been like none other. As the novel coronavirus entered Michigan and the state put protections in place in the form of the Stay Home, Stay Safe order, MSU Extension staff went to work to adapt their classes to a virtual setting. Within a week, MSU Extension launched the Remote Learning and Resources website and set to work to create resources that individuals, businesses and families needed. MSU Extension is proud to have continued its strong partnership with Allegan County.

Local MSU Extension staff and the statewide network of Educators provided information and expertise to local farmers, government officials, local and state employees, as well as, county youth and adult residents. This annual report gives examples of some of MSU Extension's accomplishments and the impact that we continue to have in the County. Thank you for the opportunity to share our most valuable resource – our people who strive to provide answers to questions that help solve real problems right here in Allegan County.

Our partnership with you makes this all possible. On behalf of the MSU Extension team serving Allegan County, thank you for another great year. We look forward to your continued support and hope you'll be able to join us during one of our upcoming programs.

Erin Moore, District 7 Director

Program Highlights



Wade Syers, joined the MSU Food Safety team this year and looks forward to growing partnerships in Allegan County.

FOOD SAFETY

In February 2020, MSU Extension partnered with the First Presbyterian Church of Allegan to deliver Cooking For Crowds. This program is designed for groups that prepare food in a public setting such as non-profit groups that host pot-lucks, spaghetti suppers, bake sales, barbecues, etc. Topics included foodborne illness, safe purchasing from suppliers, storage, preparation and service. Participants learned to reduce these risks and help prevent the conditions that may lead to a foodborne illness. MSU Extension offered a variety of food safety and preservation classes such as pressure canning and freezing, pickling and dehydrating, and preserving venison among others. Over 73 Allegan county residents took advantage of these classes.



Learning lessons for healthy eating habits are invaluable and strengthen the foundation for a healthy lifestyle.

SHOW ME NUTRITION

Community Nutrition Instructor, Sue Elwell, worked with seven different schools in Allegan County to deliver nutrition education. In 2020, 206 youth received education via the Show me Nutrition curriculum. This curriculum is adaptable by grade and age and, in addition, it can be coupled with educational standards. Students and teachers alike enjoy learning about healthy snacking, reducing sugar sweetened beverages and introducing more physical activity into our daily lives. When we make healthy eating habits fun, educational and hands-on we see the incredible benefits of programming like Show Me Nutrition in our communities.

ON-FARM SOYBEAN TRIALS

Soybean Educator, Mike Staton, continued his research on soybean varieties in 2020. In January, 55 soybean producers and agronomists participated in a ½ day educational meeting conducted in Hamilton on January 23, 2020. Follow-up evaluations documented the following impacts: Fifteen producers said they *actually* earned additional money in 2020 by implementing the new information they learned at the program. The new information was implemented on 6,577 acres, producing an *actual* financial impact of \$99,338 in 2020 alone. Four on-farm research trials were conducted in Allegan County in 2020. These were published in a 32-page research report and mailed directly to more than 11,000 Michigan soybean producers. Approximately 100 Allegan County producers received the research report in early January.



There are approximately 245 soybean farms in Allegan County with 36,000 acres of soybean fields.

Program Highlights

MICHIGAN TOURISM

MSU Extension led a series of webinar sessions entitled “COVID-19 Impacts on Tourism”. These sessions provided invaluable information in navigating the impact of COVID19 and tourism. Attendees included village and city managers, county representatives, county commissioners, economic developers, and planners. The sessions were broken into 5 separate sessions that included “Strategies for Tourism in Small Towns”, “COVID-19 impacts on food systems”, “Agritourism and Sustainability”. This webinar series is still available on the MSU Extension Tourism website and community members are welcome and encouraged to preview this relevant resource. Tourism recovery will be an important economic recovery activity for Michigan in 2021 and beyond.



Tourism will be an important economic recovery activity for Michigan. To access the free webinar series, please visit <https://www.canr.msu.edu/tourism/COVID-19-pandemic-and-tourism/>

APICULTURE EDUCATION

The MSU Extension Apiculture Team delivered a series of webinars for new and experienced beekeepers. The group reached over 2,000 people across the state of Michigan, including 41 in Allegan County. The team covered topics such as preparing for swarm season, early season management, and first year colonies. MSU Extension provides robust education on beekeeping. The College of Natural Science runs the Michigan Pollinator Initiative which houses many resources for experienced and aspiring beekeepers. Additionally, all the MSU Extension webinars are housed with the initiative to provide continual and ongoing education for the growing interest in beekeeping. To access, please visit: <https://pollinators.msu.edu/resources/beekeepers/>



MSU Extension Veteran Liaison, Adam Ingrao, holding up a hive.

ADULTING 101

Adulting 101 programming allows youth and young adults to gain skills and knowledge of useful information that will help them to be successful in an everchanging world. This exciting series of Adulting 101 was offered for high school youth and with topics that included Household Tasks, Developing a Spending Plan, Cooking 101, Debt vs. Credit and Being an Informed Renter. This webinar series had multiple states represented with over 1,000 registrations and 20 Allegan County residents participating. This program will continue to expand in 2021 and we look forward to continuing to prepare young people in our community for success with vital life skills.



The Adulting 101 program accommodated the need to offer this series via zoom. MSU Extension was able to reach young people in Allegan County as well as in other states.

Featured County Story:

Allegan County 4-H Still Arts Virtual Showcase

Due to the cancellation of the 2020 Allegan County Fair, the 4-H team worked side-by-side with Allegan County Leaders to create a virtual space for Allegan youth to showcase their still arts. The virtual showcase had over 70 entries in the event with participants from youth all across the county. The event was hosted on Facebook by two volunteers with virtual judges collaborating. The event was complete with virtual registration and even “door prizes.” While this year presented a different format, it was a popular format with the youth participants

From pottery, glasswork, cooking demonstrations and photography, the Still Arts Virtual Showcase did not disappoint. Youth displayed their exceptional talent and passion through a variety of project submissions. Despite the new setting, there were even novice entries in the 2020 showcase.

Noel Vanderbilt, Age 17, was the winner of the Novice “Best in Show” Photography submission with her project “Gaze of the Horse” (pictured right). Noel loved capturing the memories and beauty of horseback riding through photography. Noel was inspired with this project, saying “ There is something absolutely captivating about the gaze of the horse. Sometimes their ears are pricked, eyes alert, nostrils flared, poised for action. Other times their eyes are soft and thoughtful as they nose forward gently, searching for a treat or a scratch. In the barnyard, in the stall, by our side, or in the pasture, the horse evokes beauty, grace, power, and majesty. “



Another participant, Jordan Beers, age 17, of the Monterey Community Club, won “Best of Show” for three out of her four submissions— Drawing, Painting Oil (pictured left) and Paper Craft. She likes experimenting with the colors but found oranges to be quite difficult. She’s planning to move on to animals and darker colors.



MSU Extension is proud of the 2020 4-H Still Arts Virtual Showcase and the collaboration with the Allegan County 4-H Council. This event would not have been possible without the passionate leaders and volunteers that make 4-H a place for youth to learn and thrive.

While we were disappointed to not meet in person for the 2020 Fair year, this program showed exactly how 4-H youth are able to adapt and thrive. We are incredibly proud of all of the youth, and volunteers that participated in this event.

Program Highlights



4-H is Michigan's largest youth development program serving over 200,000 youth each year.

4-H LIVESTOCK LEARNING

Livestock Learning for the Allegan 4-H youth was scheduled to take place in-person in the spring of 2020. As always, our 4-H community rose and met the challenges of 2020 with the same dedication and spirit as reflected in previous years of participation. 4-H leaders and educators were committed to offering programming to our Allegan County youth and quickly adapted the training to a virtual opportunity. There were 7 hour long sessions in total with 23 Allegan County 4-H members attending. Topics included nutrition, showmanship, biosecurity, selection and daily care. 4-H participants throughout the state, moved through the year with resilience and adjusted to new virtual learning opportunities.



MSU Extension workshops and programming provide memorable opportunities for Allegan County 4-H members to learn from the experts.

4-H Veterinary Workshops

The 4-H Veterinary Science and the 4-H Beef, Sheep and Swine Teen and Adult Volunteer Leaders Workshop were held back-to-back at the Kettunen Center in Tustin, MI. Allegan County 4-H members were given the opportunity to explore new ideas in-depth and to get a "hands-on" experience with veterinary medicine and management, livestock production and management and present new ideas, activities and approaches to the 4-H Veterinary Science Program. They also developed communication skills and leadership techniques that will allow them to more effectively re-teach skills in our county to fellow 4-H members.



Zippping Around the Zoos is just one of the dynamic programming events offered in a Spin (Special Interest) Club format.

4-H SPIN CLUB "ZIPPING AROUND THE ZOOS"

Over the course of three weeks, youth were given the chance to explore the different zoos across the country and to learn about a variety of animals. This club explored land animals, water animals, reptiles, rehabilitation, behind the scenes of zoos, and to have a "funny" animal day. Allegan County residents viewed live cams from different zoos and aquariums such as the San Diego Zoo, the Smithsonian National Zoo, Georgia Aquarium, Monterey Aquarium and more from the comfort of their homes. 4-H Spin Clubs offer the unique experience of participating in Michigan 4-H Development that specializes in a specific project. This participation often results in young people becoming an Allegan County 4-H Member and expanding their growth and development.

Program Highlights

CONSUMER HORTICULTURE

MSU Extension Smart Gardening OUTREACH was represented with exhibits in the 4-day event of the West Michigan Home and Garden Show. While this event often inspires thoughts of spring, it is also an opportunity to tap the expertise of MSU Extension educators. In addition, there was a one-day conference that featured topics that ranged from smart plants pollinating, tips for gardening success by building resilient soils, edible ornamentals, to creating habitats for bees to thrive and recognizing captivating caterpillars. A total of 68 Allegan County residents gained considerable amounts of tips, tricks and the tools to create a beautiful garden in our community and the tools to create a beautiful garden in our community.



Allegan County is the home to a variety of beautiful gardens with residents learning from MSU Extension experts.

TREE FRUIT HORTICULTURE

In response to the Stay Home, Stay Safe order, the MSU Extension Tree Fruit team hosted the 2020 Spring Tree Fruit Educational session as a series of webinars. This 10-day webinar series included topics such as weather predictions, apple and cherry disease updates, spring sprayer set-up, orchard weed management among others. Fruit specialists were invited to present at the lunch time sessions. This was a true team effort with an overwhelming positive response from fruit growers and stakeholders. The series attracted 478 people statewide, with 15 growers attending from Allegan County.



The MSU Extension fruit team moved its spring tree fruit educational programs to a series of live webinars.

SMALL FRUIT EDUCATION

The MSU Extension Small Fruit Team hosted a total of three webinar series to update local growers on issues related to the early portion of the blueberry season. This webinar delivered information on research and extension subjects of interest during the 2020 blueberry pre-bloom, bloom and pre-harvest period. Topics ranged from Michigan pollinator protection plans and guidelines to insect pests and diseases. An exciting addition to the webinar was Dr. Marisol Quintanilla-Tornel, an MSU Entomology Nematologist. Dr. Quintanilla-Tornel provided direct assistance to the Michigan blueberry industry, specifically around nematodes. Nematodes are a serious problem of blueberries that many times go undetected or are misidentified as soil or nutritional problems. In total, 22 Allegan County residents participated in this series.



Michigan blueberry growers produce about 100 million pounds of blueberries every year, making Michigan a leader in blueberry production.

Program Highlights



MSU Extension has a menu of programs that offer education in mental health awareness, anger management and reducing stress.

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL HEALTH

The need to work from home and keep our distance from others has put a strain on everyone's mental health. MSU Extension is very proud to have offered mindfulness, anger management and caregiver training to Michigan residents. Within a week of the Stay Home, Stay Safe state order, Holly Tiret, MSU Extension Educator, was teaching virtual Mindfulness classes to not only residents of Allegan County and Michigan but also reached participants around the country and even abroad. Her classes in breathing, laughter and anger management have been met with great success. In Allegan County, 20 residents took advantage of classes such as Relax: Alternatives to Anger classes and Mindfulness. Overall, these classes reached over 3,000 Michigan residents.



Youth from Japan joined the virtual Gingerbread baking class with 4-H Educator, Jan Brinn.

INTERNATIONAL GINGERBREAD BAKING

The holidays are a great time to exchange the things that make our cultures unique! 4-H hosted a virtual gingerbread baking class in order to share a special holiday tradition with our global community! This virtual baking class allowed Michigan 4-H participants to join other 4-H youth around the world to learn together how to make traditional Polish gingerbread cookies! The goal was to actually bake a batch together during the one hour live event. Allegan County's Jan Brinn, Children and Youth Educator, co-hosted the event with a 4-H leader from Poland. Together they brought over 200 participants from around the world to share in this cultural event.



MSU Extension has formed a Rapid Response to Agriculture work team to help counties understand the unique issue Agriculture faces.

AGRICULTURE ANNEX—EOC

At the onset of the pandemic in 2020, Allegan County's Emergency Manger, Scott Corbin gathered together a group of individuals connected to the Agricultural Industry in Allegan County to form the Agricultural Annex of the Emergency Operating Center. The primary concern at the time with the PPE shortage that was impacting the safety of Agricultural workers as manufacturing delays and cost hikes pressed on the industry. District Director Erin Moore, and Soybean Educator, Mike Staton, both serve on the Annex to support the development of necessary support documents to be used in the case of an emergency.

MSU Extension staff located in Allegan County

Jan Brinn	Youth Development Educator	Ext. 2555	brinn@msu.edu
Sue Elwell	Community Nutrition Instructor	Ext. 2559	elwell@msu.edu
Dian Liepe	4-H Program Coordinator	Ext. 2557	liepe@msu.edu
Erin Moore	District 7 Director	Ext. 2553	mooree16@msu.edu
Rebecca Simonds	Office Manager	269-673-0370	simondsr@msu.edu
Mike Staton	Senior Soybean Educator	Ext. 2562	staton@msu.edu

Through successful partnership and collaboration with Allegan County, MSU Extension is able to continue its local presence and to provide vital educational resources and programming in such areas as community and economic development, agriculture, land use, health and nutrition, and youth development.

Thank you Allegan County!



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