



Benzie County

2019–2020 ANNUAL REPORT

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FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR:

I'm delighted to share the results of another successful year of partnership between Benzie 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.



MSU Extension offers a broad range of research-based educational outreach to county residents. Over this past year, we've empowered families and individuals to live healthier lives, supported new and local entrepreneurs, created opportunities for youth leadership development and career exploration, helped farmers with business management and mental health, and much more. Our staff live and work alongside county residents, have established community relationships and are responsive to community needs.

Although this report is intended to reflect on the work we achieved collectively last year, I would be remiss if I didn't address the changes we have made as an organization as a result of the novel coronavirus. In order to keep our communities and program participants safe, MSU Extension has temporarily moved our educational outreach virtually both with individual clients and group programs. This online suite of programs has expanded the educational options offered to Benzie County residents because our programs can be accessed by anyone, anywhere. These changes have led to an increase in engagement of residents in our programs, many of whom are first time program participants.

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

Jennifer Berkey

Jennifer Berkey, District 3 Director

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STAFF HOUSED IN BENZIE COUNTY:

- Allison Olson
4-H Program Coordinator
- Caitlin Lorenc
Community Nutrition Instructor
- Deborah Longo
Secretary
(vacant)
Farm Stress Educator



MEASURING IMPACT:

CONNECTING WITH RESIDENTS

4-H: Developing Youth & Communities	863
Keeping People Healthy.....	846
Supporting Agriculture & Agribusiness.....	429
Fostering Strong Communities & Businesses, and Enhancing Our Natural Assets	1,923

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS IN BENZIE COUNTY..... 4,061



TOTAL SOCIAL MEDIA REACH
March 17-May 19 3,312

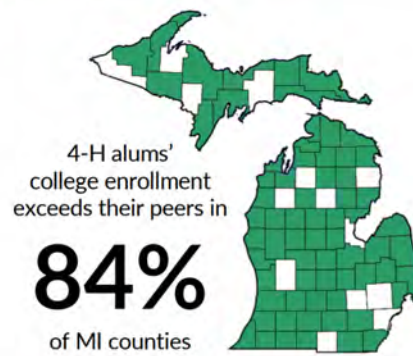
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DEVELOPING YOUTH AND COMMUNITIES

When you support MSU Extension 4-H programs, youth participants learn life skills that prepare them for the workforce – especially for highly sought after jobs in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Extension programs help children develop early literacy skills that support school readiness. They learn leadership and decision-making skills in 4-H that increase their likelihood of becoming civically active.

Benzie County 4-H Youth Educational Programming

- In Benzie and Manistee counties, there is a mandatory requirement that members selling in the 4-H livestock auction participate in organized and content-specific educational programs and events.
- 4-H Program Coordinator Laws has worked with the 4-H Livestock Council to establish an annual day-long educational event that is held every April. The focus of the sessions isn't just about raising and selling animals. It's about gaining skills that can be used later – in life, in college or trade school, and on the job. The event has aligned with a five-year plan that started with the 2016 event, using topics and presenters connected with Michigan 4-H's "Youth Business Guide to Success" program. MSU Extension team members Bev Przystas and Frank Cox, from Michigan 4-H's Career Education and Workforce Preparation team are among the program's guest presenters every year.
- The 2019 educational event topics included, "The Write Stuff" and "Tech Smart," which dealt with both the classic manual - as well as the most current electronic - communication skills. A session on "How to Complete an Award-Winning Market Record Book," taught the proper method to document the growth and progress of the market animal. "Animal Dollars \$\$\$ and Cents ¢¢¢" covered profit and loss, while "Increasing Your Marketing Skills Will Increase Your Sales" and "Setting Your Project Apart," focused on the latest marketing strategies. The event was attended by 57 Benzie and Manistee 4-H participants.
- A new attraction for the 2019 event was a lunchtime lecture and video presentation by Dale Elshoff, with the Michigan State University Agricultural Technology Program at Northern Michigan College. Elshoff was invited by Laws to present on the topic, which is one of the more recent and exciting offerings in this field. MSU has partnered with several community colleges in the state to bring education that allows people to develop highly sought after job skills closer to home. The two-year certificate programs are available in agricultural, environmental, and applied technologies studies.



Developing Youth and Communities, continued

4-H Brings True Colors to 19th Judicial Circuit Court and Centra Wellness Staff

- Early last year, Director of Youth Services for the Benzie-Manistee 19th Judicial Circuit Court, Cameron Clark, requested a True Colors program from 4-H Program Coordinator Debra Laws. Laws has been a certified True Colors facilitator since 1999 and has used this program in classrooms and with 4-H council members.
- The True Colors International program, in existence since 1978, is based on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). The methodology of this program is that personality, learning and communication styles are divided into 4 distinct types. Identifying and raising awareness of these differences has been proven to help individuals understand how best to interact with each other. It can be a powerful dynamic, especially when the success of an organization depends on the effective communication between - and collaboration among - its employees.
- An inservice was conducted at the Manistee County Education Center, operated in partnership with Munson Healthcare - West Shore Hospital. 25 caseworkers and therapists were in attendance, from Benzie-Manistee Youth and Family Court, and Benzie-Manistee Centra Wellness Network.
- The testing exercise and question periods were followed by a candid discussion regarding how these individuals planned to use this knowledge - both in interaction with each other, and with the clients they serve. Most in attendance commented that they were even excited to take this learning experience back to their non-professional relationships.



"I have already taken the MBTI assessment and studied its concepts extensively, but True Colors made it so much more fun and approachable. I'm eager to see if I can use this knowledge in my dealings with the youth that I work with, especially in improving communication."

~ True Colors Session Participant



**107 Benzie
County Youth**

Benzie County 4-H Youth Soccer Program

- The Benzie County 4-H Youth Soccer Program began in 1987 as an answer to the county's need for a well-organized, youth athletic program.
- On eight consecutive Saturdays through September and October, teams organize and play at Memorial Park in Benzonia and at Almira Township Park in Lake Ann.
- We take this opportunity to extend our deepest and heartfelt appreciation to Beulah resident Jeff Louwsma, who has served as the volunteer director of the program for the 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 seasons. We thank you, Jeff. You leave some big shoes to fill as we search for a new director. Our continued thanks go to Ray and Samantha Downs, from Honor, who have been with the program since 2010. They supervise the practices and games at the field at the Lake Ann location.



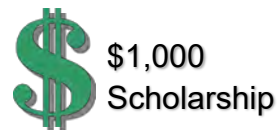
Developing Youth and Communities, continued

- To support the efforts of our volunteer supervisors and coaches, 4-H Program Coordinator Debra Laws and Benzie MSU Extension office secretary Deborah Longo oversee most of the business aspects of the program. This includes coach and referee selection, communication between coaches/players/families, player registration, liability issues and insurance needs, and financial management.

The Benzie County 4-H Advisory Council

- The 4-H Advisory Council is the overall governing body of the county 4-H program. This group gives advice and support to 4-H staff and assists in advancing the local program's structure, course of direction, and vision for the future.
- The Benzie County 4-H Advisory Council also works with 4-H staff to sponsor a 4-H Ambassador program, the Benzie County Land Atlas and Plat Book, 4-H Exploration Days, an annual 3-day educational event Michigan State University, and state-level trainings for teen and adult volunteers at the Kettunen Center, a 4-H conference and retreat facility in Tustin.
- The Benzie County 4-H Advisory Council Scholarship is an annual \$1,000 award was created by the council in 2018 and is intended to benefit a graduating Benzie County 4-H high school senior. Funds may be used for college or trade school needs. The scholarship process involves an application with multiple components and a formal interview.

2019 Benzie County 4-H Advisory Council Scholarship Winner



- Celebrated as the second winner in the history of this award is **Payton Jillian Moore**, daughter of Cynthia and Keith Moore of Thompsonville. Payton is a 12-year member of the Benzie County 4-H program and the Betsie River Barnyarders 4-H Club.
- A 2019 graduate of Benzie Central High School, Payton is now completing undergraduate work at the University of Pittsburgh, majoring in nursing.
- When asked about her 4-H experiences, Payton reflected, "Both my personal and my professional life have been impacted by 4-H by preparing me for my life after high school, giving me important skills like a strong work ethic, community service, dedication, time management, responsibility, communication and leadership. I learned to never give up, even when the going gets tough, and to persevere until the end."



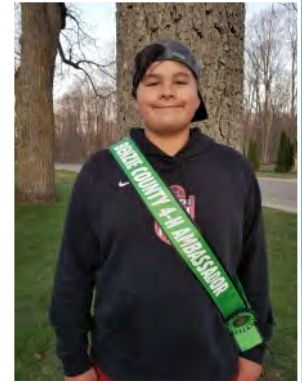
"While in 4-H, I learned effective communication skills when talking to potential auction buyers, animal judges, 4-H leaders and peers. This has enabled me to be effective at networking with employers, peers, teachers, leaders and audiences during presentations and interviews. I have learned how to be a strong leader through various experiences such as 4-H leadership camps and seminars and have taken an active leadership role in my school and community. I am thankful for the values, skills, morals and life lessons that 4-H instilled in me."

*~ Payton Moore,
2019 Benzie 4-H
Scholarship Winner*

Developing Youth and Communities, continued

The Benzie County 4-H Ambassador Program

- Two Benzie County 4-H members are selected annually through an application and interview process to serve as representatives of the program at public 4-H events. For the year of their service, they also affiliate with a 4-H council and participate in those meetings and related activities. At the end of their term, 4-H Ambassadors complete an exit interview and many unite with the program well after they have graduated from high school and college. Their feedback clearly indicates that this title is a highly favorable asset when mentioned in portfolios and resumes, scholarship and college admission applications, and employment interviews. Furthermore, they add that their council experience helped them gain leadership and decision-making skills that will increase their likelihood of becoming civically active as adults.
- The Benzie County 4-H Ambassadors selected for another term, this time for the 2019–'20 year are **Alberto and Dominic Lopez**. The twin brothers are 10-year members of the program and currently ninth grade homeschooled students.
- Both Alberto and Dominic started with Benzie County 4-H at five years old in the soccer program and continued in that activity through the eighth grade. They currently serve as teen members of the Benzie County 4-H Advisory Council.
- In addition to their soccer involvement, both boys have exhibited and sold livestock at the Manistee County Fair. Their project areas have included swine, goats, poultry and rabbits. Both boys are also veteran competitors of the 4-H Companion Animal Interview event, often winning blue ribbons and even Best of Show distinction.



The 2020 Benzie County Land Atlas and Plat Book

- The Benzie County 4-H Advisory Council and 4-H Program Coordinator Debra Laws listened to feedback from book and map users countywide and made the decision to align with a different product from a different publisher. In January of 2020, a new edition of the Benzie County Land Atlas and Plat Book was released. During book production, Laws works with Rockford Map Publishers, Inc., on the non-plat content, such as the cover, soil and landforms maps, government directory and 4-H ads.
- The 2020 cover features the work of local artist and teacher, the late Elaine M. Larson. Elaine was born in Frankfort. After completing her education at Central Michigan University and the University of Michigan, she began a 25-year teaching career that covered several Benzie County schools, including the former Homestead School, Platte River Elementary, and Benzie Central High School. Mrs. Larson passed away in Frankfort on July 30, 2019.



Developing Youth and Communities, continued

- Proceeds from all sales go directly to the Benzie County 4-H Advisory Council. Most local Benzie 4-H activities, events and trainings are covered by funds generated from plat book sales. This is a 2-year fundraising project and the Benzie book is scheduled for a new release every even-numbered year.
- The book is sold at the Benzie County Treasurer's Office and the Benzie MSU Extension office, as well as at several local businesses, including Lake Ann Grocery and Nugent Ace Hardware. Sales records continue to show that the book is ordered statewide as well as in states surrounding Michigan.

Benzie County 4-H Plays Vital Role in 2 Northern Michigan 4-H Livestock Auctions

- The Benzie County 4-H program is unique in that its members have the choice of two 4-H livestock auctions in which to participate. Because Benzie County does not have a fair of its own, 4-H members can go to Traverse City to the auction hosted by the Northwest Michigan 4-H Livestock Council. Or, they can choose to go to Onekama, to the auction supported by the Manistee County 4-H Livestock Council. Both auctions are held in August, at their respective county fairs.
- On August 15, 2019, the 4-H auction at the Manistee fair celebrated its 39th year with a sale featuring 129 animals and 21 donated items. With 79 buyers participating, the event raised nearly \$86,000.
- The 47th NWM 4-H Auction occurred on August 8, 2019. The sale featured a total of 409 4-H youth from Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska and Leelanau counties and the event raised over \$682,000. 10 animals at a live weight of 3,381 lbs. were donated to local food pantries.
- At the Manistee auction, a total of 7.5% of auction proceeds go back to the Livestock Council to pay for judges' fees, ribbons and trophies, scale certification, buyer photographs and banquet and an educational event. A smaller portion goes to other 4-H councils that were designated as recipients of income from certain donated items that were sold.
- At the NWMF auction, a total of 5% of auction proceeds go back to the Livestock Council for a buyer luncheon, technology needs and livestock member education.
- In all 4-H auctions, the majority of the money raised goes back to the 4-H members and is used for back-to-school needs and college funds.
- At both auctions, nearly half of the buyers represent businesses local to that county. People want to support businesses that support 4-H. These local businesses report that the exposure and publicity they get by being involved in the 4-H livestock auction increases their foot traffic and volume.



Manistee Auction:



129 Animals



79 Buyers



\$86,000 Raised

KEEPING PEOPLE HEALTHY & ENSURING SAFE FOOD

When you support MSU Extension, you help participants learn safe food handling practices, increase their physical activity and improve the quality of their diets. Extension programming also helps decrease incidents of violence and bullying. Encouraging these healthy behaviors helps reduce food and health care costs by helping prevent chronic health conditions and providing safe environments throughout a person's life span.

Fostering Health through Nutrition and Physical Activity

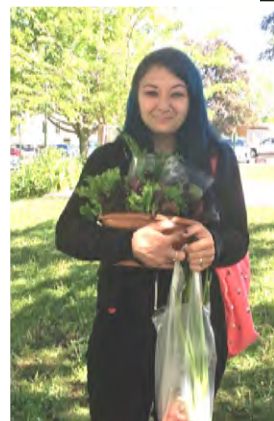
Michigan State University Extension supports individual and community level, or public health approaches, to prevent obesity. Through the United States Department of Agriculture Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed), we provide a combination of educational strategies, accompanied by supporting policy, systems, and environmental change interventions aimed to increase likelihood limited resource youth, adults, and seniors can make healthy choices.

Healthier Lives through Nutrition Education

MSU Extension Community Nutrition Instructors make nutrition come alive. Drawing from a variety of curricula, our staff partner with the community to make a difference.

MSU Extension continued their partnership with Munson Health Care to deliver the educational component of the **Fruit and Vegetable Prescription**

Program at the Monday Grow Benzie farmer's market. The program is designed to help patients with chronic disease create new healthy habits that align with the Dietary Guidelines. A healthy eating pattern that includes fresh fruits and vegetables is an evidence-based way to improve health and reduce the risk of chronic disease. The program uses Michigan State Extension's **Discover Michigan Fresh** curriculum that provides nutrition education and farmer's market tours to help SNAP-Ed eligible residents get to know their local market while shopping for nutritious and affordable food that keeps their dollars local. By creating a partnership between the Fruit and Vegetable Rx and Discover Michigan Fresh, we were able to enhance both programs while providing valuable linkages between farmers, health care providers and the community. Participants with chronic disease were referred through participating health clinics into our program where they received nutrition education, cooking demonstrations and tastings at our local Farmers Market. After receiving their nutrition education, participants receive market coupons to redeem for fresh fruits, vegetables and seedlings.



Fruit and Vegetable Rx Program Participant Results:

- 96% learned new ways to incorporate more fruit and vegetables into meals and snacks
- 94% plan to try a new kind of fruit or vegetable that is in season at the market

"It was a hit at the dinner table!" A participant stated that before this class she would have never tried new vegetables or recipes. Now she is more adventurous and encouraged to step out of her comfort zone when it comes to cooking and eating more vegetables.

Keeping People Healthy, continued

Making the Healthy Choice Easier - Supporting Changes to Policies, Systems, and Environment (PSE)

PSE Changes are a way of making sustainable changes within our community to policies, systems, and environments so that healthy choices are feasible options available to all community members. In Benzie County, this is happening through the Fuel Up to Play 60 program. This free, in-school nutrition and physical activity program allows teams of students to make PSE changes that encourage other students, staff members, and administrators to lead healthier, active lives. The changes within our schools cause a ripple effect of positively impacting our communities as students incorporate their leadership skills to motivate and encourage family and community members to properly fuel their body so they can be active every day.

Betsie Valley Elementary School

This is the fourth year of Betsie Valley's participation in Fuel Up to Play 60. By partnering with MSU Extension to help implement this program, Betsie Valley received \$2,904 in grant funding for the 2018-2019 school year. Students chose to start a cafeteria food waste audit and used grant funding to purchase equipment that would help them sort food waste, trash, and recyclables. At the end of the school year, student team members presented to the Benzie Central School Board about their initiative and changes they would like to see at their school. As a result of their efforts, starting in the 2019-2020 school year, the cafeteria will remove plastic straws to help lower plastic waste as well as stop using Styrofoam meal trays. To help encourage students to be more active, this grant helped to purchase a classroom set of snowshoes. Now, students are more active in the wintertime and can use snowshoes to go on nature walks with other students and adult guides. Fuel Up to Play 60 student leaders have enjoyed encouraging their classmates to be more active, eat healthier foods, and serving as role models for younger students.

In Spring 2019, Betsie Valley Elementary was also recognized at the State Capitol for their hard work in helping to make their school a healthier place for their students. For the second year in a row, Betsie Valley received a Silver School Wellness Award. The School Wellness Award recognizes schools who are making significant policy and environmental improvements to their environment related to healthy eating, physical activity, and tobacco-free lifestyles.



**Grant funds to Benzie
County Schools through
Smarter Lunchrooms &
Fuel Up to Play 60:**

\$13,032



Keeping People Healthy, continued

Benzie Central Middle School

For their second year participating in Fuel Up to Play 60, Benzie Central Middle School (BCMS) was awarded \$2,841 in grant funding with assistance provided by MSU Extension. This grant money was used to help make sure all students had access to breakfast. Research has shown that students who eat breakfast are more likely to perform better on tests, have longer attention spans, and are less likely to miss out on school. One way to increase breakfast participation is to make breakfast food easily accessible to students. Using grant funding, BCMS was able to purchase a grab-and-go breakfast cart. Another important part of being healthy is physical activity. The Fuel Up to Play 60 grant increased opportunities for students to be active by promoting in-class physical activity, also known as “brain breaks”. By participating in fun and short movement breaks, middle school students can expend excess energy thereby increasing attention spans and information retention rates. Fuel Up to Play 60 is helping BCMS students and staff start and continue their journey on living a healthy lifestyle!

Benzie Central Middle School Fuel Up to Play 60 student and adult team members were also chosen to attend the Rally for School Health event. This event is an all-expenses paid trip to Detroit and is hosted by the United Dairy Industry of Michigan at Ford Field. At this event, students can interact with other schools from around the state, hear from motivational and informational speakers, and taste test different healthy foods that they can bring back to their school. The highlight of the event is being active on Ford Field for 60 minutes by participating in warm-up activities and football drills alongside trainers and both former and current Detroit Lions players. Attending this event is a once-in-a-lifetime experience that these students won't forget!

Benzie Central Schools

In the 2018-2019 school year, MSU Extension, along with Paul Oliver Memorial Hospital, Chartwells, Benzie-Leelanau Health Department, and staff and administration of Benzie Central Schools, gathered together to start a district-wide wellness committee. The goal of a wellness committee is to help assess, edit, guide, and implement a district wellness policy. The wellness policy supports a district's or school's efforts to promote student and staff health, well-being, and ability to learn by supporting healthy eating and physical activity. In the span of one school year, this committee was brought together, assessed and edited the current wellness policy for the district, as well as identified areas



Keeping People Healthy, continued

of concern and wrote new wellness policies. For example, a new policy that was written and adopted reads, “The [Benzie Central School] District will use research and evidence-based curricula for nutrition education.” The Benzie Central School Board adopted the district’s newly revised wellness policy in Spring 2019 and the district was able to start wellness initiatives for staff and students. The new policies can be viewed on the district website at benzieschools.net.

Frankfort Elementary School

Fuel Up to Play 60 is thriving at Frankfort Elementary (FES)! By partnering with MSU Extension to help implement this program, FES has received \$3,587 in grant funding for the 2018-2019 school year. This student leadership team decided to use funding to help make environmental improvements to the cafeteria. Through a school-wide contest, the team decided to repaint the cafeteria using the school colors and will include the school logo as the cafeteria focal point. Rebranding the cafeteria and using student involvement means students are more likely to enjoy being in the space, increase participation in school meals, and feel sense of ownership and pride in their environment. The FES team also decided to help their peers be more active by introducing “brain breaks”, or short physical activity breaks, into the classroom. Team members were responsible for working together to design breaks and introduce them to teachers who can use them throughout the day. These Frankfort Panthers are hard at work making sure their school is a healthy place for all.

Chocolate Milk for Area Athletes

In 2019, MSU Extension worked closely with Benzie Central High School’s Cross Country and Softball teams to help athletes reach peak performance by staying hydrated with chocolate milk. By partnering with MSU Extension, Benzie Central received a total of \$3,700 in grant funding to purchase chocolate milk for their teams. Provided by the United Dairy Industry of Michigan, the Chocolate Milk: Nature’s Sports Drink program encourages athletes to choose chocolate milk after grueling practices and games as it contains nine essential nutrients needed for overall health. MSU Extension also assisted in distributing 1,400 bottles of chocolate milk, valued at \$1,500, at the annual Benzie Central Pete Moss Cross Country Invitational.



SUPPORTING AGRICULTURE & AGRIBUSINESS

Supporting Fruit Production

Tree Fruits

Growing tree fruits has continued to be a challenging endeavor in northwest Michigan. To help growers address critical issues faced by the industry, the tree fruit integrated pest management (IPM) program led by MSU Extension Educator, Emily Pochubay, offered two key programs for growers in Antrim, Grand Traverse, Leelanau, Benzie, and Manistee counties in 2019.

- **2019 Tree Fruit Management School** attracted 130 stakeholders for two and a half days of education on horticultural practices, pest and disease management, and invasive species. While many of the attendees were local, we were pleased to host out-of-state participants from as far as Iowa and Oregon. A post program survey indicated that 98% of participants improved their knowledge of practices that reduce production risks, and 91% planned to change practices to reduce production risks.
- A **Tree Fruit IPM Updates** series was offered in Antrim, Grand Traverse, Leelanau, and Benzie-Manistee that provided 328 growers and crop consultants with timely pest and disease information related to fruit production during the 2019 growing season. A post program survey polled 40 participants who represented approximately 931 acres of apples and 3,925 acres of cherries in northwest lower Michigan. All participants reported that attending IPM Updates improved their knowledge of practices that helped them to reduce production risks.

Wine Grapes

During the past year, multiple presentations were held for local wine grape growers and producers to meet the unique needs for northwest lower Michigan.

- **Spotlight into Wine** - 80 Grape and wine producers in the Northwest Michigan region. The world-renowned viticulturist Richard Smart, author of the seminal grapevine canopy management publication, "Sunlight into Wine," presented a seminar and an in-vineyard demonstration to 80 grape producers to introduce and review cool-climate viticulture techniques for canopy management, and trunk diseases on multiple training systems.
- **2019 Orchard and Vineyard Show Wine and Grape Sessions** had university experts from California, Michigan and Ohio educate Michigan's 120 grape producers on spring and fall weed control and cultural practices to improve fruit and wine quality in *Vitis vinifera* and cold climate cultivars. This event included presentations on vineyard pathogens, insects and sustainable waste management.

When you support MSU Extension, you help participants learn profitable and efficient business and production practices.

Supporting Food and Agriculture, continued

Home Horticulture

In 2019 we saw another year of growth for the **Master Gardener Program** in Benzie County. Through volunteer outreach, Extension Master Gardeners shared research-based gardening knowledge and engaged citizens in environmentally responsible gardening practices, improving food security, improving community, and developing youth through gardening. There were 8 certified Master Gardener volunteers active in Benzie County this year working nearly 500 hours on various projects in Benzie County valued at over \$12,300. The bulk of the hours were in projects benefiting the community like environmental stewardship, community beautification, and food security.

Master Gardeners last year worked to improve flower beds along US-31 in Benzonia, in gardens at the villages waterfront park in Elberta, and a native plant garden at Penfold park. Master Gardener Volunteers also partnered with the Periwinkle Garden Club to improve the beautification of five public garden spaces in Frankfort. All of these projects involved Master Gardener Volunteers teaching community participants about plant identification, soil science, and sustainable gardening practices for water quality.

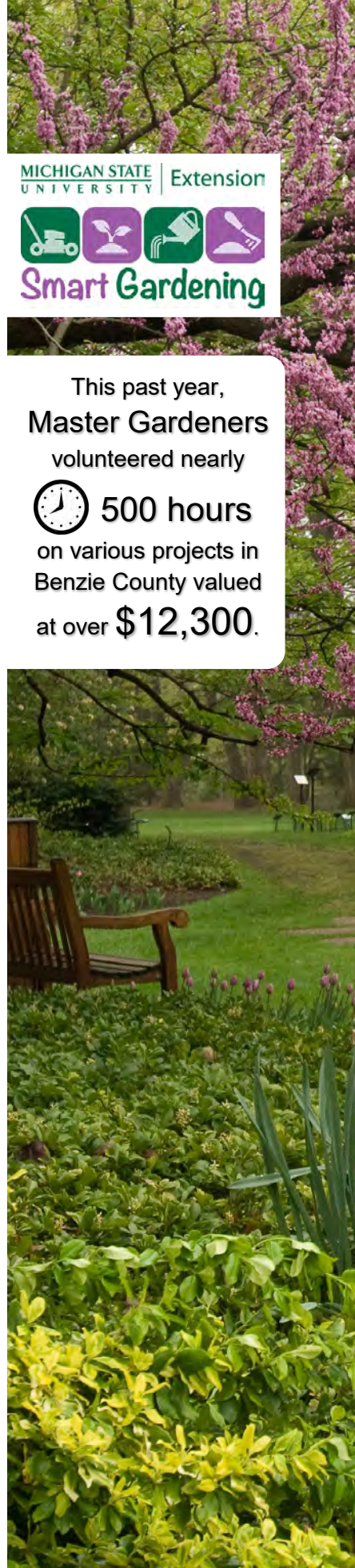
MSU Extension Master Gardeners continue to run a **Plant & Pest Diagnostic Clinic** out of the Benzonia Public Library (Mills Community House). Last year, Master Gardeners led 6 of these monthly clinics from May to October 2019. During the clinics, residents were welcomed to bring in samples of plants for identification, questions about insects, and plant diseases; MSUE staff and Master Gardener Volunteers were on-site to offer problem solving and plant health care advice.

Other **Consumer Horticulture** programming and services available for residents of Benzie County include:

- Gardening Hotline
- Gardening in Michigan website
- Soil tests for home gardens, yards and landscape plants
- Ask an Expert online system
- Smart Gardening programming

Supporting Hop Production

MSU Extension continues to provide valuable education offerings each year to support emerging hops producers in the Grand Traverse Region. Although the exponential growth in the craft beer sector has tapered off in the last year or two, the number of U.S. breweries likely surpassed 8,000 in 2019. In the past year, craft beer volume increased by approximately 4% while overall beer volume declined. Michigan is currently ranked 5th in number of breweries and 4th in acres of hops in production. Hops provide aroma, as well as bitterness to offset the sweetness of malt. In spite of a challenging market for some public hop cultivars that are in oversupply nationally, northwest lower Michigan's Grand Traverse, Leelanau, and Benzie counties collectively boast more acres of hops than anywhere else in the state. Northwest lower Michigan producers have invested



This past year,
Master Gardeners
volunteered nearly
 **500 hours**
on various projects in
Benzie County valued
at over **\$12,300.**

Supporting Food and Agriculture, continued

tens of millions of dollars in hopyard, harvest, and processing infrastructure over the last several years.

MSU Extension provides valuable education on hop production throughout the state of Michigan and beyond, and 2019 was no exception. MSU Extension Educators, Dr. Rob Sirrine and Erin Lizotte gave many presentations throughout Michigan, including The Great Lakes Hop and Barley Conference, Hop Growers of Michigan Annual Meeting, South Atlantic Hop Conference (North Carolina), Nebraska Grower and Brewer Conference, the Montana Hop Conference, and developed multiple presentations as part of the MSU Hop Bine and Dine Webinar Series. MSU Extension also continued to provide leadership for the Great Lakes Hop Working Group (GLHWG). The GLHWG is a multi-state collaborative developed and coordinated by MSU that seeks to develop priorities for hop research and education and collectively work to address those needs. As the leaders of this working group, MSU developed an online Desire to Learn course entitled: Hop Production in Midwest and Eastern North America that is open to members of the general public.

MSU Extension has taken a leadership role across the North Central and North East U.S. by providing valuable research and outreach to current and prospective growers on best practices for planting, harvesting, and pest management. MSU hop Educators are in demand as speakers across the country as evidenced by invited presentations in Nebraska, North Carolina, Vermont, Pennsylvania, Montana, and beyond in 2019.

In March of 2019, MSU held its annual Great Lakes Hop & Barley Conference at the newly renovated Park Place Hotel and Conference Center in Traverse City, MI. The conference features hop, barley, and craft beer experts from around the world, and generally attracts more than 200 participants annually from multiple states and countries. MSU collaborated with MI LOCAL Hops (Williamsburg, MI) and Great Lakes Malting Company (Traverse City, MI) to offer very well attended post-conference educational tours. We were excited to host the annual conference in Traverse City, which has been voted Best Small Town in the U.S. (Livability), best beer town (CNN Money), one of the top 25 cities for beer lovers (Daily Meal), and one of the top seven small beer cities that deserve national attention (Thrillist).

MSU Educators continue to secure federal and state funding for on-farm research in Benzie County. Dr. Rob Sirrine and Erin Lizotte are currently primary investigators on a multi-state USDA-funded grant with Washington State University scientists that seeks to develop and deliver IPM strategies to the rapidly expanding U.S. hop industry. With Project GREEN funding, Dr. Tim Miles (MSU), Erin Lizotte, and Rob Sirrine are currently assessing methods for controlling cone diseases in



Dr. Trey Malone, MSU, at the 2019 Great Lakes Hop and Barley Conference.



Supporting Food and Agriculture, continued

hops. Dr. Sirrine and MSU colleagues also acquired funding from the MDARD Craft Beverage Council to investigate the terroir-influenced quality attributes of hops. The results of this research could help Michigan hop producers differentiate their hops in a manner that increases sales and revenue. With MSU scientists, they also have a \$4.9 million proposal pending with USDA NIFA entitled: Advancing Quality, Resiliency, and Market Access for U.S. Hops with Washington State University, Oregon State University, and the University of Idaho. If funded, this multi-state research will take place 2020-2024.

Assistance to support beginning farmers across MI

The MSU Product Center Food-Ag-Bio assists county residents in developing products and businesses in the areas of food, agriculture, natural resources and the bio economy. The innovation counselor has special training to deliver these services to local residents. Business counseling is conducted on a one-on-one basis and may take place at the MSU Extension office or the client's home or business location. The assistance provided is tailored to meet the needs of the client and may include things like developing a business plan, navigating the regulatory maze, accessing the supply chain or seeking funding options. The innovation counselor also assists clients in accessing specialized services they may need that are offered through Michigan State University like feasibility studies, food processing, nutritional labeling and packaging assistance.

In 2018, MSU Extension, the MSU Product Center, and the MSU Center for Regional Food Systems developed a unique new partnership to offer sector specific technical assistance with local community organizations to cultivate small batch food processors and agriculture businesses. The Michigan Good Food Fund is a partnership between the MSU Center for Regional Food Systems, other technical assistance providers, and financial institutions. The program is committed to supporting enterprises which grow, process, distribute, add value, and/or sell healthy, whole, or minimally processed foods that are available and affordable in low-income and underserved communities.

That same year, Food For Thought, a local processor and co-packer, received a Michigan Good Food Fund Catalytic Investment Award of \$25,000 to expand their product line up and purchase new equipment. The award supported the company's drive to be more competitive, so they can keep more jobs in Michigan. As an example of the benefits, Food For Thought was recently awarded business to co-pack a unique product for a customer from Southern California, allowing exporting of product.



"While the COVID pandemic has certainly been a challenge, our team is laser focused on continually growing our business and making "Made In Michigan" the gold standard in healthy, clean food!"

~Greg Young, CEO at Food for Thought

FOSTERING STRONG COMMUNITIES

When you support MSU Extension, participants learn how to implement best practices in good governance that keeps communities solvent, productive and engaged; learn effective conflict management skills that help leaders and residents work collaboratively on complex issues; and engage youth leaders in decision-making. In the personal finance area, MSU Extension helps youth and adults alike learn the skills they need to increase their savings, manage their spending avoid predatory lending and reduce mortgage defaults. All of these outcomes help lower the cost of governmental services and lead to personal and community stability, strong neighborhoods and safe communities.

- **Northern Michigan Counties Association** continues its long history of being a place where county commissioners from across the northern lower peninsula gather eight times each year for lively discussion, sharing successes and concerns, learning from each other, and from guest speakers on topics selected by the commissioners who participate. MSU Extension provides the educational staff support.
- **Building Strong Sovereign Nations (BSSN): Anishinaabek Leadership for Seven Generations Tribal Governance Conference**, a program for elected and appointed tribal officials, celebrated its eleventh program year in 2019. We have asked tribal leaders for their input on updating the curriculum starting in 2020, while also ensuring the program is a better fit with the staggered election cycles of the 12 Michigan Federally Recognized Tribal Nations.
- **Opportunity Zones**, what they are and how local communities can increase their chances of benefitting, was the subject of a training presented by MSU Extension in cooperation with MSHDA and MEDC.
- MSU Extension Government and Community Vitality Educators presented an interactive program on **Capital Improvements Programs** at the four Michigan Association of Counties Summits in 2019. Benzie County participated.
- **Fiscally Ready Communities** is a joint effort of the Michigan Department of Treasury and MSU Extension designed to provide education on many local government financial topics. The 2019 program was an overview of budgeting and financial policy basics. Nine people from Benzie County participated, and one community took advantage of an opportunity for some follow-up consultation. The 2020 program will focus on Capital Asset Management and Planning.



Fostering Strong Communities, continued

- MSU Extension was on-hand for the Benzie County Summit to provide a 45 minute program on **planning and zoning for solar energy**. As Michigan transitions to renewable energy and the price of solar continues to come down, many communities are actively writing ordinances to allow for a range of solar options, both small and large scale.

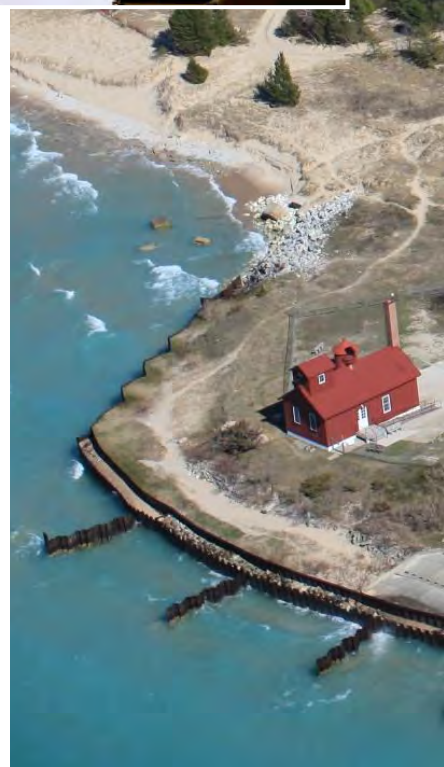
Enhancing & protecting our Great Lakes coastal resources

Sea Grant Extension

MSU Extension supports efforts to carry out Michigan Sea Grant programs throughout Benzie County and the rest of Michigan. Michigan Sea Grant Extension helps apply research, conducts educational activities and is connected to more than 40 coastal counties. Extension Educators provide technology transfer by interpreting scientific knowledge for decision-makers, public officials, community leaders, businesses and industries. Michigan Sea Grant Extension provides targeted support focusing on marinas and other businesses, restoring coastal habitats and related industries, such as commercial and recreational fishing. In partnership with state and federal agencies, Extension Educators are responsive and proactive in addressing local, regional and national issues relevant to Michigan.

High Great Lakes levels and impacts from these elevated levels (flooding and erosion) were hot topics in 2019/2020. Sea Grant Extension educators provided technical and educational assistance to Frankfort City Manager, Benzie County Conservation District, Benzie County Emergency Management and presented to the County Board of Commissioners among other things. This is a long-duration high water event and additional assistance will be provided during 2020/2021 as we endeavor to ride out the “storm”.

Mark Brederland giving a lake levels update to the Benzie County Board of Commissioners in February 2020.



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