



Benzie County

2017–2018 ANNUAL REPORT

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> FROM THE DISTRICT COORDINATOR:

Over the past year, Michigan State University (MSU) Extension partnered with Benzie County to continue strengthening youth, families, businesses and communities. Your MSU Extension staff members, grounded in local relationships, serve by bringing the university's research and resources to provide outreach and education in the areas Benzie County residents need it most.



In this report, we're excited to share about the people and programs that are improving the lives of Benzie County residents in many ways, including helping grow Michigan's agriculture economy, encouraging sustainable use of our natural resources, controlling health care costs by giving individuals the information they need to manage chronic illness and preparing tomorrow's leaders. From an in-person workshop to online education, MSU Extension professionals work every day to provide the most current information when people need it to ensure their success – in the workplace, at home and in the community.

We're passionate about serving Benzie County and are looking forward to a new year of serving. Thank you for your continued support of MSU Extension and for partnering with us to make a difference.



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> MEASURING IMPACT:

CONNECTING WITH RESIDENTS

4-H: Developing Youth & Communities1,003
Keeping People Healthy & Ensuring Safe Food 864
Supporting Food & Agriculture, Fostering Strong Communities
& Businesses, and Enhancing Our Natural Assets339

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS IN BENZIE COUNTY2,206



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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.



The Benzie Youth Soccer Program

- In 1987, a need was realized for Benzie County youth to participate in and reap the benefits of a well-organized, county-wide youth athletic program such as softball or soccer. In most communities, these programs typically fall under the authority of a community recreation association. As Benzie County did not have this type of agency, event organizers looked to Benzie MSU Extension to provide that leadership – and the program choice was soccer.
- To support the program, the Benzie MSU Extension office, under the direction of 4-H Program Coordinator Debra Laws, handles most of the business aspects of the program. This includes coach selection and thorough volunteer background checks, player registration, communication between coaches/players/families, liability issues and insurance needs, and financial management.
- Beulah resident Jeff Louwsma has served as the volunteer director of the program since September of 2016. He also oversees most of the soccer activity at Memorial Park in Benzonia. Ray Downs, from Honor, has been with the program since 2010. He supervises practices and games at the field in Almira Township Park in Lake Ann. In October of 2017, Dr. Dennis Pace, past head coach and a founder of the program, passed away. There is discussion currently taking place to permanently honor Dr. Pace's memory at one of the playing fields.



137 Benzie
County Youth

"I believe 4-H and its leaders are helping to shape our future's best commodity – our children."

*~ Ray Downs,
Supervisor of
Benzie 4-H Soccer
in Lake Ann*

4-H Exploration Days at MSU

- This three day event, held annually in late June at the Michigan State University campus, simulates college life for over 2,000 4-H youth from all over the state.
- The Benzie 4-H Leaders Association Council pays 50% of the registration fee for youth and other adult attendees, plus additional expenses such as group insurance and chaperone needs.
- The 2017 trip included a group of 8 youth from Benzie County. The youth and their chaperones live on campus, experience dorm life, and attend a variety of classes and other educational events in subject areas that include human and animal sciences,

Developing Youth and Communities, continued

international culture and languages, career exploration in dozens of fields, music, human services, life skills, hobbies and sports, and personal and business finance.

- For most of these Benzie County youth, this will be their first exposure to a college campus and it will influence most of them towards a college education and a greater career goal than they had originally planned.

The Benzie County 4-H Advisory Council

- This group serves as an advisory board to 4-H staff and helps to give the local program vision, structure and direction.
- The current board consists of 8 members, representing the communities of Benzonia Township, Homestead Township, and Joyfield Township.
- The 4-H Advisory Council also works with 4-H staff to support a 4-H Ambassador program, county plat book, annual youth trip to Michigan State University, and a volunteer recognition program.
- This year, the group is anxiously awaiting the submission of applications for its first ever college scholarship intended solely for Benzie County 4-H members.

Applications for the 2018 Benzie County 4-H Gleaners Life Insurance Society Scholarship are due at the end of April. There will be an application and interview process from which one winner of the \$1,000 scholarship will be selected in May of 2018.



**\$1,000
Scholarship**

The Benzie County 4-H Ambassador Program

- A maximum of 2 4-H members are selected annually through an application and interview process to represent the program at public 4-H events and council meetings.
- The Benzie County 4-H Ambassadors for the 2017-18 year are Hannah Long and Payton Moore. Long is a 9-year member of the program and currently a junior at Benzie Central High School. She has been accepted at Interlochen Arts Academy for her senior year where she will major in voice. After graduation, she plans to enroll in



Eastern Michigan University's musical therapy program, where she will major in psychology. Moore is an 11-year member of the program and currently a junior at Benzie Central High School. She is involved with student council, National Honor Society, Key Club, Interact Club, and Science Olympiad. She has tentative plans to attend the University of Pennsylvania in 2019 and major in pediatric oncology.

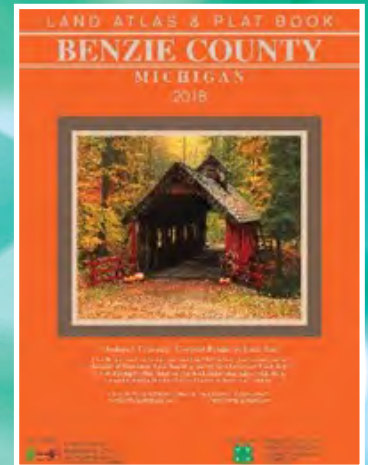
"4-H has prepared me for my life after high school by giving me important skills like a strong work ethic, community service, dedication, time management, responsibility, communication skills, and leadership. This helped to create a spark in me that burns brightly whether it is on a project, at work, school or in the community. I have learned effective communication skills when talking to auction buyers, judges, 4-H leaders and peers. This has enabled me to be adept at networking with employers, peers, teachers, club leaders and audiences during presentations and interviews. 4-H camps and seminars have influenced me to take 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, 4-H Ambassador. Pictured right on a recent medical mission trip to Cambodia.

Developing Youth and Communities, continued

The Benzie County Land Atlas and Plat Book

- The latest edition of this book was launched in March of 2018. The cover features a popular local landmark, “Loon Song Covered Bridge” in Lake Ann. This is a 2-year fundraising project and the Benzie book is scheduled for a new release every even-numbered year.
- Proceeds from all sales go directly to the Benzie 4-H Leaders Association Council.
- The book is an added asset to Benzie County in promoting local tourism and real estate interests. Sales records continue to show that the book is ordered statewide, by residents of both peninsulas, as well as the states surrounding Michigan.
- Numerous local 4-H activities, special events, and funding for travel to statewide 4-H educational events and 4-H Exploration Days at the MSU campus are made possible in part due to the financial support received annually through plat book sales.
- 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 Backcast Fly Shop, Lake Ann Grocery, Nugent Ace Hardware, Stapleton’s Market, Tag Limit Outdoors, and Victoria’s Floral Design & Gifts.



“For me, the highlight of last year’s livestock education event was meeting many younger families who had just enrolled in 4-H. The sessions answered their questions and introduced them to passionate and caring people in the 4-H community. It will be wonderful to see them become leaders for 4-H in the future!”

*~ Emeleen Sobkoviak,
graduate 4-H member
and candidate for 2019
Livestock Council
election*

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

- The Benzie County 4-H program is unique in that its members have the choice of 2 4-H livestock auctions in which to participate. Because Benzie County does not have a fair of its own, 4-H members can go northward to Traverse City, to the auction hosted by the Northwest Michigan (NWM) 4-H Livestock Council. Or, they can choose to go southward to Onkama, to the auction supported by the Manistee County 4-H Livestock Council. Both auctions are held in August, at their respective county fairs.
- 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.
- In 2017, the Manistee auction celebrated its 37th year with a sale featuring 142 animals and 35 donated items. With 106 buyers participating, the event raised over \$120,600. Honor State Bank, which is also a 33-year consecutive buyer, has served as auction cashier since 2005.

Manistee Auction:



142 Animals



106 Buyers



\$120,600 Raised

**The 10 Things 4-H
Taught Me That No
Sport Could:**

10. Record keeping
9. A passion for working with my hands
8. Being a caretaker
7. Noncompetitive friendships
6. Following things through to completion
5. STEM Education
4. A passion for making old things new
3. Resiliency
2. Leadership in real-world situations
1. Excellent communication skills

Used with permission from Alicia Schmitt, writer at "Successful Farming" magazine and creator of "The Pork Diaries" website. She grew up in the Floyd County, Iowa, 4-H program.

Developing Youth and Communities, continued

- The 2017 NWM Fair Auction recognized its 46th year. The sale featured a total of 406 4-H youth from Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska and Leelanau counties and the event raised over \$654,000. Eighteen swine and one steer were donated to local food pantries.
- At the 2017 Manistee auction, figures indicate that 17 of the registered buyers represented Benzie County businesses. At the 2017 NWM Fair auction, there were 20 Benzie County business buyers. People want to support businesses that support 4-H. These local businesses report that the exposure and publicity they get by being involved in this event increases their foot traffic and volume.



20 Benzie County Business Buyers

Benzie County 4-H Educational Programming

- There is an increased effort to involve 4-H livestock members in regular educational programs. Often, the 4-H livestock auction has been viewed as an event where some participants put in minimal effort just to receive a market check.
- 4-H Program Coordinator Debra Laws has worked with the 4-H Livestock Council to establish an annual day-long educational event to be held every April. The focus of that event 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. They have been following a 5-year plan that started in 2016, utilizing topics and presenters connected with Michigan 4-H's "Youth Business Guide to Success" program.
- The 2017 educational event topics included, "The 5 Principles of Marketing," and "It Takes More Than Chickenfeed." The event was attended by 47 Benzie and Manistee 4-H participants. The 2018 event is scheduled for Saturday, April 28.



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

Our Challenge

Obesity has important consequences on our nation's health and economy. It is linked to a number of chronic diseases including coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and some cancers. Among adults, the medical costs associated with obesity are estimated at 147 billion dollars. According to The State of Obesity: Better Policies for a Healthier America released in 2017, Michigan has the 10th highest adult obesity rate in the nation. Michigan's adult obesity rate is currently 32.5 percent, up from 22.1 percent in 2000 and from 13.2 percent in 1990.

Healthier Lives through Nutrition Education

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 exemplary nutrition and physical activity education for limited resource participants where they eat, learn, live, work, play, and shop. Program and outreach efforts aim to increase the likelihood that limited resource youth, adults and seniors can make healthy food choices within a limited budget and choose physically active lifestyles consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

For youth and adults who took part in series-based classes, increases were reported in areas of behavior. There have been notable successes as a result of our direct education. Program Instructor Connie Hemingway uses the Show Me Nutrition curriculum to reinforce healthy habits

Nutrition Education Participants:



179
Adults

613
Youth

\$1 = \$10



**EVERY \$1 SPENT ON NUTRITION EDUCATION SAVES
AS MUCH AS \$10 IN LONG-TERM HEALTH CARE COSTS.**

ADULT BEHAVIOR CHANGE



24 % more physically active



33 % eat more vegetables



78% improved nutrition
practices



YOUTH BEHAVIOR CHANGE



38% more physically active



45% improved food safety
practices



82% made healthier food choices





Keeping People Healthy, continued

among children. This evidence-based curriculum includes health themes for a variety of grade levels. We take pride in offering meaningful and interactive learning opportunities in the classroom. The teachers at Benzie Central Schools and Frankfort-Elberta Area Schools continue to be supportive partners.

“My students look so forward to having Ms. Hemingway visit each week. She does an outstanding job of teaching the nutrition lessons, while maintaining a high level of engagement with my 1st grade students!”
~ Benzie County Teacher

Teaching teens to cook and choose healthier foods empowers them to make behavior change that may last into adulthood. MSU Extension facilitated Teen Cuisine, a 6-lesson curriculum that helps middle and high school-aged youth increase confidence in the kitchen.

Making the healthy choice easier - Supporting Changes to the Policy, System and Environment

MSU Extension works to create a culture of health and wellness by providing coaching at the organization level. We provide technical assistance in assessing the environment, including policies and the physical space, creating an action plan, and implementing the action plan to work towards best practices related to nutrition and physical activity.

Childcare settings are one of several community sites MSU Extension works with to provide guidance for enhancing nutrition and physical activity policies and environments. Program staff are working with a home-based child care center in Benzie to encourage a healthier environment for our communities' youngest members.

The school environment has shown to be a ripe opportunity to make meaningful impact. As the places where children spend much of their time and often eat at least half of their calories, schools are a primary driver in young people's knowledge of, attitudes about, and access to food. Through the implementation of Smarter Lunchroom assessment, MSU Extension partners with school stakeholders to identify free or low-cost solutions that nudge students to voluntarily select the healthiest food in the lunchroom. Food service staff and teachers at Betsie Valley Elementary observed less waste after breakfast as a result of implementation in their cafeteria. In addition, from funds available through the Michigan Department of Education Team Nutrition, Betsie Valley purchased resources to enhance the health of the cafeteria environment.

- Apple corers allow kitchen staff to offer pre-sliced fruit, making this option more desirable among students
- 2 breakfast coolers to support “Breakfast in the Classroom”
- 3 new attractive serving containers to make fruit and vegetables more appealing

Keeping People Healthy, continued

“I like implementing Smarter Lunchrooms because it’s easy to make small changes that result in a big difference. It’s enjoyable to ask kids for their feedback and to use that information to assist in making the cafeteria space, their space, a more welcoming place. It’s easy to ask students for their help – because they want to! – and then you can watch them create an environment that they like to be in and which engages their peers.”

- Program Instructor Caitlin Lorenc

Due to a partnership with the United Dairy Industry of Michigan, MSU Extension facilitates **Fuel Up to Play 60**. Fuel Up is an in-school nutrition and physical activity program launched by National Dairy Council and NFL, in collaboration with the USDA, to help encourage today's youth to lead healthier lives. Program Instructor and Benzie Central Schools alum, Caitlin Lorenc, leads Fuel Up to Play 60 and Smarter Lunchrooms throughout the northwest Michigan region. Caitlin has been extremely successful in working with school teams to acquire funds to enhance the school environment and offer engaging cafeteria taste tests. Through this effort, the following items have been purchased for partner schools:



- Recess equipment
- Kitchen equipment
- Visits by local farmers
- Milk cooler
- A vibrant mural

With assistance by MSU Extension, the Betsie Valley Elementary School Fuel Up to Play 60 student team and coaches attended the 2016 Rally for School Health at Ford Field in Detroit. This event is an opportunity for student leaders to hear from motivational speakers, interact with Detroit Lions players and take in all the experiences that come up visiting a lively city. The team presented to the Benzie County Commissioners on their participation with the program. Participating in Fuel Up has shown to build leadership skills.

Partners

Local partnerships are critical to the success of our work. Relationships with Benzie Central Schools and Frankfort-Elberta Area Schools, Benzie Area Christian Neighbors (BACN), Stakenas Farms Inc., Honor – Onekema Building Supply, Grow Benzie, and The Outpost play a key role in helping to plan and host MSU Extension community nutrition interventions throughout Benzie County. Coordination with Benzie Area Christian Neighbors played a significant role in helping us provide regular education to food insecure adults on choosing and cooking with healthy food.

“We love having Jane from MSU Extension serve up nutritious recipes in the BACN waiting room. They always smell amazing and the Neighbors are excited to pick up the ingredients in the pantry that day to make the dish themselves”

- Michelle Northrup, BACN.

Fuel Up to Play 60 and Smarter Lunchrooms

\$21,912

Value of grant funds
and resources to
Benzie County Schools

401

Benzie adults and
youth reached



Keeping People Healthy, continued

Reducing anger, bullying and stress

Stress Less with Mindfulness

Mindfulness means paying attention to the present moment without judgement. Research has shown that practicing mindfulness is effective in reducing stress-related symptoms such as worry, depression and physical tension, and may be helpful in managing chronic conditions such as cardiac disease and diabetes.

By offering teens, adults, and seniors alternative ways of relating to everyday life experiences, including thoughts, emotions, physical sensations and events, Stress Less with Mindfulness teaches and encourages the use of mindfulness self-care skills to help one feel better and enjoy life more.

In 2017, 16 Mindfulness Series and 5 One Time Presentations were conducted in Benzie County to a diverse audience including adult volunteers, community members, parents/caregivers, students, teachers and more.

As a result of the trainings in 2017, participants showed improvement on these key outcomes:

- 98% can identify three mindfulness tools to help them manage stress
- 95% are more positive about dealing with stress in their lives by using mindful tools
- 96% now use mindful breathing to calm themselves in the face of stress
- 93% practice mindful movement as a way of calming the mind and body
- 96% describe how a mindfulness perspective can change reactions to daily stressors

RELAX: Alternatives to Anger is an educational program that actively engages participants to gain knowledge and skills to constructively deal with anger. The core concepts include recognizing anger signals, empathizing, listening, accepting that others' anger is not about you, and letting go of the past in order to maintain a present perspective. Participants learn to better manage their anger and stress at home, in the workplace and in school. In 2017 there were 2 RELAX: Alternatives to Anger Series offered in Benzie County through a partnership with the 19th Judicial Circuit Court Family Division with 10 participants.

Participants left with improved knowledge or new skills designed to promote social and emotional well-being with others in their lives and immediate social environments.

Highlights from the program evaluation. As a result of the RELAX program:

- 64% reduced their frequency in yelling and screaming
- 64% now work hard to be calm and talk things through
- 63% talk things through until they reach a solution

SUPPORTING AGRICULTURE & AGRIBUSINESS

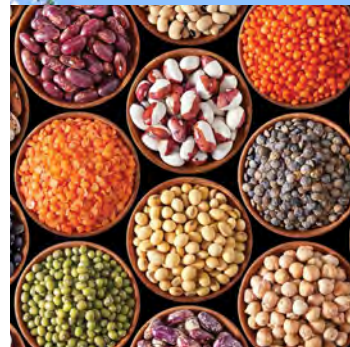
Tree Fruit Integrated Pest Management Education

Tree fruit integrated pest management (IPM) works toward optimizing economic and environmental sustainability for orchard growers. The seminar series, “IPM Updates,” led by MSU Extension Educator Emily Pochubay provided tree fruit producers and crop consultants in northwestern lower Michigan with timely pest and disease information related to fruit production during the 2017 growing season. Seven, two-hour long meetings were held in Benzie County in 2017 and these meetings reached 92 tree fruit growers. Fruit Educators also hosted 135 participants at the bi-annual Tree Fruit IPM School in Traverse City that attracted growers from across the county.

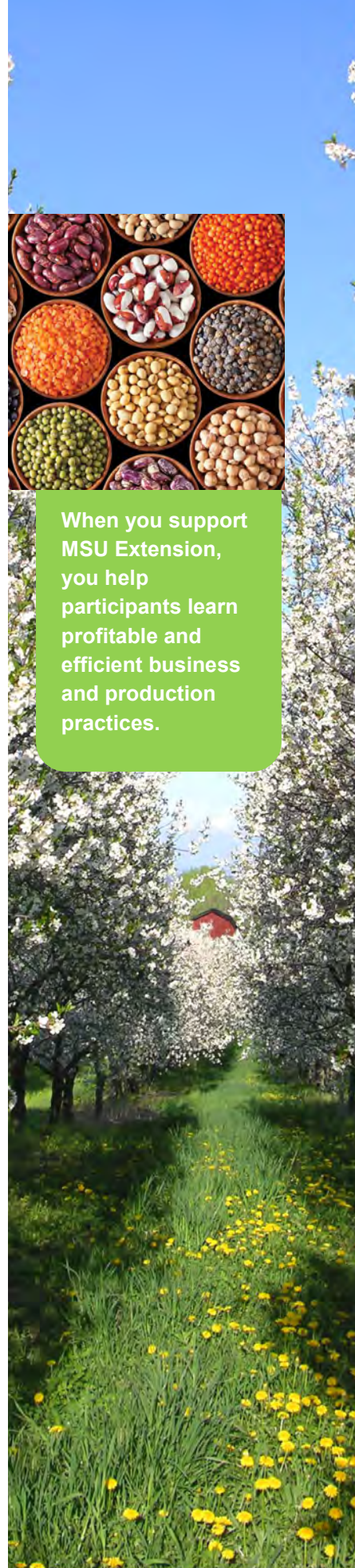
Exploring Opportunities for Growing Fresh Market Fruit in Michigan

The tour attracted 60+ participants, including growers from northwest Michigan and students and faculty from the Department of Horticulture at MSU. The Northwest Michigan Horticulture Research Center staff partnered with the Benzie-Manistee Horticultural Society for its annual spring show. This yearly event is an opportunity for northwest Michigan growers to see and learn about cutting edge horticulture and research. In 2017, we planned a bus tour to the Grand Rapids area to look at high-density fresh market sweet cherries and multiple leader apple systems.

We kicked off this daylong program at RiveRidge Orchards where they have planted sweet cherries on a V-trellis using Gisela 3. We were joined by the newly formed horticulture duo, Drs. Greg Lang and Todd Einhorn, for a good discussion about growing high-density sweet cherries. We explored the potential for these innovative systems in Michigan. This stop was followed with a look at a high-density sweet cherry block planted to a vertical axe. The Leo Dietrich and Sons’ farm showcased trees planted at 2.5 ft between trees, where they harvested 6 ton/acre in the fourth season. Both stops provided food for thought on future plantings for fresh market sweet cherries in northwest Michigan. Over lunch, we had a great discussion about the economics to move from processing to fresh market apple and sweet cherry production. Isaiah Wunsch, from Old Mission Peninsula, provided data from his farm as they are transitioning from processing blocks to more fresh market fruit. Justin Finkler, from RiveRidge, also presented economic information about their operation; he spoke to the future of producing fresh market fruit in Michigan. He told the audience that he thought that we could increase our fresh market sweet cherry production by 80% which created a lot of discussion on the bus ride home! Lastly, we were joined by our colleague Phil Schwallier to look at a block of multiple leader apples, as this orchard is the oldest multiple leader planting in the state. Orchard owner Bill Nyblad jumped on board to try this system as Bill has traveled all over the world exploring different



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



Supporting Food and Agriculture, continued

orchard systems. We thank Bill and all the Grand Rapids growers for opening their orchards to us. This tour was a fabulous opportunity to investigate different methods of growing fresh market fruit, and we want to extend our thanks to the Michigan State Horticulture Society and Crop Production Services for their support of this educational session.

Home Horticulture

2017 was a groundbreaking year for the Master Gardener Program in Benzie County. Through volunteer outreach, Extension Master Gardeners shared science-based gardening knowledge and engaged citizens in environmentally responsible gardening practices, improving food security, improving community, and developing youth through gardening.

This year was the first year to see an MSU Extension Master Gardener Plant & Pest Diagnostic Clinic in Benzie County. Master Gardeners led two of these clinics out of the Benzonia Public Library (Mills Community House) in August and September 2017. During the clinics, residents were welcomed to bring in samples of plants, insects, diseases and other problems. MSU Extension staff and Master Gardener Volunteers were on-site to offer problem solving and plant health care advice. In total, 11 residents took advantage of this service in its first year. Next year, to build on this success, we will be holding monthly clinics throughout the growing season.

There were seven Master Gardener volunteers active in Benzie County this year, working more than 250 hours on various projects in Benzie County valued at over \$6,000. The bulk of the hours were in projects benefiting the community like environmental stewardship, community beautification, and food security.

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

- Gardening Hotline
- Gardening in Michigan website
- Ask an Expert system
- Smart Gardening programming
- Soil tests for home gardens, yards and landscape plants
- Master Gardener Training and Volunteer Program



This past year,
Master Gardeners
volunteered more than



250 hours

on various projects in
Benzie County valued

at over **\$6,000.**

Supporting Food and Agriculture, continued

Supporting Hops Production

Tremendous growth in the craft beer sector over the past few years has resulted in increasing demand for hops. Hops provide aroma, as well as bitterness to offset the sweetness of malt. In 2017, craft beer volume increased by 5% while overall beer volume declined by 1.2%. In the U.S., craft beer represents 12.7% of overall volume and 23% of overall retail dollar sales. In recent years, hop producers across the U.S. have increased acreage. Michigan is currently ranked 4th in hop acreage after Washington, Idaho, and Oregon. Northwest Michigan's Grand Traverse, Leelanau, and Benzie Counties collectively boast more acres of hops than anywhere else in the state. Northwest Michigan producers have invested tens of millions of dollars in hopyard, harvest, and processing infrastructure over the last several years. Approximately 40 new acres of hops were planted in Benzie County in 2017.

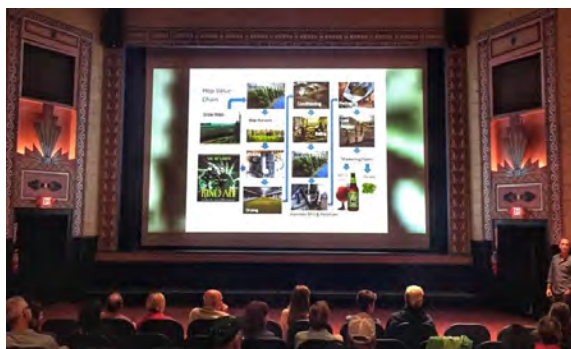
MSU Extension provides valuable education on hop production throughout the state of Michigan and 2017 was no exception. MSU Extension Educators, Dr. Rob Sirrine and Dr. Dean Baas presented on the State of Michigan Hops and Barley at Frankfort Beer Week in October 2017. Dr. Sirrine also presented on "Craft Beer and Hop Production" to a lively group at the Lake Shores Garden Club, Platte River Twp. Hall in September, 2017 and at Grow Benzie with Brian Confer, Head Brewer at Stormcloud Brewing Company in Frankfort, MI.

MSU Extension Educator, Rob Sirrine, gave a presentation on the state of Michigan hops at Frankfort Beer Week.



MSU Extension Senior Educator, Erin Lizotte, discusses pest management options during the 10th annual summer hop tour.

In summer 2017, MSU and the Michigan Brewers Guild held their 10th annual summer hop field day and tour. While the 2016 tour was held on farms in Benzie County, the 2017 tour featured several Leelanau County farms as well as a visit to Hop Lot in Suttons Bay. Potential hop producers and others interested in hops learned directly from current producers as well as MSU Extension experts.





Supporting Food and Agriculture, continued

In March of 2018, MSU held its annual Great Lakes Hop & Barley Conference in Kalamazoo, MI. The conference features hop, barley, and craft beer experts from around the world, and generally attracts 200-300 participants annually from multiple states and countries.

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. In 2017, MSU Extension organized on-farm audits with members of the Hop Quality Group, a national organization dedicated to improving hop quality for the craft beer industry. The Hop Quality Group and MSU Extension toured multiple hop harvest and processing facilities offering recommendations to improve quality.

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 MSU Extension Educator has special training as an innovation counselor to deliver these services. 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 Educator also assists clients in accessing specialized services they may need that are offered through Michigan State University like feasibility studies, nutritional labeling and packaging assistance.

Forty counseling sessions took place to assist four local entrepreneurs in starting new businesses and expanding existing businesses. Five new jobs were created by the businesses that received assistance. One business received strategic planning services that assisted them in developing a plan for their business expansion. Two food processors made large investments in their businesses with a total of \$750,000 of capital investment.

2016-17 MSU Product Center Impacts in Benzie County:



44 Counseling
Sessions



4 Ventures
Launched or
Expanded



5 New Jobs
Created



Value of
Increased
Investment:
\$750,000

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, organized by MSU Extension, county commissioners from 34 counties in northern lower Michigan meet 8 times per year to share information and learn from the experiences of others.

Building Strong Sovereign Nations is a leadership building program developed by MSU Extension in cooperation with leaders of Tribal Nations in Michigan and delivered annually in conjunction with the United Tribes of Michigan fall meeting. The program is open to leaders from all Tribal Nations in Michigan and is also available to leadership and staff of individual tribes. Onsite workshops are also available.

Open Meetings Act/Freedom of Information Act (OMA/FOIA) Workshops sponsored by Benzie County were presented by MSU Extension for local government leaders in 2017.

The **Stronger Economies Together (SET)** program is a national initiative collaborating with USDA and local partners in Manistee, Benzie, Grand Traverse and Kalkaska, to help identify and develop business sectors that hold the highest growth potential in an effort to help create, attract, and retain jobs.

Pension and OPEB Legislation Breakout Session at the 2018 MAC Legislative Conference to update commissioners about the Michigan Department of Treasury analysis, funding levels that trigger additional action by local units and the waiver request process created in last year's legislation.



Supporting Food and Agriculture, continued

Enhancing & protecting our Great Lakes coastal resources

Sea Grant Extension

MSU Extension's Greening Michigan Institute supports efforts to carry out 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.

Outreach Topics and Programs:

- Healthy Coastal Ecosystems
- Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture
- Resilient Communities and Economies
- Environmental Literacy and Workforce Development
- Coastal Hazards – Dangerous Currents

Sea Grant educators are working with the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, City of Frankfort, Benzie 911, and others on swimming safety in Lake Michigan beaches. Drowning prevention is an urgent topic as more visitors come to the shores of Lake Michigan.



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Michigan State University Extension helps people improve their lives through an educational process that applies knowledge to critical issues, needs and opportunities.