



Branch County 2016 ANNUAL REPORT

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Developing Youth and Communities



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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. 4-H'ers also demonstrate reduced high-risk behaviors such as drug use, and learn to complete tasks, solve problems and seek any help they might need from peers and adults. 4-H involvement also helps participants avoid or reduce involvement with the court system. This helps ensure more young people succeed in school, attend college and contribute to their communities. More successful young people in communities results in greater tax revenues and consumer spending and increases the likelihood that young people will stay in, or return to, their communities.

Growing true leaders

With innovative ideas, exuberant energy and the ability to look beyond preconceived obstacles, youth have the capacity to change the world. However, many lack the skills and confidence to empower these assets into motion. They need experiences and training that help them to feel ready and capable to lead.

Michigan 4-H helps to prepare current and future leaders by offering numerous opportunities for leadership development. From the club experience to statewide youth councils, all youth have the chance to serve in a leadership role. Those experiences and various leadership trainings provide youth with skills to last a lifetime and empower them to stand up today as true leaders in their families, schools and communities.

In the past year:

- 25 youth formed the Michigan 4-H State Youth Leadership Council, becoming statewide champions for 4-H.
- In 2016, two Branch County youth members were selected to serve on SYLC for the 2016—2017 year.
- 32 youth were trained as teen leaders in the 4-H Ag Innovators Experience. These youth cultivated important leadership skills as they delivered programming to 1,200 of their peers.
- 40 youth learned how to become advocates for themselves and 4-H through the 4-H Teen Spokesperson training; 86% of those surveyed indicated they feel confident in standing up for issues that are important to them.
- 34 Branch County youth and chaperones attended 4-H Exploration Days in June 2016 .



4-H Count—2016

168 Adult Volunteers

64 Youth Volunteers

824 Total 4-H
Youth Participants.

The Branch 4-H Exchange Club has been active for the past 30 years. In July, 2016 they traveled to St. Charles County Kansas.

Many 4-H 'ers have had the opportunity to learn about agriculture and travel to many states to include California, North Carolina, Virginia, Minnesota, Colorado and Pennsylvania. All Youth ages 12-19 are welcome to join. Our two year exchange hosts the first year and travels the second year.

Building communication skills for a lifetime

Communication is an essential element of every aspect of life – personal and professional. Whether it is written, spoken or visually represented, the way we express ourselves makes a big impact on our daily lives at home, work and play. Youth who practice and enhance their communication skills in adolescence will find these skills to their advantage in future employment and adulthood.

To help young people develop this important life skill, MSU Extension's Michigan 4-H has made communication an aspect of nearly every area of its programming. Youth are required to record their progress on projects, verbally report their activities and illustrate their understanding in a number of ways. Some Michigan 4-H programs make communication a major focus, further allowing youth to cultivate and enhance these critical skills.

In 2016

- 40 youth attended the 4-H Teen Spokesperson workshop; 78% of those surveyed indicated they feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings with others.
- 32 teen leaders taught more than 1,200 fellow young people the Water Windmill Challenge as part of the 4-H Ag Innovators Experience.
- Nearly 350 youth participated in 4-H meat and livestock judging programs where they verbally validated their class evaluations. **Branch County** youth participated in 4-H livestock, dairy and horse judging at the state level. The 4-H livestock judging team earned the opportunity to represent Michigan at the National level in Louisville, sponsored by Branch County 4-H Foundation.



Two Branch County Youth Elected to State 4-H Youth Leadership Council

Kaitlyn Collyer and Savannah Taylor were elected to the 2016-17 4-H SYLC which operates to give teens a voice in statewide 4-H programming. As SYLC the teens have attended the 4-H Teen Leadership Spectacular at 4-H Kettunen Center in Tustin, meet with worked with Commodity Marketing and Zoonotic Disease awareness activities at local events.

4-H Members Travel to 4-H Capitol Experience

Seven Branch County 4-H Members joined approximately 80 other teens from around the state to learn about state government and how different agencies, lobbyist and legislators support the creation of bills to form laws. Youth selected an issue to research such as criminal justice and the law, Jobs and economy, education, health, agriculture and human services. The issue groups wrote a bill to debate in both the mock House and Senate and if the bill passed both chambers, the bills would be presented to a legislator acting as the governor who chooses to sign the bills into a law or veto the bills.

4-H Citizenship Washington Focus: A Short Course in our Nation's Government

Each year 6 Branch County 4-H members join a group of 50 youth to attend CWF. Youth head out by charter bus with the first stop in Gettysburg touring the Civil War Battlefields and the Gettysburg National Museum. Youth live at the National 4-H Center in Chevy Chas, Maryland for the week-long teaching youth about the National Government as well as touring all of the historical sites like the Vietnam, Korean and World War II Memorials, Holocaust Museum, and the Capitol. Youth met with legislators in the senate and the House to learn about the areas.

Branch 4-H family hosts 4-H FLEX student

The Crouch Family from Quincy hosted Enayy Kurbanova from Turkmenistan, an exchange student in the 4-H States International Program. Enayy was selected to participate in the exchange based on her leadership experiences and her grades in Turkmenistan. While in the U.S. Enayy shared her culture at the Teen Leadership Spectacular and several other statewide and local programs. She also



earned a certificate from states International for over 200 community service hours while in the U.S. Many countries partner with U.S. States International Exchange Program giving students the opportunity to host and travel.

Ensuring Safe and Secure Food



MSU Extension efforts in ensuring safe and secure food lead to a healthy population, which in turn helps keep health care costs in check and our communities viable.

When you support MSU Extension's efforts to enhance residents' access to an adequate supply of safe, affordable food, program participants will focus on food safety measures in the field and at harvest, learn proper food preparation and food preservation techniques, and bring community partners together to strengthen access to healthy food supplies. This leads to a healthy population, which in turn helps keep health care costs in check and our communities viable.

Reducing foodborne illness through education of individuals, small businesses

The National Institutes of Health estimates that every year, 48 million people in the United States become ill and 3,000 die from pathogens in food. Causes range from outdated home food preservation practices to unsafe sanitizing practices at public events and small businesses. Over the last three years, MSU Extension food safety and preservation programs have taught almost 10,500 Michigan residents safe food handling, food preservation and methods to reduce foodborne illness.

Participants include youth, nonprofit organizations that prepare food for the public and food preservers who want to create safe products for their small businesses.

Through face-to-face and online learning, Michigan communities receive high-quality, research-based education using U.S. Department of Agriculture guidelines for safe food preservation.

- 95% of participants report they will follow research-based and tested recipes for home food preservation.
- 86% of youth participants gained knowledge about food spoilage organisms and learned how the organisms' growth can be slowed or prevented.
- 85% of participants can correctly list strategies for cross-contamination prevention.
- 91% know correct methods of cleaning and sanitizing surfaces.
- A Cottage food law workshop held in Branch County in April 2016 provided food safety and marketing information to 15 Branch residents.
- How to preserve food using a pressure canner workshop was held in Coldwater in August 2016 in the kitchen of St. Mark's Episcopal Church. 9 residents attended.

Keeping Businesses Strong



When you support MSU Extension, you help participants understand the economic, environmental and social benefits of purchasing local and regional foods.

MSU Extension and the MSU Product Center help Michigan entrepreneurs develop and commercialize high-value, consumer-responsive products and businesses in the food, agriculture, natural resources and bio-economy sectors. When you support MSU Extension, you help participants understand the economic, environmental and social benefits of purchasing local and regional foods. You also help young people develop business skills that will help them succeed as adults and help communities capitalize on their ecological, social and cultural assets. This fuels the economy by creating and retaining jobs, and helps ensure a healthy tax base.

Building entrepreneurial spirit and skills

As the backbone of the economy, small business owners play a critical role in the prosperity of the nation. But to be a successful entrepreneur, one must have not only the ambition and moxie to take a risk, but also the business sense and skill to make a profit. To ensure the business owners of tomorrow – today's youth – are triumphant in their future endeavors, they need to learn the entrepreneurial concepts that pave the way for success.

MSU Extension is helping to meet this need by providing youth and the adults that support them with the skills and resources necessary to turn ideas into business ventures. Through simulations and workshops, youth learn how to develop business plans and operate their own companies, as well as how to be more entrepreneurial in their everyday 4-H experiences. In 2015, these programs were delivered to nearly 1,200 people in 59 Michigan counties.

As a result:

- 92% said they learned how entrepreneurial skills could be used in any career, and 60% reported planning to start their own businesses.
- Six youth from the Branch County 4-H Youth Entrepreneurship Program started their own businesses and began selling their products at a local store.

Keeping People Healthy



Encouraging 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.

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.

Improving nutrition and increasing physical activities in Michigan communities

Limited income and poor nutrition affect quality of life and can increase healthcare costs. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that more than 30 percent of Michigan adults are considered obese, and one out of every three deaths in Michigan is caused by cardiovascular disease, influencing the quality of life and adding billions of dollars each year in economic burden.

MSU Extension delivers affordable, relevant, evidence-based education to help residents in urban and rural communities stay healthy throughout their lifespans. Programs teach participants how to buy and prepare nutritious, budget-friendly foods and increase physical activity. In 2015 alone, these programs reached more than 112,000 adults and youth across the state in over 1,600 different locations.

- 79% of youth participants improved their abilities or gained knowledge about how to choose foods according to Federal Dietary Guidelines.
- 79% of adult participants made a positive change in at least one nutrition practice, such as preparing foods without adding salt, or using the Nutrition Facts labels to make food choices.
- 73% of adult participants made a positive change in at least one food resource management practice, such as planning meals in advance or comparing prices when shopping.

Branch County Impact

Valerie Albright and Sarah Johnson provide Nutrition and Physical Activity programming throughout the county. Adults are served through either series (6 classes) or presentations.

- In 2016, 65 adults attended 5 different series that were offered. An additional 217 adults were reached through 13 presentations.
- Adult participants showed improvements after graduating from a series in three main areas. 66% of participants showed improvement in one or more food resource practice (i.e. plan meals, compare prices, does not run out of food or uses grocery list)

Keeping People Healthy in Branch County, continued

- 38% of participants showed improvement in one or more food safety practice (i.e. thawing and storing foods correctly).



Zesty Corn Salad recipe was a hit with one couple. They plan on making it for their son's upcoming graduation party in July.

Cooking Matters

Participants showed improvements in their health and physical activity practices by sharing their successes. These successes are those of the participants but also have an impact on the friends and families of our participants. For example, in a *Cooking Matters for Parents* class, participants made a Zesty Corn Salad recipe as a group. One of the couples in the class loved the salad. They loved it so much that they are planning to make the salad for their son's graduation party coming up in July. They were excited to find an easy, inexpensive recipe that they know their guests will like, and will pair well with the Sloppy Joes they are planning to serve.

Confidence in preparing foods is gained through the attendance of series. One participant said that she had made Ratatouille from the *Cooking Matters for Parents* cookbook. She went on to say that her children loved the Ratatouille and that she had made the dish twice.

Gardening with Youth Grant

We are also doing our best to meet families where they are at. A 4-H group had formed as a result of the Gardening with Youth grant (a result of a partnership between MSU Extension, the Great Start Collaborative, and the Branch County Community Foundation) received by St. Mark's Episcopal Church. The 4-H group planted a garden at Reformation Lutheran Church and met there regularly. Val Albright was asked to provide a series. A *Cooking Matters for Families* class was held. The majority of the group was Hispanic. Val enjoyed learning from them about food and their culture. This group was unique because most were family; brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, and a grandma too.

Smarter Lunchrooms

Smarter Lunchrooms is an initiative that helps make healthier lunchrooms through changes in the environment. Smarter Lunchrooms uses easy, no-cost and low-cost changes to encourage students to select, eat, and enjoy healthier foods in school without eliminating their choice. MSU Extension will provide coaching and technical assistance to school lunchroom staff throughout the process to conduct a pre and post assessment using the [Smarter Lunchroom Scorecard](#); Help staff choose and implement lunchroom changes, assist with applying for grant funding to make larger changes such as purchasing salad bars and help schools write success stories to be able to communicate with parents and the community about the initiative.

- In 2016: Suzanne Pish worked with Ryan Elementary Principal and staff to implement the Smarter Lunchroom program. 270 youth were exposed to changes made in the cafeteria environments.

Keeping People Healthy in Branch County, continued



Project RED, Rural Education Day, held every April at the Branch Area Careers Center. 523 Branch County 3rd graders were reached with six presentations. This is a partnership with Branch County Farm Bureau and BACC.

Classroom Nutrition Programs in Branch

- Through 32 Show Me Nutrition series, 611 youth were reached.
- An additional 523 youth were reached through 6 presentations offered at health fairs, the county fair, with a majority being Branch County 3rd graders reached at Project RED (Rural Education Day), a partnership with Branch County Farm Bureau and Branch Area Careers Center. .

Youth in grades 3-5 surveyed showed:

- improvements in eating healthy snacks by 31%
- eating vegetables by 24%
- eating fruits by 22%,
- eating breakfast by 21%
- and increasing physical activating by 18%.

Youth programming success reaches beyond the classroom

- A Bronson parent of 2 students, one from Anderson Elementary and the other from Ryan Elementary, shared that her children were having a discussion about the MyPlate while sitting together in the backseat on a car ride.
- During our annual program, FRIEND's Health and Nutrition Day Camp, attended by 65 youth age 7-11, we made "Butter." Many of the youth were doubtful that what we were doing would make butter. The look on the children's faces when they shook the cream long enough to get a chunk of solid butter inside their container was priceless. We included some science with it about turning a liquid into a solid. The campers got to take their butter home with them and share the experience and then get to eat the butter with their family.
- In addition to direct programming, 13,158 individuals were reached through distributed materials with nutrition and physical activity facts and information through newsletters, factsheets, promotional materials and electronic distribution.

Making the Most of Our Natural Assets



Better land stewardship benefits communities by protecting and enhancing Michigan's natural resource assets.

When you support MSU Extension's natural resources education programs, participants learn about income-generating opportunities, ecological principles, natural resource issues and the role of natural resource professionals. They also explore public policy issues related to environmental stewardship. Our programs can lead to increased income for families that retain their natural resource assets, help landowners become better stewards of their land, and protect land management opportunities for future generations. Better land stewardship benefits communities by protecting and enhancing Michigan's natural resource assets.

Intro to Lakes Online Course

- Lake Ecology, natural shorelines, aquatic plants and citizen involvement are among the topics studied by students of the Intro to Lakes course. This intense 9 unit course was completed by 128 participants across the state, with 1 graduate from Branch County.

Raising awareness of the benefits of cover crops

Cover crops are a hot topic in agricultural circles, thanks to an MSU Extension specialist's message that's resonating with the right crowd. Dean Baas, a senior research associate, conducts cover crop and organic agriculture research and education.

Cover crops are plants seeded into agricultural fields, either within or outside of the regular growing season, with the primary purpose of improving or maintaining ecosystem quality. Environmental benefits include enhanced biodiversity, increased soil infiltration and attraction of honeybees and beneficial insects.

Researchers are focusing on ways cover crops can be used by farmers to bring diversity to the crop system; to reduce reliance on fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides; and to determine the impact of cover crops on overall operation economics. Studies show:

- Farming benefits include reduced erosion, improved soil quality through increased porosity, soil organic matter and water-holding capacity, as well as the addition of beneficial microbes.
- Cover crops help retain nutrients that otherwise would be lost.
- Cover crops add nitrogen through fixation while combatting weeds and breaking disease cycles.
- In August, 2016 farmers and Ag Business Representatives attended a field day sponsored by Bracy, NCC and Schumacher Ag Services Company to educate farmers on Cover Cropping and sustainable agriculture the 2017 Market outlook. Dean Baas delivered sessions on soil health and cover crops to 102 participants at this program in Quincy.



Responding to Stress in Farm Communities

Issue:

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health recently examined 130 occupations and found laborers and farm owners had the highest rate of death due to stress-related conditions like heart and artery disease, hypertension, ulcers and nervous disorders. In 2016, the CDC reports that out of every 100,000 farmer 90 commit suicide that is six times higher than the National rate of suicide with non-farmers. Michigan has seen an increase in suicides and suicide attempts over the last year since the commodity prices have fell drastically.



Phase one:

Mental Health First Aid training is a full-day, hands-on, certification course that can help those people working with farmers and farm families to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental illness and emotional crisis. Two classes were offered during 2016 and 35 MSU Extension and Industry professionals are now certified in Mental Health First Aid.

Phase two:

MSU Extension has developed a workshop specifically designed for people who work with agricultural producers and farm families who want to know more about managing farm-related stress and learn ways to approach and communicate with those in need. Educators will be discussing the present agricultural market situation with an overview of how this has affected a farm's financial situation and cash flow, communication techniques, highlighting impact of stress on our body and state of mind, providing information on how to recognize some warning signs of depression, self harm and mental illness.



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Responding to Stress in Farm Communities



Adam J.
Kantrovich, PhD



Suzanne Pish, M.A.



Roger Betz

Since October 2016, ***communicating with Farmers under stress workshops*** have been offered throughout the state of Michigan and Indiana which included **274** participants.

As a result of the program,

72% of participants increased their understanding of the current agriculture financial situation; 27% of participants were already very informed on the issues facing Michigan agriculture.

89% increased their understanding of the impact that stress has on their own bodies.

92% were now able to recognize warning signs of depression, suicide, and mental illness.

97% learned where to send people for help in the community, and of those, over 50% said their awareness of community resources greatly increased.

There was high satisfaction with the workshop and Extension in general.

95% of participants will use MSU Extension resources and training in the future.

94% of participants were already familiar with MSU Extension prior to this workshop; 68% had previously participated in an MSU Extension workshop on a different topic.

89% of participants left the workshop more aware of MSU Extension resources and opportunities.

As a result of those attending the ***Communicating with Farmers under Stress workshop***, 19 people reported they will share the information with additional people. This means another 845 farmers receiving the information as an outcome of the workshop



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Supporting Food and Agriculture



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

The Coldwater Area Garden Club hosted a presentation by MSUE on growing hops in backyard gardens in October, 2016. 15 attendees learned about the history of hops, their uses, how to grow them, dry them and store them.

The production of commercial food and nonfood agricultural operations is growing rapidly. The number of households raising a portion of their own food and raising livestock or gardening for pleasure or relaxation continues to increase. When you support MSU Extension, you help participants learn profitable and efficient business and production practices. Participants also learn how to optimize and reduce the use of pesticides and fertilizers, and how to conserve and protect water resources. This education leads to better use of time, money and human capital, and helps retain and create agricultural jobs. These measures strengthen Michigan's economy.

Branch Farmer's Day Continues as Premier Ag Event in Michigan

The 49th Annual Branch County Farmer's Day held on February 15, 2016 at the Branch Area Careers Center. This program has a long history and has been a venue for individuals interested in agriculture to learn more about current topics within the agricultural industry. This event provides farmers, agriculture allied Industry representatives and community members (Branch county and surrounding areas) that have an interest in agriculture, the opportunity to come and learn about current topics surrounding the agricultural industry. This year's event featured 16 educational sessions. In addition, to speakers from MSUE there were also speakers from Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Farm Bureau, Michigan Pork Producers Association and Branch County FFA. Overall, a total of 360 participants attended the 16 educational sessions that were offered at Branch County Farmer's Day. 90 plus agri-business related vendors set up a booth at this event for networking and business promotion opportunities.

Pork Quality Assurance Site Assessments

Site assessments are an on-farm educational tool for all pork producers to objectively assess the well-being of their pigs. Retailers and restaurants may ask for assurances about animal well-being from suppliers and the packers. In turn, this causes packers to require verification of on-farm well-being practices from the producers through PQA Plus Site Assessment Status and a potential 3rd party Audit verification.

- At the request of producers and packers 7 site assessments were conducted in Branch County. Farms assessed range from 2,500 head farrow to finish operation to contract finishing sites that raise 12,000 finishing pigs per year to a family owned pork producing system that produces 100,000 + market hogs annually.
- In total 45 employees and contract growers from Branch County received training in 2016.

Extension Educators Serving Branch County

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