



Thank you for another great programming year! We couldn't do our work for the residents of Calhoun County without your continued partnership!

Julie Pioch, District 13 Director - piochj@msu.edu

To help cut through the noise of misinformation and make informed decisions about vaccination, MSU Extension, was selected by the MDHHS to develop vaccine education programming. The Michigan Vaccine Project was a three-year effort that leveraged our statewide network of county offices and community partnerships to provide people with trusted, evidence-based information. The MVP outreach campaign used digital, radio, and print materials, as well as in-person and virtual education programming, to inform Michiganders' on vaccination decision making and

empower communities and individuals to make informed choices. MVP promoted a healthier Michigan for all. Program highlights included 34 articles published to the MVP website; MVP staff participated in 120 community events, reaching over 22,000 people and reached a potential audience of over 14 million people through all outreach efforts including digital, radio, print and direct engagement.



MSU Extension's Corinne Lopez at a booth at the Battle Creek Health and Wellness Expo on May 1, 2023 sharing information on vaccines and how to identify misinformation versus good sources of information.

Calhoun County Based Staff

Kathy Fischer, CYI Supervising Educator
Cressie Vargo, 4-H Program Coordinator
Kellie Jordan, Food Safety Program Instructor
Nisha Ritchie, Community Nutrition Instructor
Sylvia Benavidez, Secretary I

Contact Information

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Calhoun County General Fund Appropriations

2021	\$81,823
2022	\$118,715
2023	\$123,800

**CALHOUN COUNTY
MSU EXTENSION WEBSITE**

29,317 PAGE VIEWS
8,035 VISITORS
14% REGULAR CONSUMERS

431 4-H Youth Enrolled

118 Adult Volunteers

31 Community Clubs

1579 Total Youth Reached

**69
PROGRAMS HELD IN THE
COUNTY**

**419
EXTENSION PROGRAMS INCLUDED
CALHOUN COUNTY RESIDENTS**

**1885
COUNTY RESIDENTS ATTENDED
EXTENSION PROGRAMS**

**122
DIRECT CONSULTATIONS
REPORTED**

**11,524
ESTIMATED CONTACT HOURS FOR
CALHOUN PARTICIPANTS**



19 Residential Soil Tests
10 Commercial Soil Tests

68 "ASK EXTENSION" Questions



**10 Calhoun County
Extension Master
Gardeners**

**280 Youth Reached via
SNAP Education**



Health Programming Reaches Nearly 300 in Southwest Michigan

*"It's so easy to feel stuck and tired with chronic illness. You have helped me to improve my life."
— Chronic Pain PATH Participant*

Being healthy means tending to our unique physical health needs, however that takes shape. Whether practicing tai chi in a sunny park or ensuring our immunizations are up to date, we can improve our physical health by managing chronic conditions, preventing injury and illness, and embracing joyful movement to the best of our individual abilities.

Social-emotional and mental health is also key. We can care for this part of our health in a multitude of ways, from practicing mindfulness to learning how to support someone in a mental health crisis. This allows us to cope with negative situations and feelings, foster strong and healthy relationships with others and ourselves, and live with purpose and meaning.

Good sleep, access to healthy foods, supportive relationships — what it means to be healthy is different to us all. That's why MSU Extension is here to support all the ways we can live healthier lives and build healthier communities, by bringing the vast knowledge and resources of MSU directly to individuals, communities and businesses.

In 2023, nearly 300 residents from Berrien, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph and Van Buren Counties participated in health and food safety programming including Stress Less with Mindfulness, Personal Action Toward Health (PATH), RELAX: Alternatives to Anger, Home Food Preservation, Safe Food = Healthy Kids, the Michigan Vaccine Project, A Matter of Balance, and SLEEp Education for Everyone (SLEEP) just to name a few.



2023 Great Lakes Expo

***"I cannot say enough good things about this conference. The presence of University information and education (understandable for growers) combined with the industry resources is unmatched for the horticulture industry anywhere else." ---
GLEXPO Participant***

The Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable & Farm Market EXPO, Michigan Greenhouse Growers EXPO (GLEXPO) and Lavender Conference is an annual event that draws thousands of farmers from Michigan and beyond to the DeVos Place Convention Center in Grand Rapids each December.

Attendees included fruit growers, vegetable growers, fruit and vegetable growers, and greenhouse growers with 19 attendees from Calhoun County. In 2023, the multi-day event had nearly 3,200 attendees in more than 90 educational sessions and workshops with sessions on specialty crops, greenhouses, and farm marketing.

MSU Extension's team of vegetable, fruit, greenhouse, and community food system educators and specialists organized 77 out of 96 recorded educational activities offered. The 2023 show offered 54 Michigan Restricted Use Pesticide (RUP) credits, 47.5 Ohio RUP credits, and 100.5 Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) continuing education credits.

Organizers also put together two separate bus tours in conjunction with GLEXPO. The Farm Market Bus tour had 152 participants on three buses visiting six farm markets and agritourism operations to the east and northeast of Grand Rapids. The Greenhouse Biological Control Essentials: Setting Yourself Up for Success workshop and bus tour visited Walters Gardens in Zeeland.



2023 Calhoun County Fair Activities

Big, exciting days at the 174th Annual 2023 Calhoun County Fair kept the crowds coming back during August 13–19. The theme for all the fun was “Boots, Barnyard, and Family Fun at the Calhoun County Fair!” The kids in the 4-H Barn had access to a wider range of activities. There were Lego competitions, ceramic projects, woodworking, and even an opportunity to get up close and operate a robot from a local robotics club.

The General Market Project Auction had some really creative items to look at and a nice crowd gathered for bidding! Seeing kids, whether 4-H or not, dancing for fair goers, operating robots, supporting their brothers and sisters in competition, being responsible for animals, showcasing their art and animals on the last day of the fair is inspiring. We've got some pretty amazing youth and kids in Calhoun County. Let's continue to support our youth in all their dreams. Thank you for being there for 4-H!



Supporting Entrepreneurs Across "Cereal City" and New Manufacturing Spaces for Packaged Goods Makers

Battle Creek Unlimited, an economic organization in Battle Creek, Michigan, has been partnering with the MSU Center for Regional Food Systems and the Product Center to support food businesses in the region.

When an opportunity to develop a proposal for the MEDC's Small Business Innovation Hub RFP came about, Battle Creek Unlimited's Gabriela Perez-Hernandez jumped at the idea of adding a full-time Innovation Counselor to the budget. The proposal was accepted by the MEDC and the MSU Product Center under the leadership of Mollie Woods and Dave Ivan and will expand their team to support entrepreneurs across "Cereal City" and create new manufacturing space for packaged goods makers.

This initiative adds to the program, Battle Creek Food Reimagined, a collaborative of organizations that includes the MSU Product Center, MSU Center for Regional Food Systems, JPG Resources, City of Battle Creek, WK Kellogg Foundation and Battle Creek Unlimited.

An Innovative way to Teach ServSafe in Spanish

Kelli Jordan, MSU Extension Food Safety Program Instructor recently found another avenue to meet the need for translation. In one of the offerings of a ServSafe class, a participant with English as their second language needed a little extra help. She was able to accommodate the student by discovering a new way to use technology. Jordan shared, “I was able to set up a separate computer with Spanish ServSafe PowerPoint on it for him to view. While I taught the English ServSafe PowerPoint, he was able to follow along with the Spanish ServSafe PowerPoint. He was also able to take the Spanish ServSafe exam.”

During the exam, the client shared that he was worried he wouldn't pass but ended up scoring 75% on the test. The program also has other languages such as French, German, Chinese, and many others which will be used for teaching going forward.

***"Following along with the Spanish PowerPoint was easy and helped me learn the material" ---
Calhoun County ServSafe Participant***



Emergency Response to Accidents Involving Livestock Trailer Training - Calhoun County

At the request of Lieutenant Chris Young – PEM, Emergency Management Coordinator, Calhoun County Sheriff's Office, members of the MSU Extension Emergency Response to Accidents Involving Livestock (ERAIL) team delivered an ERAIL Trailer training program for first responder departments in Calhoun County. The trailer training was held on April 27, 2023 at the Calhoun County Fairgrounds. Overall, 32 first responders from various departments across Calhoun County attended the program.

The objectives of this training included: 1) increasing awareness of ERAIL trailer locations and contacts and 2) familiarize first responders with the equipment contained within the ERAIL trailer by providing hands-on opportunities to work with scenario-based situations, therefore using the equipment to set up for animal containment and handling.

Ernie Baker, Branch County Animal Control, Branch County Sheriff's office, brought the ERAIL trailer housed in Branch County for the first responders to see the trailer and get hands-on experience with the equipment contained within the response trailer. Mr. Baker also served as a resource person during the program.

Results from the post program survey indicated that before the training, only 8.8% of attending participants had knowledge of the ERAIL Response Trailer, where the trailer is located and who to contact to use it in emergency situations.

As a result of the training, 100% of participants gained knowledge of where the trailer is located and who to contact to use it in emergency situations.

Participants were also asked about their skill level using livestock emergency response equipment before the training. Forty one percent indicated that they had never used any of this equipment before, 21% indicated that they had little knowledge of this type of equipment and 29% indicated that they had some skill level using this equipment, respectively. As a result of the program, 94% of participants reported that their skill level increased moderately to significantly when using livestock emergency response equipment.

“What was eye opening was how many of my first responder colleagues did not know anything about animal handling or equipment. This was a good training for them, more of them need this information.” ---Calhoun County ERAIL Trailer Training Participant



Smart Gardening for Calhoun EMGs

From January through November, 1,321 MSU Extension Master Gardeners (EMGs) joined timely “horticulture centric” programs with several EMGs in attendance from Calhoun County. Each online session featured interactive Smart Gardening topics taught by the MSU Extension consumer horticulture team and faculty, helping them stay connected while enriching their knowledge. To allow greater access and increase convenience, all sessions were recorded and recording links were sent out immediately after the session.