



2020 Annual Report to Missaukee County



A Message from the District Director Spring 2021

2020 will be a year to remember for many reasons. The creativeness, dedication, teamwork, and resilience

that our MSUE professionals exhibited during this global pandemic will be something I will always remember. This has been a difficult time for communities, families and staff, and I am proud of the work we have done to continue to provide high-quality educational programs throughout Michigan.

During the pandemic and subsequent stay-home orders, MSUE staff were given an opportunity to do something they have wanted to do for a long time - convert their in-person programming to a digital format. Digital formats don't work for everybody or every program, but to expand our reach and help more people incorporate the evidence-based learning from a major university into their homes, families, businesses and communities, has always been a goal worth pursuing. Many were moving in that direction already; the pandemic required others to move there faster.

Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) brings the science, programs and resources of Michigan's land grant university to organizations, communities and individuals throughout the state. Our outreach and engagement is built on a local basis, thanks to our county partnerships and more than 600 faculty and staff in offices across all 83 counties.

Historically, most of our relationships have been maintained through in-person meetings and programs. Over the last few years we have built up the breadth and quality of our website at extension.msu.edu which now averages 1.25 million visitors per month.

Working from home with the tools and support needed to help them succeed in a remote environment, MSUE educators have continued to assist farmers, elected officials and decision makers, parents, families and

In 2020, we expanded our capacity to provide high-quality virtual education. In this report, you will find stories of strength and effort, stories of resilience and creativity. There is no doubt this pandemic has pushed us all to the edge from time to time, but we have worked together to get beyond it and to continue to do the good work we do and deliver the best for our residents. We are looking forward to a time when we can all meet in person safely again.

youth by meeting with them on virtual platforms through online meetings and webinars. With the work they have accomplished over the last months, staff have reported some of the benefits and disadvantages to "virtual" learning:

- Programs that are recorded allow people to view the meetings in a time convenient for them.
- We are reaching audiences that would not be able to attend our programs in the past because of time, travel and disability.
- We are reaching local, regional, state, national and global audiences.
- We are able to share our expertise, ideas and best practices more efficiently across the state.
- There are more opportunities available to everyone – once a program is made virtual anyone can sign up, regardless of where they live.
- A digital divide still exists, not all programs work in an on-line format, and nothing will replace our local, face to face, relationship- based work.

In the end, I believe this experience in on-line program development and investment in capacity will augment our face to face work (**once that resumes**) and provide greater access to our work than ever before. Thank you for your continued support!

Shari Spoelman, District Director

Spoelma4@msu.edu



Response of MSU Extension to the impact of Novel Corona Virus

In late March, MSUE pivoted all of our programming to online formats to comply with the original Stay Safe, Stay Home order (EO2020-42). Within six days of that order, we launched the [Remote Learning and Resources](#) website and our teams immediately began modifying programming to a digital format that would provide equal educational value right in people’s homes. This online space provided a platform to launch this effort and since then has become a robust virtual one-stop-shop for everything MSU Extension has to offer online. Within a few days into quarantine, staff had new programming spooled up and ready to present digitally. A few noteworthy examples include:

Adulting 101: Staff members quickly pivoted from a face-to-face program offered in a few locations to a series of one-hour presentations called **Adulting 101**. Topics include things such as what to look for when renting, tips and tricks for easy cooking, how to keep your finances in order and the right way to do household tasks such as ironing and setting a table. Once promoted via social media, it went “viral,” attracting more than **3,000** registered participants statewide and was recommended by school districts. This program has now become a regular recurring series and engaged a team of program staff to share in its delivery.

Gardening Cabin Fever Conversations – Gardening became a highly popular series of webinars via Zoom and Facebook Live designed to get people’s minds off of being cooped up inside and get them thinking about their garden spaces. Sessions focused on lighthearted but educational conversations about topics like seed saving, houseplants, pollinator health, community gardening and container gardening. The webinar’s success of more than **500 attendees per session** prompted organizers to continue programming during winter 2021.

[Educational Resources for Parents, teachers and families](#) were compiled to assist with remote and home-based learning. 4-H Curriculum, videos, tip sheets and virtual learning tools were developed and continue to be added to and improved as we begin the Fall school year.

[Rapid Response For Agriculture](#) was a site developed in 2019 to provide a single point for farmers to access resources developed in response to several weather related emergencies. In 2020, our agriculture team immediately rose to the challenge to assist the industry with resources and management tools to aid them through the pandemic emergency.

One first response was a series of articles and best practice options for the [floriculture industry](#) who were limited in the ability to sell to their wholesale markets. Other resources were aimed at keeping farm employees safe and [how to best manage operations](#) while still meeting consumer demands for a fresh, safe food supply during emergency conditions created by Covid-19.

Canning food became more popular during the pandemic. While working from home has its challenges, food safety staff witnessed some really great results with programming online. By having online classes, instead of face:face, the reach for food preservation classes increased by over 4,000%.

Adulting 101: Preparing for Life and College

DATE & TIME:
 April 9 2 pm Budget and Credit
 April 16 2 pm Rent Smart
 April 23 2 pm Cooking 101
 April 30 2 pm Household Tasks

LOCATION:
Virtual through web

COST:
Free

Prepare yourself for the future!

SPONSORS:
 MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY Extension
 MID MICHIGAN COLLEGE

WHO SHOULD ATTEND:
Older youth (11th and 12th Graders)

DESCRIPTION:
Learn some quick tips that will help you navigate life and college. Budget and Credit-Explore the basics. Rent Smart-Learn what to know when you rent. Cooking 101- Learn some tips and tricks for cooks for yourself. Household Task- Learn ironing, making bed, and other helpful hints.

HOW TO REGISTER
<https://msu.zoom.us/j/257448955>

CONTACT:
Michelle Neff by hydemic@msu.edu or 989-429-2359

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Join Us Online

Food Preservation Series
Every Thursday 1 p.m. & 6 p.m. EDT

March 18 - Introduction to Home Canning
 March 25 - Preserving Maple Syrup
 April 1 - Selecting Plants for your Garden
 April 8 - With Spring's Arrival, Asparagus Won't Be Far Away

To Learn More Visit:
https://www.canr.msu.edu/food_preservation/events
 To join by phone, call in advance to register at 877-643-9882.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension



MSU Extension in Missaukee County

2020 By the numbers:

Jan—Dec 2020	
# of programs offered statewide attended by County residents	100
# of County residents who attended programs	284
# of MSUE staff reporting serving residents of County	35
# of Direct Consultations Reported (Field Crops, Com Vitality, Prod Center, Soil tests, gardening, food safety, etc.)	189

General Fund Budget Expenditure	
FY 2019-2020	\$74,465 (budgeted)
	\$70,795 (expended)

4-H 2019-2020	
4-H Adult Volunteers	12
4-H Youth Club Enrollment	107
Total Youth Served (duplicates removed)	323

MSU Extension District 6 Advisory Council

County	Name	
Clare	Sandy Bristol	Commissioner
Clare	Ken Brown	
Gladwin	Rick Grove	Commissioner
Gladwin	Dick Metz	
Isabella	Jerry Jaloszynski	Commissioner
Isabella	Bob Wachowski	
Mecosta	Marilynn <u>Bradstrom</u>	Commissioner
Mecosta	Vacancy	

County	Name	
Missaukee	Frank <u>VanderWal</u>	Commissioner
Missaukee	Vacancy	
Osceola	Jill Halladay	Commissioner
	Tim Michell	Alternate
Osceola	Russ Nehmer	
Osceola	David <u>Eggle</u>	
Wexford	Judy Nichols	Commissioner
Wexford	Mike <u>Soloman</u>	
Wexford	Chris Gentry	Chair



4-H Program Highlights



BRANDIE SIGLER

4-H Program
Coordinator

siglerbr@msu.edu
231-839-5848

"I recognize that many in our counties do not have access to reliable high-speed internet, so I focused my efforts on creating programs that don't require internet. I developed kit programs so youth can participate at their own pace."

Brandie Sigler is the 4-H coordinator in both Missaukee and Wexford Counties. She loves the adaptability of her job. When working hard to get youth involved in our programs, Brandie is able to make quick shifts and be flexible. When COVID restrictions were first put in place, she was able to transition an existing face to face "Babysitting" club at Lake City Schools to a virtual format immediately so she could continue the program without interruption.

What worked especially well because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the need to reduce face:face interactions?

Manton High School has students that live in both Wexford and Missaukee Counties. Last fall, Brandie partnered with them to bring a new program to students at that school. Brandie brought Spartan Peak Health and Performance to 4 classrooms of freshman health students. Three of the classes were traditional classroom settings, which she led virtually. The 4th class was an independent study. Students had the option to go to a classroom after school, participate virtually, or watch a recording at their convenience. This helped the teacher because she was struggling to find content to deliver to the independent study students. The series was so successful that the PE teacher has requested that Brandie bring "Steps to a Healthy Teen" in her class.

What would you like our commissioners and other stakeholders to know about your work during 2020?

Brandie adapted quickly to the new normal of social distancing and virtual learning. Recognizing that many families in our counties do not have access to reliable high-speed internet, Brandie focused her efforts on creating programs that don't require internet. She developed kit programs that were mailed to youth who could participate at their own pace and use optional internet-based opportunities to share their work with their peers.

Youth now have more access to 4-H programming across the state than they ever have before. The majority of programs in every county are open to youth across the state. This allows for students to find programming that matches their specific interest.

When not working, Brandie enjoys her hobby farm of ducks, chickens, goats, and a new pet pig.



Peak Health and Performance, formerly known as Spartan Performance, provides middle-school and high-school athletes with sound nutrition education. Nutrition education can help young athletes improve their health, their overall eating patterns, and their athletic performance.



Nutrition



DENISE GILDE

Community Nutrition
Instructor

gildedden@msu.edu
231-839-4667

*"I personally have emerged
a more knowledgeable and
technologically skilled
employee."*

Community Nutrition Instructor Denise Gilde enjoys the flexibility and variety of tasks her job provides. As a nutrition instructor, she works with schools and agencies like Love, INC to provide nutrition education across the lifespan. During Covid and the work from home order for all non-essential workers, Denise worked hard to overcome the hurdles we were all presented with and learned many new skills to share with the people she serves. Now she is thrilled to realize that this challenge made us all much stronger. She is especially proud of the teachers and students who worked so hard through the on-again, off-again, in-person, and at-home classes. She finds it gratifying to feel such resilience during a time of much uncertainty.

What would you like our commissioners and other stakeholders to know about your work during 2020?

Although many challenges this past year prevented most in-person programming, time was used wisely. MSUE Employees have learned much about distance teaching and learning. I believe that this will ready us for programming with community members whom we may not have been able to reach in previous years due to financial and transportation issues. When able to get back to face-to-face meetings with community members and partners, I believe we will see even greater program participation. "Utilizing what we have learned from this pandemic will be a gift for the future," noted Denise. When not working, Denise enjoys gardening, landscaping, and decorating.

Grocery Store Shenanigans

Participants are using the information we teach them to choose healthier options at the grocery stores, and in their meal planning.

While shopping at a grocery store, I overheard a familiar voice emphatically telling her children that they could not have a particular cereal they were asking for. As I turned to look, I recognized a mom and her three children who had taken one of my "Cooking Matters For Families" class. Mom said "Remember, we're looking for cereal that has a Whole Grain as the first ingredient, and the lowest amount of sugar." About that time, mom spotted me and said, "Hey look, it's our nutrition teacher! If you don't believe me, ask her."





MSU Extension Staff



ADAM INGRAIO, PH.D.

Extension Specialist:
MSU Extension
Veterans' Liaison /
Agricultural
Entomologist
ingraoad@msu.edu
906-293-3203

Bee Keeping

A popular statewide webinar series in 2020 was MSU Apiculture and it was designed for new and experienced beekeepers. This 10- session program had more than 1,600 participants, eleven of which were from Missaukee County. Topics includes First Year Colonies, Established Colonies, Early Season Management, What to do When Bees Arrive, and Preparing for Swarm Season.

MSU Extension Staff



HEIDI LINDBERG

West Michigan
Greenhouse and
Nursery Education &
Research
wollaege@msu.edu
616-994-4701

Christmas Tree Production

MSU Extension hosted a Christmas Tree Pest Management webinar series in 2020, attended by several growers in Missaukee County (7).

The four-part webinar series was organized and hosted by MSU Extension (Bert Cregg, Heidi Lindberg). The webinars were advertised nationally and featured presentations by MSU and MSUE personnel. Their presentations included pest scouting methodology, insect and disease ID and management, and trouble-shooting non-pest damage. We offered pesticide recertification credits for Michigan growers.

Youth Career Development

Mock It Then Rock It! One of the successes Sara has brought to the Wexford -Missaukee area is the Mock Interview Day. Fortunately, this was held in Cadillac at Baker College in February, before the pandemic hit. Mock It Then Rock It: Mock Interview Day was held for all 11th and 12th graders in the greater Cadillac area. On the day of the event, students experienced a practice interview, had their resume reviewed, and attended breakout sessions on relevant topics. In addition to several staff from MSUE, the community wide event had a planning committee with membership from Baker College, Michigan Works, Cadillac Area YMCA, Munson Hospital Cadillac, and representatives from local schools.



SARA KEINATH

*Youth Career
Exploration/Work
Force Preparation*
skeinath@msu.edu

Mock Interviews for students: What can be better than good comments from the youth participants?

- *Very well done, this was very helpful!*
- *I had so much fun, I want to thank everyone who did this*
- *I liked it. It helped me with tips and tricks to do better in an interview and do better on resume.*
- *I was very nervous at the beginning but as time went by I was more comfortable with how my body language was.*
- *This was fun and helped me feel more comfortable talking in an interview. Also learning to handshake correctly.*
- *I learned so much! Wonderful people. Thank you so much.*



Agriculture

Paul Gross is an Agriculture Extension Educator specializing in Field Crops and Soil Health. When not working, he is happiest spending time with his family and friends.



PAUL GROSS

Field Crops

Educator

grossp@msu.edu

(989) 560-1371

"I am utilizing technology to improve efficiency in my work and to reach more people."

Paul enjoys working with farmers and agribusinesses, bringing the research and information from MSU's Extension Specialists and applying it to their farms to improve productivity, profitability and environmental practices. Paul engages in on-farm research in the county to test products, practices, and systems that address issues on their farms.

During the pandemic, Paul worked with his colleagues to develop a stronger online presence for programming. They developed online courses, podcasts, informational videos, and short how-to videos that farmers can view on demand. These have been posted on our social media sites. Covid-19 has forced all of us to be more creative in how we communicate and interact with farmers.



Impact of COVID:

According to Paul, "Like everyone else, Covid-19 changed our world and how I carried out my programming. I am fortunate that I was able to conduct all of my planned on-farm research in the summer of 2020. I was able to travel to

fields to monitor pest traps, provide soil samples and scout pests. We utilized pictures and videos for weed, insect, and disease problems when travel was not possible. I am utilizing technology to improve efficiency in my work and to reach more people."



FaceBook Live weekly "Lunch Break" is an ongoing event that brings up to date information from the MSU Extension field crops team and other members of MSU's ag educators and specialists to growers.



Farm Stress



ERIC KARBOWSKI

Community Behavioral
Health Educator

karbows8@msu.edu
(989) 444-2211

“Every connection and outreach made to someone that is struggling can have a lifelong impact.”

Eric Karbowski is our Farm Stress educator who enjoys spending time with his family and friends, football, hunting, kayaking, and cutting wood. He is passionate about working with farmers, creating tools, and developing resources to support those in need. Eric joined MSU Extension to help provide behavioral health supports and services to farmers and farm families in our community. The existing farm stress programs created a nationally recognized foundation that set the stage for the advanced opportunities and supports now available to those we serve. The focus on adhering to the programming models, yet flexibility to be creative and innovative, have proven to be important in allowing resources such as the teletherapy program and “wrap around” model to be implemented. For Eric, his position with MSU Extension is helping him fulfill both personal and professional goals.

Mental Health Minute: When the Covid-19 pandemic hit, Eric and his team of colleagues in agriculture were able to make an impact despite the inability to provide in person programming. One of those examples is a program called “Lunch Break.” Once a week, ag educators and Eric provide a Facebook live feed for updates and advice for growers and producers. Each week, Eric provides a Mental Health Minute, and embeds good, sound mental health education for the participants. Sometimes, you don’t know that you can use this information until you receive it.

Teletherapy: Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, MSU Extension through a partnership with Pine Rest Behavioral Health, created the teletherapy program for farmers to access supports through online-counseling with master’s level clinicians that have a connection to agriculture. This was timely because the roadmap to support and recovery was already in place, making connecting farmers with the services efficient. It later received funding to help offset cost further reducing access barriers.

According to Eric, “The heralding truth behind behavioral health is that often the effectiveness of the supports we are providing will not likely be publicized. Every connection and outreach made to someone that is struggling can have a lifelong impact. Although we have a large amount of reportable farm stress impact data and outreach engagements, as friends, neighbors, and supporters of MSU Extension, you are supporting the continued development of resources and tools further reducing the impact of stress, mental illness, and the potential loss of life by suicide through our farm stress efforts.”



Responding to Farmers in Need



Dairy



PHIL DURST

Extension Dairy &
Beef Cattle Health
and Production

durstp@msu.edu

989-345-0692

"I enjoy sharing what I have learned from research and farmer experience to help others solve problems and improve."

Phil Durst is a Dairy Educator who enjoys "working with farmers who are committed to produce the highest quality product and to be successful in business in spite of many difficulties."

Notes about Covid: Agriculture is an essential industry and not everything can be done remotely. During the pandemic and stay home order, because agriculture is considered essential work, Michigan State University Extension permitted some educators to work directly with farmers in certain situations for specific reasons. For Phil, this included:

- Helping a dairy farmer deal with the resulting mastitis outbreak following a night in which many cows had teat ends frost-bitten;
- Working with two generations helping them develop a plan to transfer farm ownership and management so that the business continues;
- Evaluating a dairy operation with a group of advisors and helping the owners set goals and means to achieve them, then watching as they did achieve their goals;
- Walking through information with a dairy farmer to help him evaluate corn silage varieties in selection of seed that will increase milk yield and decrease ration costs;
- Discussing employee management strategies with farm owners that treat employees with respect and involve them as valuable team members helping the farm succeed.

What would you like our commissioners and other stakeholders to know about your work during 2020?

Farmers did not cease working during the pandemic; they had a job to do every day, even though markets floundered. Likewise, as an MSU Extension Educator working with farmers, my work has continued, though differently, in order to provide support for farmers in a challenging business environment. In the past several years, I have taken an active role in helping farmers and others involved in dairy processing as a way to add value. These have been both interesting and tasty opportunities!

During 2020, Phil was elected by his peers nationally as Vice President of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents. In that role he has had opportunities to talk with Extension Agents/Educators all across this country as well as in Puerto Rico and Guam. Together, they share a love for helping agricultural producers and homeowners produce food and beauty, and for helping communities thrive. Phil will serve in national leadership roles for an additional three years. At home, Phil is engaged in a Christmas tree start-up hobby. He enjoys working outdoors.





Finance and Homeownership



TEAGAN LEFERE

*Financial &
Homeownership
Program Instructor*

leferete@msu.edu

989-539-7805 ext 5623

I enjoy hearing back from individuals who learn something new during one of our classes and the positive changes they are making in their personal finances.

Teagan Lefere is a grandma that loves to crochet. But don't let that fool you. She is also an active Finance and Homeownership instructor for MSU Extension, helping hundreds of people every year prevent a mortgage foreclosure, improve their family budgets, prepare for homeownership, or become stable renters. Teagan loves working with individuals and families toward a positive financial outcome. I enjoy hearing back from individuals who learn something new during one of our classes and relay back to me what they learned and the positive changes they are making in their personal finances.



During the pandemic and work from home orders, Teagan had to become more creative while working with people who may not have had the abilities or technology to fulfill documentation requests from Step Forward.

This is a Success Story that happened in spite of COVID. But it's also a story about why Teagan is such an amazing employee. Without her persistence, this outcome wouldn't have materialized.

Many things changed with COVID-19 and how I work with homeowners and assisting them in applying for Step Forward Hardest Hit funds. Before COVID-19 I would meet with individuals in a convenient location to assist them in gathering paperwork or to sign documents. Once I began working from home and travel restrictions were imposed, that became a challenge. One woman I assisted was in a wheelchair and had a hard time scheduling rides to meet me in my office. Step Forward needed a letter of explanation regarding her hardship and subsequent delinquency in her property taxes. Before COVID I would take her documents to sign or pick-up documents requested by Step Forward at her home. She had been admitted to a nursing care facility due to health issues and I was unable to meet with her due to COVID restrictions. With her permission, I contacted the facility director and asked if I emailed her a letter, would she be able to print the letter, have her sign it and email it back to me. She said that would not be a problem and I was able to fulfill Step Forward's request. She was approved for Step Forward funds to bring her property taxes current from 2017 to the present tax year.

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