



## 2020 Annual Report to Gladwin County



### A Message from the District Director Winter 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](http://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](mailto: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:

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. The series attracted more than **3,000** 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.

**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

**SPONSORS:**  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY Extension  
MID 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/707448953>

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

MSU is an affirmative action, equal opportunity institution. Complaints by students through a grievance procedure and students through the grievance procedure will be subject to the grievance procedure. MSU does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, religion, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or disability. Persons with disabilities have the right to request and receive reasonable accommodations.

**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](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

**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%.



### MSU Extension in Gladwin County

2020 By the numbers:

Jan—Dec 2020	
# of programs hosted in County	<b>24</b>
# of programs offered statewide attended by County residents	<b>140</b>
# of County residents who attended programs	<b>472</b>
# of Direct Consultations Reported (Field Crops, Com Vitality, Prod Center, Soil tests, gardening, food safety, etc.)	<b>102</b>

4-H 2019-2020	
4-H Adult Volunteers	34
4-H Youth Club Enrollment	230
Total Youth Served (unduplicated)	392

General Fund Budget Expenditure (from voter approved millage)	
FY 2019-2020	\$104,462
Indirect Costs paid to county	\$1,283

### 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



### MELISSA PRESTON

4-H Program  
Coordinator

prest142@msu.edu  
989-426-7741 ext. 204

**4-H Coordinator Missy Preston** loves to craft and cook. She is a perfect fit for her position and says she loves the community of Gladwin and the youth she works with. “I love the passion people put into their community and I love seeing the kids succeed at whatever they do with the community’s full support.”

**Passport Kitchen.** During COVID, “Passport Kitchen” was a huge success for Gladwin County 4-H. The goal of the program was to engage youth in exploring culture through a series of fun kits

and videos. Each kit was made to be an experience for the youth that showcased a culture respectfully and educationally. A variety of presenters, each a part of the culture they taught, prerecord videos that could be accessed at any time.

The videos not only made this program more appealing because they can be viewed at any time, but they also put faces to these cultures. Seeing people speaking the language, talking about traditions, and sharing history made it so the youth could have some connection even without face to face programming. If youth were unable to watch the videos, they could still participate in the program with a kit that was provided to each participant. A goal was to get youth in the kitchen learning the basics of cooking and utilizing the equipment. Basic kitchen skills are a need in life and this program not only encouraged trying new foods but built a foundation of core cooking skills.

Many parents and youth shared their experience on our closed (private) Facebook group. One parent shared this: “Our last name gives away our Irish heritage that comes from both sides of the family. I have seen a similar recipe somewhere in a family cookbook. We made a completely Irish heritage meal with most of the main meal coming from our farm! We made Irish lamb stew with potatoes, carrots, rutabaga, celery, onions, parsley, thyme, and lamb from our farm to compliment the soda bread. It was easy to see how this quick bread was extremely versatile and filling” Another youth and her grandpa got to see indigenous culture represented. “Two thumbs up for the wild rice soup! It was extra special since she was able to make it with her Grandpa. He is a member of the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians. This series has been great for the food but to also explore our heritage.”

This program took a big world and brought it closer to home for our youth and has been growing since its creation with new cultures and foods being showcased in additional series. It has also been picked up by other counties in the state. Currently, we have run this program 4 times with 145 youth taking part in the program.



### Gingerbread showdown.

What happens when Clare and Gladwin face off in a gingerbread house contest? Something that brings out creativity and teamwork. You come out with some creative gingerbread houses when you ask youth to bake and build a gingerbread house. In December Clare and Gladwin 4-H programs had youth learn how to make their gingerbread in a fun online video and allowed them creative freedom in designing and decorating their gingerbread house. The youth then submitted a photo that was voted on by the community. Eleven teams of youth participated. Sadly, Gladwin County 4-H lost by 1 point to Clare, but we’re likely to see this return in 2021 for another showdown.

*-see next page for more 4-H Highlights-*



### Paint and create

Paint and create was an online painting program that encouraged youth to let their creativity flow while learning the basics of painting. Eleven youth participated over a 4-week series starting with drawing and building their way up to painting and shading. At the end of the class, the youth shared their painting and the story they were trying to tell.

### 60-second science

In trying something new, Missy created an online web series where she attempted to do a science experiment in 60 seconds. While they often exceeded 60 seconds, it was a fun challenge to take the MSU “Heads in Hearts” lessons and teach them in a condensed version in online videos. As of today, we have had over 2000 views on the videos and will be bringing them back this spring.

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

“This year was tough, but I believe it has made our program so much stronger in what we offer. I have spent more time developing programs of high quality and high impact that can reach youth regardless of where they live and their access to technology. Our volunteers worked hard to keep our youth informed and engaged by encouraging them even when we couldn’t meet. While this past year was not what we hoped, I do believe in the long run I will take what I have learned and apply it to the future to make the best better.”

### Nutrition



#### CORAL BETH ROWLEY

Community Nutrition  
Instructor

rowleyc@msu.edu  
989-426-7741 ext. 206

---

*“I like it when we can see the ‘light go on’ regarding some healthy/unhealthy choices, and then thinking of ways to move in a healthier direction.”*

---

Being able to connect with people on relevant nutrition-related & physical activity topics is a passion of MSU Extension’s Community Nutrition Instructor, Coral Beth Rowley. She especially loves to see people apply the new information they learn— taking a step in the direction of such things as food resource management, trying to reduce sugar intake, increasing fruits, vegetables, whole grains, various healthy protein sources, and exercising more regularly. Coral Beth’s time is shared with Clare County.

Prior to the COVID-19 closures, Coral Beth provided nutrition series at Gladwin Elementary with two Great Start preschool rooms and the combination Great Start/tuition-based preschool room there during the winter months, just finishing up with them before all staff (and students) were sent home.

Spring became a transition period for Community Nutrition Instructors, moving all their curricula into an online format. During the summer and fall growing season, “Prescription for Health” nutrition courses were taught to clients referred by their health care providers in surrounding communities.

As the year progressed, In Gladwin County Coral Beth and Midland Extension Community Nutrition Educator, Tara Roberson, provided trainings with the Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative (MYOI) Gladwin/Midland group. This is a program which focuses on helping older youth who have either “aged out” or soon will be aging out of the foster care system and are transitioning into adult life, often without a family support system. Lessons taught included “Go, Slow and Whoa Foods” followed by “Rethink Your Drink” two weeks later. This happened in December and there were 13-15 youth and mentors (also young adults) that were present, from around age 15 or 16 up to early twenties.

When not working, Coral Beth likes being active and enjoys walking and doing seasonal activities. Coral Beth is very involved with her church and can be found helping with Food Distribution events.



## Beef Production



### KABLE THURLOW

*Beef & Grazing  
Educator*

thurlowk@msu.edu  
989-426-7741 ext. 203

---

*"I am still here to help just as I have been in the past. It might not look the same when I am not in the office, but you can still connect with me.*

*Diagnosing problems over the phone and the computer has gotten easier. I have learned that farmers truly do not mind attending some programs virtually. "*

---

When Kable Thurlow started with Extension in March of 1998, his goal was to get back home to family and raise his children on the same farm that he grew up on. His other goal was to bring the vast resources and expertise of MSU to the people in his community and help them be better at what they do. Working with farmers and agribusinesses across this state is very rewarding for Kable.

**Grazing School.** After the COVID-19 pandemic prohibited traditional face-to-face education, it was decided to move "Grazing School" to a virtual setting and offer eight topics in 1.5-hour blocks two times per week during the month of October. The intended audience of the course was beginning farmers and livestock owners who graze dairy, beef, and small ruminant animals and want the latest animal and forage research on grazing management. Kable coordinated this state-wide effort, working with MSU specialists and other educators to record educational videos, provide online teaching, and attend to all the details related to this series. A couple of successes came out of this:

1. The number of attendees actually increased. In previous years, typical face-to-face enrollment was 20-30 students. We were surprised when over 70 enrolled in the virtual 2020 offering.
2. All the webinars and videos were recorded and placed on MSU's website so anyone can access them at any time to refresh their skills. Currently, they are being closed captioned for greater accessibility.

Participant evaluations showed that everyone's expectations were met or exceeded. Knowledge was increased for 90-100% of participants in all content areas (pasture management, nutrition, fencing, designing grazing plan, density, etc.) and many indicated they were likely to implement new practices. When asked, "If given the choice on the format for the grazing school, which would you prefer?" 2 out of 3 respondents indicated they would prefer a combination of face-to-face and online instruction. About one-fourth preferred only online, whereas only one-tenth preferred face-to-face instruction. This information will be extremely valuable in preparing for future grazing schools.

**Virtual Grazing Field Day.** Kable Thurlow and Paul Gross were the lead Educators/Organizers at this event that attracted over 91 people. Evaluation results showed that 95% said that the event met or exceeded their expectations and 95% said they gained knowledge in six of seven content areas.



---

*"It has been a stressful year for all of us and we are all learning how to adjust to a new way of work and life, but we will make it."*

---



## 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 Wednesday “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



## Healthy Living



### MICHELLE NEFF

*Child and Family  
Development*

*Educator*

hydemich@msu.edu

989-539-7805

---

*“Our work to provide resources to parents and to engage youth in a variety of activities virtually never stopped. My work and the work of MSU Extension continue to help people across our district. MSU Extension is here in our communities to help educate and share resources.”*

---

Michelle Neff, Children and Youth Educator, enjoys providing opportunities for youth to learn new things and explore. Extension has so many programs and events that engage community members. The passion of bringing knowledge and information out into communities makes her feel like we are making an impact with communities. When not working, Michelle enjoys gardening, home food preservation, reading, and watching movies.

**Adulting 101.** Adulting 101 was a big impact that happened during the pandemic. Reaching over 3,000 students while planning a local event showed how important teen programming is needed. This is an example of what happens when a program goes “viral.”

This idea came from a local school counselor who shared a need to have programs for seniors while many schools were testing juniors during school in the Spring. MSU Extension and Mid Michigan College brainstormed topics that might interest youth who are getting ready to graduate and move away to college or move out. The topics that were discussed, planned, and later offered included: budgeting and understanding credit, being an informed renter, basic cooking skills, and household tasks like ironing, laundry, and cleaning. Since schools ended in-person programming on March 13th, the planning team decided to make this a virtual program in a four-week series each week with a new/different topic, with MSU Extension taking the lead. After very little promoting locally, Adulting 101 series got picked up by Mlive, many social media sites and it went viral. The first series had over 1,000 youth registered for each of the classes. A waiting list was created, and it was determined to offer another round of Adulting 101 in May with five classes instead of four. Additional classes were also offered in April to help fill the need around Credit vs Debit and Developing a Spending Plan.

MSU Extension staff from the Financial and Home Ownership Team, the Health and Nutrition Institute, and the Children and Youth Institute all worked together to offer programming to high school aged youth across the state and country. Participants from 29 states and two countries participated in the Adulting 101 Series. Numerous teachers and individuals followed up with requests for recording and other resources. Over 124 views of the recordings have taken place. MSU Extension has since provided a College 101 series and additional Adulting 101 classes.

**Evaluation.** An evaluation was sent to all youth after the first series completed. Of the 94 youth that responded to the survey:

66% feel more prepared to live on their own after taking the Adulting 101 Series.

91.44% agreed and strongly agreed that the resources provided by MSU Extension were helpful.

Comments from participants about how they will apply the information:

*“I will use the spending plan for the rest of my life.”*

*“I will definitely practice better spending habits. I now have a defined method for tracking spending & savings.”*



## 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.*

MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity employer, committed to achieving excellence through a diverse workforce and inclusive culture that encourages all people to reach their full potential. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status. Issued in furtherance of MSU Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Jeffrey W. Dwyer, Director, MSU Extension, East Lansing, MI 48824. This information is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names does not imply endorsement by MSU Extension or bias against those not mentioned.