

# Michigan State University Extension in Genesee County: Solving Problems & Increasing Opportunities for Today & Tomorrow

In 2018, Genesee County residents voted to maintain the research-proven education provided by Michigan State University (MSU) Extension in local communities!

On August 2, 2022, Genesee County residents again will be asked to continue investment that helps families, businesses and professionals with the knowledge they need be healthy and safe, to do their jobs better, to build strong communities, protect local environments and help young people gain the confidence and skills needed to be successful.

Genesee County residents receive \$3.50 in return value for every \$1 the county invests in MSU Extension programs.

## Delivering Education Despite the Pandemic

While stay-at-home orders hindered access to many opportunities during the pandemic, Genesee County residents logged 2,228 registrations for MSU Extension online educational programs during 2020 and 2021. County residents accessed 603 online programs designed to improve parenting and child well-being, promote healthy and safe eating, improve business practices and make home ownership possible and affordable among the many online MSU Extension educational offerings.

- Genesee County physicians and health service providers recorded 60 registrations for the 2020 and 2021 online Pediatric and Adult Influenza webinars and 85 registrations for the 2020 and 2021 Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Fall Immunization conferences hosted by MSU Extension to stay up to date on current public health trends and research to prepare for the immunization seasons.
- In 2020, Genesee County residents logged 91 registrations for the MSU Extension online home food preservation presentations series, which offered expertise on pressure canning, water bath canning, atmospheric steam canning, blanching, freezing and dehydrating methods for preserving foods.

## Fostering Youth Success

Sixty-one percent of Genesee County 4-H seniors graduating from 2012 to 2017 enrolled in college within 6 months of high school graduation, exceeding by 6% the college enrollment rate of all other Genesee County seniors during this time. An investment in Genesee County MSU Extension and 4-H is an investment in the positive development of Genesee County youth.

- In 2020, Genesee County MSU Extension 4-H programs engaged 5,389 Genesee County youth aged 5 to 19 in special interest and short-term virtual learning opportunities that helped youth develop new skills and interests across a myriad of topics. There were 145 Genesee County youth registered in active 4-H Clubs during the pandemic led by 29 community-based adult volunteers.
- In partnership with the Flint River Watershed Coalition, MSU Extension engaged 25 youth and 11 educators in water quality testing of the Flint River and its tributaries. These youth were then partnered with environmental professionals from General Motors and other community stewardship organizations to study results and share their findings through public presentations. Participants learned about water quality in the Flint River, water treatment and distribution systems as well as how those factors combine to contribute to drinking water in Flint. Prior to the pandemic, this program has engaged up to 1,100 Flint area students from 21 schools.

## Strengthening Civic Leadership

MSU Extension leadership development programs serve to increase knowledge and skills among individuals and public service staff teams to provide more proficient leaders within organizations and communities.

- In 2021, civic leaders throughout Genesee County participated in the Fiscally Ready Communities online training, which provided city and county administrators with research-informed training on financial best practices, local government funding, capital asset management and budgeting for fiscal sustainability. MSU Extension training for government leaders facilitates building financially healthy and strong civic communities for Genesee County residents.
- MSU Extension supports strengthening community access to healthy foods through its ongoing 11-year partnership with Edible Flint. Interest in and support for home gardening and new garden starts increased in 2020 resulting in the doubling of Garden Starters Kits from 200 to 400 orders. Residents were also supported with the initiation by Edible Flint of the Garden Coach program to support home gardeners with information and resources throughout the garden season.

## Mastering Gardens for Home & Community

MSU launched the Master Gardener Program in 1978 and has trained more than 40,000 Michigan residents from 80 Michigan counties in horticulture principles using environmentally sound growing practices. These residents often go on to serve local communities as garden hotline volunteers providing research-driven gardening practice for home and community space gardening.

- In 2020 and 2021, MSU Extension recertified 272 Genesee County Master Gardener volunteers who are trained to complete 40 hours of community service either in enhancing community garden projects or answering garden hotline questions.
- In addition to Master Gardener recertification courses, Genesee County residents participated in online educational programs featuring topics such as food safety for home and community gardens, the Smart Gardening series, master composter course and garden weeds recognition.

## Educating for Greater Farm Profitability

Access to evidence-based information is critical when business decisions depend on it. MSU Extension is a leader in discovering knowledge and helping farmers apply tested solutions that benefit their farms, their families and their communities.

- Genesee County farmers planted 79,300 acres of corn, soybean and winter wheat in 2020 producing 6.28 million bushels of these field crops (U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service, County Estimates, 2021). To help these and other field crop producers in Michigan, the MSU Extension field crops team hosted a weekly field crop breakfast series that brought local producers together with MSU experts for timely, relevant, in-season crop and weather information to advance production. The series attracted 2,134 live participants.

## Helping Struggling Families Make Healthy Decisions

As of December 2021, 76,798 Genesee County adults and children were receiving assistance from the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. MSU Extension helps families needing food assistance learn how to make the most of their food dollars and safely prepare meals that are both healthy and tasty.

- In 2020, Genesee County MSU Extension staff worked with 38 community groups of adults and youth providing the six-week nutrition education series on healthy lifestyle choices and provided access to educational resources to help families make the most of their monthly food resources.

MSU Extension is eager to continue serving Genesee County residents in strong partnership with the County Board of Commissioners. By working together, MSU Extension can continue to help people improve their lives by bringing the vast knowledge resources of MSU directly to individuals, families, businesses and communities.