



Gratiot County 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

BY THE NUMBERS



1,022 youth participated
in 4-H and school
enrichment programs



363 adults participated
in health and nutrition
programs



County students
received \$1,129,654 in
financial from MSU



More than \$499,071 was
spent with local businesses

MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR

In 2019, Michigan State University Extension helped its partner, Gratiot County, meet needs of County residents through education, consultation and collaboration. Your local MSU Extension staff and the statewide network of Educators provided information and expertise to local farmers, government officials, local and state employees, as well as, County youth and adult residents. MSU Extension has over 200 programs and continually strives to meet the needs of Michiganders with research backed, unbiased information to help improve their lives. This annual report gives examples of some of MSU Extension's accomplishments and the impact that we continue to have in the County. Thank you for the opportunity to share our most valuable resource – our people. Whether taking phone calls, answering the many walk-in questions or providing education programs to groups or individuals, we strive to provide answers to questions that help solve real problems right here in Gratiot County.



Bill Hendrian,
District 8 Director

CONTACT



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Extension

Program Highlights



"In the weeds" discusses critical issues facing our farming industry every other week. Farmers can participate by phone, mobile device or by playing the audio. https://www.canr.msu.edu/field_crops/in-the-weeds



Best practices are very important to follow to assure healthy animals and producers. For information on swine education, please contact Casey at zangaroc@msu.edu.



For information on financial literacy programming or the Step Forward program, contact Brenda Long at long@msu.edu.

VIRTUAL FARM RESOURCES

Monica Jean, District 8 Field Crops Educator, and the MSU Extension field crops team have developed several online programs. Farmers and agribusiness across Michigan listen in to these programs which include the Field Crops Webinar series, Virtual Breakfast and "In the Weeds" podcast. The webinar typically has 90 attendees and offers nine different topics. In 2019, 50% of attendees reported changing an aspect of their farm, which affected 14,000 acres and saved farmers in Michigan \$99,000 by managing risk and improving production efficiency. In 2019, 921 people participated in the Virtual breakfast, a live presentation with specialists during the growing season. The "In the Weeds" podcast began in late 2019 and currently has 12 posted podcasts played 1,300 times.

SWINE EDUCATION

MSU Extension educator, Casey Zangaro, served Gratiot County and pork producers throughout the state with her expertise. Through an agreement with High Lean LLC, Casey assessed over 70 grow-finish swine barns. Taking into consideration barn conditions and swine health, Casey was able to assist farmers prepare to send pigs to most U.S. slaughter plants. Casey worked with youth who have an interest in raising and showing pigs. Topics such as biosecurity, health and overall nutrition were just some of the areas covered by her programs. Casey was able to reach over 280 youth and adult participants in Gratiot and surrounding counties. Casey's programming is critical to both novice and commercial pig enthusiasts.

BRENDA LONG

In 2019, Step Forward Michigan or lenders approved 34 distressed homeowners in Ionia, Montcalm and Gratiot Counties who received nearly \$144,000 in delinquent mortgage and property taxes assistance, thus keeping their homes. MSU Senior Extension Educator, Brenda Long, works on a daily basis with those who are hardest hit. In Gratiot County, she provided critical information for struggling homeowners and residents who sought money management information. She also took calls from Gratiot county residents to discuss the potential loss of a home or to redirect struggling homeowners to needed resources. Brenda has helped Veteran's, single parents and many vulnerable members of our community with this timely information.

Program Highlights



4-H member Anne Thompson and South Korea 4-H Exchange member, Chaequm, visited the Crisp Point Lighthouse on Lake Superior.



Fourteen 4-H members of the 4-H Exchange Club from Somerset County, New Jersey were hosted by Gratiot 4-H families for one week in 2019.



Tommy Reck, shown above, a current Gratiot County 4-H member participates in a booth at the Winter Extravaganza.

4-H EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

Michigan 4-H offers youth and their families an opportunity to think globally, grow in their cultural awareness, and gain knowledge about the world through international exchange programs that include both hosting and traveling abroad. This year Gratiot County 4-H had members participate in both the 4-H International States Exchanges and the Gratiot 4-H Teen Exchange Club. Three Gratiot Families hosted International 4-H exchange members from Japan and South Korea for one month. This cultural exchange program offers 4-H members an opportunity to experience an immersive cultural experience. The members live with a host family to experience real life in a new culture

4-H CLOVERBUD DAY

The Gratiot County 4-H program once again held their annual 4-H Cloverbud Day in 2019. This annual event is a day of fun, science, and health for youth aged 5-8. This years event was a special opportunity for Gratiot County Teen Leaders to work together with a group of fourteen 4-H members from the 4-H Exchange Club from Somerset County, New Jersey who were visiting for the week. The teens learned to work together to help make this event a success for the younger 4-H members. This years special treat was meeting Dr. Pol! Dr. Pol was the speaker at the Gratiot 4-H Cloverbud Day where he spoke to the youth about being a veterinarian, weird and exotic animals he has worked with and answered questions about animal health.

AMERICORPS

Lance Fowler, the 4-H AmeriCorps STEAM Coordinator partnered with the Alma Library to host the 4-H Winter STEAM Family Extravaganza. Sixty families attended the event with twelve different activities led by teen volunteers from local National Honor Society chapters, FFA chapters, and 4-H Clubs. Each activity had some type of focus on the Winter Season, Arctic Animals, the Science of Winter Sports, or other winter-themed topics with a corresponding library book on display. Upcoming SPIN (Special Interest) clubs were promoted and projects completed from other SPIN clubs were on display for families to see as they came into the event.

Program Highlights

GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY VITALITY

In 2019, the Gratiot MSUE office welcomed David Rowley to its team. David is an educator with the MSUE Government and Community Vitality team which provides educational programs for local officials and citizens. One program is the Citizen Planner, which describes the roles, responsibilities and best practices for planning and zoning. MSUE also partnered with the Michigan Department of Treasury to provide a Fiscally Ready Communities course providing best practices for fiscal and operational budgeting. Other programs that David will be offering to Gratiot County residents are, Land Division, Solar on Agricultural Land Development, Opportunity Zones, and more. For more information on any of these programs, please reach out to David at rowleyd2@msu.edu.



MSU Extension offers training on planning and zoning, policy options, land use and environmental issues. All services are available to Michigan's 1,858 municipalities, 14 multi-county regions, 12 federally recognized tribal nations.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Alma will be the host of the 2021 Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities conference. This program was created by MSU Extension in 2007 as a way to increase local community knowledge and support for entrepreneurship growth throughout Michigan. Diane Longanbach, MSUE Product Center Counselor, invited Gratiot communities to attend the 2019 conference held in Ludington, and a 5 member team from Alma joined her. CEC uses a unique approach that embeds the conference in the local community. Breakout sessions will be held right in the local businesses led by experienced entrepreneurs or persons working in economic and community development. This format allows participants to learn and more importantly, see, feel and taste what works in any sized community.



Residents from Alma joined MSUE at the 2019 CEC Conference in Ludington. Right away, the team knew that this was a conference they wanted to bring back to their town.

OVER THE COUNTER

Many residents like the personal touch or for other reasons come visit with us at the office. Many 4-H youth, volunteers and parents attend meetings or drop off information, fees, or just to say hello. Many local residents would like a plant or insect identified. Gardeners and farmers often stop by to pick up soil test kits. In fact, in 2019 Gratiot County residents used 41 soil test kits. When someone visits the local office, the local support staff are the link to many MSU Extension services. Whether it is by appointment, by phone, or by walk-in, our local office is here to serve the needs of Gratiot County.



Michigan State University Extension continues to serve the residents of Gratiot County and we welcome you to stop in and say hello.

Featured County Story



Gratiot County MSU Extension Educator, Erica Rogers, visits farms, does research, meets with decision makers, writes articles, and hosts meetings of producers, consumers, environmentalists, government officials and many others in the Gratiot County farming community as well as state wide. Erica provides education related to animal processing, manure spreading, and other farming practices that affect the environment. The goal is to provide research-based information that helps inform decisions made by producers, consumers and regulators. Applying the latest research and information can help the farming economy grow while protecting Michigan's natural resources.

Research Informs Decisions

"Some small poultry processors wanted to land apply the wastewater from their processing facilities. These facilities were told by EGLE that a groundwater permit would be required (annual cost of \$1,500), which is an economic hardship for many of these types of facilities. Along with other interested parties, we developed a research project to help determine the actual constituent concentrations and volumes and explored an exemption from the groundwater permit. There were notable differences observed between samples due to different practices and set ups of facilities and we deemed that more research was warranted. However, we also learned valuable lessons including the need for other industries to become more active in wastewater issues. Environmental issues related to permitting can have a great impact on small and large food producers. MSU Extension is in the field to provide research and direction to help navigate these critical areas."

- Erica Rogers, Michigan State University Extension, Environmental Management Educator



Chickens can be a good source of income for small poultry processors. Having the appropriate guidelines and recommendations laid out for those just starting in this business is important from both an economic and environmental standpoint." Photo: Erica Rogers

MSU Extension staff located in Gratiot County

Natasha DePue	Community Nutrition Instructor	989-831-7506	depuenat@msu.edu
Bill Hendrian	District 8 Director	231-843-4395	hendria2@msu.edu
Monica Jean	Field Crops Educator	616-443-8782	atkinmon@msu.edu
Diane Longanbach	Product Center Educator	989-875-5293	longbach@msu.edu
Kami Paksi	County Support	989-875-5333	paksi@msu.edu
Erica Rogers	Environmental Mgmt. Educator	814-441-1356	roger392@msu.edu
Dave Rowley	Government & Land Use Educator	989-875-5233	rowleyd2@msu.edu
Joan Taylor	Office Manager County Support	989-875-5234	tayl1182@msu.edu
Chris Thompson	4-H Program Coordinator	989-875-5295	thom1367@msu.edu
Casey Zangaro	Swine Educator	989-875-5292	zangaroc@msu.edu

Additional MSU Extension staff serving Gratiot County

Roger Betz	Farm Management Educator	269-781-0784	betz@msu.edu
Isabel Branstrom	Consumer Horticulture Educator	517-676-7301	branstr2@msu.edu
Katie Courtade	CYI / 4-H Supervising Educator	616-527-5357	courtad3@msu.edu
Faith Cullens	Dairy Educator	989-224-5249	cullensf@msu.edu
Lori Eccles	Nutrition Supervising Educator	517-543-4472	ecclesl@msu.edu
Paige Filice	Invasive Species Educator	517-676-7291	filicepa@msu.edu
Charles Gould	Bioenergy Educator	616-994-4547	gouldm@msu.edu
Kevin Gould	Beef Educator	616-527-5357	gouldk@msu.edu
Paul Gross	Field Crops Educator	989-772-0911	grossp@msu.edu
Tom Guthrie	Equine Educator	517-788-4292	guthri19@msu.edu
Abigail Harper	Community Foods Educator	517-676-7298	harperab@msu.edu
Sheila Hebert	Infant Maternal Health Educator	517-432-3076	murphysh@msu.edu
Christine Heverly	Youth Development Educator	989-224-6454	sisungch@msu.edu
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Joyce McGarry	Food Safety Educator	517-887-4587	mcgarry@msu.edu
Katie Ockert	Chronic Wasting Disease Educator	517-527-5357	ockertka@msu.edu
Rachel Puckett	AmeriCorps Program Director	517-676-7207	pucket21@msu.edu
Jade Richards	Behavioral Health Instructor	517-887-4575	richa572@msu.edu
Holly Tiret	Social Emotional Educator	616-632-7893	tiret@msu.edu

Supporting MSU Extension

For more than 100 years, MSU Extension staff have been helping people in our communities. MSU Extension values the opportunities made possible by our federal, state and local partners. In addition, our staff often seek grants that focus on particular needs that enable us to focus our efforts where necessary. In fact, grants made up the largest percentage of our statewide funding in 2019. Another important resource comes from donors. MSU Extension receives generous support from individuals and organizations who are passionate about specific work we do and want to make possible even more education. Donors fund local programs or offer opportunities to youth to participate in activities beyond the local program. Gifts sometimes fund research positions or just help boost local operations. To learn more about giving to MSU Extension, visit extension.msu.edu/giving.

Through successful partnership and collaboration with Gratiot County, MSU Extension is able to continue its local presence and to provide vital educational resources and programming in such areas as community and economic development, agriculture, land use, health and nutrition, and youth development.

Thank you Gratiot County!



MISSION:

Michigan State University Extension helps people improve their lives through an educational process that applies knowledge to critical issues, needs, and opportunities.

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