



# Isabella County 2018 ANNUAL REPORT

## BY THE NUMBERS



Over 3,700 Isabella County adults and youth participated in MSU Extension programs



Over 2,250 youth participated in 4-H and other youth enrichment programs



More than 1,342 residents participated in health, wellness and nutrition programs



Over 100 residents participated in gardening services and programs



Over 570 residents participated in agricultural programs and services



Over 160 community members helped with financial, homeownership, and foreclosure prevention education



6 Extension professionals based in Isabella County



MSU spent more than \$1.1 million with local businesses

## MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR

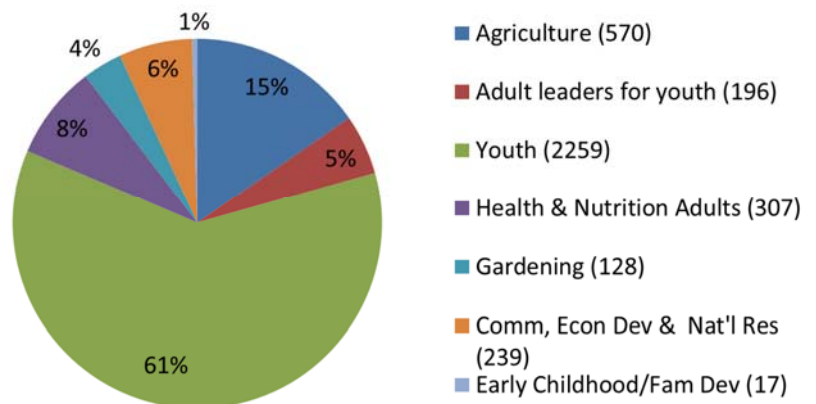
Michigan State University (MSU) Extension partners with Isabella County to strengthen youth, families, businesses and communities. Your MSU Extension staff members, grounded in local relationships, serve by bringing the university's research and resources to provide outreach and education where Isabella County residents need it most.



We're passionate about serving Isabella County and are looking forward to a new year. Thank you for your continued support of MSU Extension and for partnering with us to make a difference.

Shari Spoelman, District Director

### Numbers Served = 3,716



# Program Highlights

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Budgeting classes help residents understand their limited resources and provide skills to help plan for homeownership.



4-H members preparing for showmanship at a small animal clinic



One of the many plant disease samples brought into the Extension office for identification.

## FINANCE & HOMEOWNERSHIP

MSU Extension's team of knowledgeable financial pros demystify common money and homeownership best practices with university-backed, research-based programs and resources to help Michigan residents navigate through whatever fiscal challenges life throws their way. In 2018, the team provided money management education, foreclosure triage, education counseling and Step-Forward Michigan assistance in Isabella County.

## 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

4-H is the largest youth development organization in Michigan. Connected at the national level, MSU's program promotes traditional 4-H clubs as well as many other leadership and life skills development. Highlights of youth activities include: hatching chicks in the classrooms, summer camps, therapeutic horseback riding, exhibiting animals, still exhibits, and leadership projects at the County Fair, Shooting Sports and animal projects at the state and national level, as well as 4-H National Congress and Mock Interview Day.

## GARDENING & CONSUMER HORTICULTURE

Homeowners often have insect infestations or plant diseases that they are unfamiliar with and need help addressing. MSU Extension provides soil testing, plant and insect identification, disease identification and treatment, Smart Gardening resources, and a toll-free Lawn and Garden hotline. The Isabella County MSU Extension office assists many customers with basic home gardening concerns.



# Program Highlights

## GOVERNMENT & COMMUNITY VITALITY

Conducting Land Division Reviews is a technical training for persons interested in the Michigan Land Division Act. It provides a detailed system of conducting the review, and provides an application form that can be customized to local land division and zoning ordinances. Upon course completion, participants know who can conduct reviews, what a parent parcel is and how that is determined, the statutory and case law limits on what the review is for, and how to apply a detailed local review process.



Learning land division law is important for local officials, developers, and property owners.

## NUTRITION EDUCATION

MSU Extension's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program provides basic nutrition education and hands-on activities for all ages. Core curricula are designed to help low-income families stretch their food dollars while maintaining good nutrition. Some instruction includes physical activity and cooking techniques that help instill life-long skills. It is estimated that every \$1 spent on nutrition education saves as much as \$10 in long-term health costs.



Kids learn to make healthy snacks during "Cooking Matters for Teens."

## FOOD SAFETY & HOME FOOD PRESERVATION

Providing quality education programs to help residents and businesses keep food safe is a hallmark of cooperative extension services across the country. In Isabella County, we offered classes in food preservation, cottage food law, safe food handling in food pantries, ServSafe, Cooking for Crowds and pressure canner gauge testing. Utilizing partnerships with local organizations helps create environments for successful trainings.



Learning to can using up-to-date safe methods reduces the risk of food-borne illnesses.

# Agriculture



Isabella County boasts a diverse agricultural economy that produces over \$119 million annually, 66% in crop sales and 34% in livestock.

MSU Extension is helping to make a difference in Isabella County.

## Highlights of MSU Extension actions taken in 2018:

MSU Extension has a long history for providing research-based knowledge to address the needs of farmers across Michigan. This held true with Isabella County MSU Extension in 2018 with MSU faculty specialists conducting a number of on-farm research locations across Isabella County.

**Limiting phosphorus.** Isabella County staff hosted three locations for Dr. Kurt Stienke, MSU Soil Fertility Extension Specialist in phosphorus studies. The purpose of these studies is to determine the optimum phosphorus fertilizer application rates in corn. Excessive phosphorus is in our surface waters and can be a serious issue promoting excessive algal growth that can impair fish and wildlife habitats, and can interfere with recreational activities such as swimming, boating and fishing. As a result of these studies, farmers are able to optimize application rates while maintaining corn yields, profitability and protecting surface waters.

**Herbicide resistance.** Herbicide resistant weeds are becoming a serious issue in Isabella County crop production fields. Resistant weeds are competing with the crop for space, water and nutrients, lowering crop yields while increasing weed control costs. In response, Dr. Christy Sprague, MSU Extension weed scientist, had two resistant weed research sites in the county in 2018. One site was for waterhemp and one for horseweed. At each location, different herbicides and combinations were tested for optimum control.

**Other farm research.** New and innovative production practices were also part of the on-farm research. Dr. Kim Cassida, MSU Extension forage specialist and Dr. Erin Burns, MSU Extension weed scientist had a location for their interseeding alfalfa in corn study. The goal is to establish alfalfa in the corn crop to maximize alfalfa yields the following year. Dr. Manni Singh, MSU Extension systems agronomist had a location looking at precision application prescriptions optimizing fertilizer application rates across soil variability within fields. Dr. Karen Renner, MSU weed scientist had one interseeding cover crops in corn site. The purpose of the study is to establish cover crops in a growing crop to protect water and prevent erosion. Isabella County is also a location for the MSU organic soybean variety trials.

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### 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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