



Kalamazoo County

2018-2019 ANNUAL REPORT

BY THE NUMBERS



3,788 youth in 4-H youth development programs assisted by 118 adult volunteers



100 youth participated in the 4-H True Leaders Service Challenge and 7 attended leadership training



64 childcare providers attended 4 early-childhood education programs



43 food service professionals attended ServSafe certification training



201 active Master Gardeners



7 residents completed the 13-week Intro to Lakes series and 4 Lake Association leaders enrolled in the Cooperatives Lake Monitoring Program



351 residents attended food systems education programs



3 forest consultations were provided to land owners and 115 soil samples were processed by MSU.

MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR



I am delighted to share a snapshot of programming from another successful year of partnership between Kalamazoo County and Michigan State University (MSU) Extension. Because of your continued support, we've been able to make a difference in the lives of youth, families, businesses and communities.

MSU Extension offers a broad range of research-based educational services to county residents. Our staff live and work alongside county residents, are rooted in community relationships and are responsive to community needs. Over this past year, we've empowered families and individuals in Kalamazoo County to live healthier lives, created opportunities for youth leadership development, assisted greenhouse growers and farms with business management and provided technical training to community leaders and volunteers. Educators have been active in seeking answers and developing educational programs to emerging issues impacting Kalamazoo residents such as PFAS research, marijuana laws, producing industrial hemp, reacting to unpredictable weather patterns, flooding and farm stress.

On behalf of the local team serving Kalamazoo County, thank you for another productive year. We look forward to your continued support and hope you'll be able to join us during one of our upcoming programs.

Julie Pioch, District Director

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

Program Highlights



A dairy visit organized by 4-H Teens gave youth a chance for hands on learning.



Over 500 youth and adults participated in the native bee challenge program in 2018-19.



4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT HIGHLIGHTS

There were 3378 youth who participated in 4-H programs in 2018. Breaking it down into program areas: 438 were registered in yearlong community clubs, 1557 in short term interest groups and 1712 in school enrichment programs. 118 adult volunteers and 44 teen leaders worked to teach and mentor the 4-H youth in Kalamazoo County. Impacts of the program were realized in our traditional clubs as well as in first generation audiences in the urban and suburban areas.

In July, 2019 the 4-H Dairy Club partnered with the Kalamazoo Youth Development Network to host a group of 50 youth from the Kalamazoo Boys & Girls Club at a local dairy farm. The event was organized by 4-H teen leaders who wanted to reach out to new groups of youth. The youth participated in hands-on learning activities including a milk tasting and a cow milking simulator.

Kalamazoo 4-H community club members were well represented at local and state educational programs such as state animal and archery competitions, MSU pre-college programs such as 4-H Exploration Days and Coding Camp and civic engagement programs such as Capital Experience and Citizen Washington Focus. Through participation in these programs, youth learned skills to enrich their project experience as well as leadership and other life-long skills.

More than 500 Kalamazoo youth participated in the 2019 4-H Ag Innovators Experience "Native Bee Challenge". This program is teen-led and designed to engage youth in the exploration of science, especially as it relates to career options connected with agriculture. The "Native Bee Challenge" included learning the importance of native bee species in the pollination of food, experiencing pollination simulation using models of plants, building a nest for native bees, and using mapping to communicate where and why native bee habitat should be added to communities. The program connects agriculture career opportunities and feeding a growing world population, while building skills in critical thinking, communication, and leadership.

Grant-funding for the program enabled one teen leader from Kalamazoo to travel to Iowa to learn the curriculum and share that information with other leaders. Six other teen leaders attended trainings at MSUE's Kettunen Center. Together with 4-H staff they were able to teach at a variety of locations including Kalamazoo Parks and Rec, Galesburg-Augusta Middle School, KRESA, The Montessori school, Kalamazoo Valley Museum, several day camps, John Ball Zoo, Kalamazoo Growlers Education Day and two different teacher trainings at the Kellogg Biological Station. Participants were able to make a native bee house of their own to place in their back yard or local neighborhood where native bees can lay their eggs, supporting native bee habitats throughout Kalamazoo County. Three native bee houses now exist in the county at the River Street Launch site, at KRESA and at the Kalamazoo County Expo Center and Fairgrounds.

TRAINING LOCAL DECISION MAKERS

MSU Extension's government, leadership, and community engagement programs engage participants in learning skills of good governance and how to collaborate on solving complex issues in order to improve their communities. Participants leave MSU Extension educational programs with a deeper understanding of their civic responsibilities and roles within their own communities, increased confidence to make decisions, skills and information to better manage community resources, knowledge of how to implement best practices, and an understanding of the importance of building quality places in Michigan. The application of knowledge and skills gained from good governance programs builds stronger civic infrastructure. Programs reaching Kalamazoo residents in 2018-19 include:

Zoning Administrator training, an intensive 16-hour course, is designed to equip zoning administrators with the technical skills required to successfully fulfill their responsibilities. Two programs held in 2018-19 trained 71, including two from Kalamazoo County.

Citizen Planner Online is a self-paced version of the team's signature program. Five local officials from Kalamazoo County completed the 15-hour program in 2018.

In partnership with the Southcentral Michigan Planning Council, 55 participants attended a program on planning and zoning for alternative energy. This program was part of a comprehensive statewide initiative to help local leaders make land use and siting decisions related to solar and wind power.

New County Commissioner School was attended by two newly elected county commissioners in Grand Rapids in late 2018.

MAINTAINING HEALTHY ECOSYSTEMS

MSU Extension's Introduction to Lakes program is an intensive six-week online course specially designed for those interested in learning about inland lakes. Participants explore topics such as lake ecology, watersheds, natural shorelines, water law, aquatic plants, and citizen involvement. A total of 159 people took the course in 2018-19, including seven from Kalamazoo county. On-line sessions are accompanied by three live streaming 'ask an expert' sessions with MSU Extension educators.

The Michigan Conservation Stewards Program is a leadership training program for volunteers to gain expertise to help restore and sustain healthy ecosystems. Field-based, classroom, and online sessions offer hands-on learning opportunities focused on ecological foundations and natural resources decision-making. Instruction on how to make land management choices was provided by MSU Extension, Michigan Natural Features Inventory, and Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Seven 3-hour weekly and two all-day intensive field sessions were held in Kalamazoo & Barry Counties with 14 graduating from the program in October 2018.

Kalamazoo County was also the site for a Natural Shoreline Landscaping for homeowners program in 2018.

Program Highlights



Elected and appointed officials participate in training programs designed to equip them with critical technical and leadership skills to succeed in their roles.



Utility grade solar projects are being sited throughout Michigan.



Conservation stewards students learn the importance of wetlands to the health of the ecosystem.

GREENHOUSE GROWER EDUCATION

The floriculture industry is an important economic driver in Kalamazoo County. In 2018-19, MSUE educators maintained a rigorous scouting and consultation schedule as well as educational programming to meet the needs of the industry. For example: Managing pests is a consistent challenge for greenhouse growers due to population growth rates, insecticide resistance and life stages. Biological control can overcome these challenges, so MSU Extension developed a course on greenhouse biological control featuring presentations from international biocontrol experts, MSU Extension and technical representatives from two biological control supply companies. A total of 40 participants from 10 Michigan counties, including Kalamazoo, attended a program in August 2018. Evaluation data revealed that 94% of the participants intended to implement changes to their current production practices. A Greenhouse Field Day held in January 2019 showcased practices that saved labor and energy, and improved efficiency for commercial greenhouses. A total of 68 people, representing 18 million square feet of production, attended from 13 Michigan counties, including Kalamazoo. Evaluations showed that all respondents would make changes to their growing or labor management practices as a result of the meeting. The information was reportedly worth up to \$221,492 to the participants.



Greenhouse growers listen to experts in pest control.

FOOD SYSTEMS EDUCATION

MSU Extension's Community Food Systems team supports



MSU Extension Cooking demos at the Kalamazoo Farmers Market.



The 2019 Racial Equity in the Food System Summit was held in Kalamazoo.

local and regional food systems in three program areas. The Food and Farming Business Development Program provides leadership for an ecologically sound, socially just and economically viable agri-food system that advances sustained regional and rural economic development. Our Food Systems Education Program helps consumers, community leaders and policy makers understand the power they have to impact food systems through policy and purchasing choices. The Farm to Institution program develops institutional foodservice capacity to use local foods, use gardens as educational tools and incorporate hands-on education related to agriculture, food and health. Locally, in partnership with PFC Markets, MSU Extension provides education to Kalamazoo Farmers Market customers about Michigan's agricultural seasonality and how to use fresh food through monthly Michigan Fresh cooking demonstrations. In 2019 the inaugural Michigan Racial Equity in the Food System Summit was held

in Kalamazoo to educate and encourage dialogue and

action around structural inequalities in the food system. In a unique partnership with Kalamazoo Valley Community College, a Community Food Systems Educator works at the college's Food Innovation Center and partners with staff on community education, farm to institution and small farm food safety support.

AG EDUCATION & SUPPORT

MSU educators reach out to Kalamazoo growers via the Internet, videos, electronic newsletters and timely articles published in print to keep growers up-to-date on the latest research, best practices and weather conditions that will impact their crops. Relevant and timely information was provided through on-farm research and demonstration projects, on-line workshops such as the beginning farmer series and face-to-face meetings for field crops farmers struggling with planting decisions from 2019 spring weather conditions and winter injury resulting from the January 2019 polar vortex. On-farm trainings on the Produce Safety Rule were conducted to assist 16 farmers who grow and sell fresh produce. With the multitude of issues facing today's farmers, including a declining farm economy and unpredictable weather patterns, farm stress and farmer suicide are serious issues being addressed by a multi-disciplinary team who have developed resources and training programs for farmers, and those who work with farmers, to help them identify signs of stress and know where to get help.



MSU Educators present on-farm research results.