



# Kalkaska County 2020–2021 ANNUAL REPORT

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## FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR:



This past year will go down in history as one like no other. As an organization who has been embedded in counties for over 100 years, our community education model changed and shifted like at no other time in our rich history. I am especially proud of the way our entire county team pivoted their educational efforts and provided online programming for our valuable stakeholders; which includes growers, families, youth, local businesses, and residents. Our content-rich programming allowed residents from across the state to access it from their homes, regardless of geographic location. This allowed individuals throughout northwest lower Michigan to access programming being taught from southern Michigan to the tip of the Upper Peninsula. This increased accessibility for all residents to access our outreach and education was an added value for our county partners. The most notable achievement this year was the way our local offices provided support to county departments and Boards of Commissioners to respond to emerging needs related to the pandemic and county operations. This speaks to our commitment to our counties, partnership with county government and ability to respond to critical needs in our communities. It is always my distinct honor to present this summary of our accomplishments and deeply value our partnership with Kalkaska County.

*Jennifer Berkey*  
Jennifer Berkey, District 3 Director

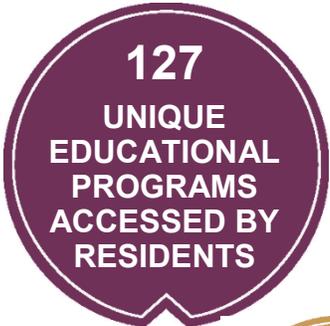
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## MEASURING IMPACT:



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# DEVELOPING YOUTH AND COMMUNITIES

When you support MSU Extension 4-H programs, youth participants learn life skills that prepare them for the workforce – especially for highly sought after jobs in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Extension programs help children develop early literacy skills that support school readiness. They learn leadership and decision-making skills in 4-H that increase their likelihood of becoming civically active.



## Virtual Learning = New Opportunities

The pandemic brought challenges, but also brought opportunities to think outside the box for Kalkaska 4-H. While clubs could not meet in person, we utilized Zoom meetings and Google meets to keep in contact with youth, but then got creative to still give them the hands-on experience that they're so used to with 4-H!



Youth participating in a 4-H Junk Drawer Robotics virtual session via Zoom.

## Learning about Investing through Market Livestock Projects

In a unique program hosted by Beth Ferry, MSU Extension Educator from Wayne County, youth had the opportunity to learn about investing and business principles and how they relate to 4-H livestock projects. The first workshop was geared towards teens, focusing on investing options based on post-high school goals. College savings accounts, CDs, interest rates, and stock market investing were all broken down into manageable pieces and compared side by side, giving teens the opportunity to evaluate each based on their own goals and needs. The second workshop, for youth 12 years old and up, broke down different types of businesses and what each one had to offer for youth raising 4-H market livestock who wanted to take their project to the next level. Cost analysis, start-up costs, customer base, and insurance were among the topics that were covered in an easy to understand format.

## Developing Youth and Communities, continued

The Kalkaska County 4-H Leadership Association sponsored activity kits, and members were given the opportunity to choose a kit that they were interested in. Each kit had several activities inside that they could complete on their own time. Youth could choose from one of the following kit options:

- Get a little Science-y : test out robotics, electricity and more.
- Hogwarts Classes: covers 5 Hogwarts classes! Some examples are Magical Creatures, Astronomy, and Potions.
- Teen arts and crafts: bath bombs, monogram canvases and more.
- Sweet Summer Time: learn how to make homemade ice cream, patriotic wands, and start a garden in an egg carton.
- Kitchen Fun Kit: whip up a cheesy bean dip, bread and even edible slime!
- Nature: get out of the house and into the woods and make a paracord bracelet, paper bag journal, a birdfeeder and more.
- Animal Science: youth learn how to budget for their pig project or learn how a steak gets graded at the store.



4-H youth Keller, showing off his completed flashlight made from his “Get a little Science-y” kit.

## Career Preparation at Kalkaska High School

In partnership with Kalkaska Public Schools, Kalkaska 4-H joined Mr. Kurt Grangood’s elective class “Surviving High School and Beyond” via Zoom in February to teach a series of lessons on building a resume when you don’t have traditional job experience. In May, we held an in-person mock interview event with the same class. Students presented their resumes and completed a mock job interview, answering questions about themselves and their chosen “dream job,” much like a traditional job or scholarship interview would go. Several students commented that the experience was beneficial in helping them get past the nerves of a real job interview, and all students created a resume full of skills and experiences, even if their traditional paid job experience was small or none.

## How high can a cotton ball fly?

The last full day of school at Cherry Street Intermediate School brought catapults and flying cotton balls! Over 90 students in 4th and 5th grades participated in a junk drawer robotics lesson that focused on the process of science, communicating like an engineer, building like a technician, and then the best part of the day: building a free arm catapult. Teams of students were provided with a kit of supplies that included paper clips, popsicle sticks, dowels, and more. Their challenge: build a free arm catapult that would launch a cotton ball six feet through the air. Students and teachers alike enjoyed the activity!

## Developing Youth and Communities, continued

### Adventures, Community and Success at the Kalkaska County Agricultural Fair

The return to in-person programming brought with it the return to the Kalkaska County Agricultural Fair for our livestock project members. The first week of August, 64 youth and their families gathered to show off their hard work and enthusiasm while swine, cattle, sheep, goats, poultry and rabbits filled the barns and the arena. The weather cooperated and the week was full of renewing friendships while working together to accomplish goals. Sportsmanship and building each other up were two concepts heavily focused on, starting with a game of ultimate Rock, Paper, Scissors. “Caught ya Beee-ing Awesome” was instituted, so youth and adults alike spent time looking for and recognizing youth going above and beyond to do great things.

“Sam was congratulating other kids after the pig show and showing great sportsmanship”

“Sharing her supplies; scissors, tape etc. and just being willing to always help”

“She was helping others clean pens that were not hers”

In addition to the traditional events during the fair, our members also engaged in several new activities created just for them. These included Taco Tuesday, a walking taco bar served on Tuesday afternoon. The Kalkaska Sheriff's Department sponsored Cops and Donuts Thursday morning, offering free donuts and the chance to visit with law enforcement officers after morning chores were complete. An app-based scavenger hunt had youth seeking out volunteers from various organizations to inquire about their passions and their reasons for volunteering in their community, as well as taking selfies with sheep and searching the exhibit building for various entries.

A “Fair Time Fun” day camp was added to the 4-H lineup and eight youth participated in a morning of scavenger hunts, smoothie-bike snacks, science experiments, Olympic relay races, and hover ball archery. Youth were able to participate in five different 4-H project areas while learning about what it takes to show a turkey, how much sugar is in your favorite drink, and much, much more! The highlight was definitely the creation of pool-noodle stick ponies, followed by the chance to learn a barrel pattern and race it.

Local youth trying out the MSU Extension smoothie bike with Community Nutrition Instructor Lanae Bump, during Fair Time Fun Camp.



Some of our 4-H youth celebrating the end of another successful fair week!

# KEEPING PEOPLE HEALTHY & ENSURING SAFE FOOD

When you support MSU Extension, you help participants learn safe food handling practices, increase their physical activity and improve the quality of their diets. Extension programming also helps decrease incidents of violence and bullying. Encouraging these healthy behaviors helps reduce food and health care costs by helping prevent chronic health conditions and providing safe environments throughout a person's life span.

## Fostering Health through Nutrition and Physical Activity

PSE changes are a way of making sustainable changes within our community to policies, systems, and environments so that healthy choices are feasible options for all community members. In Kalkaska County, one way this is happening is through the Fuel Up to Play 60 program. This free, in-school nutrition and physical activity program allows teams of students to make PSE changes that encourage other students, staff members, and administrators to lead healthier, active lives. The changes within our schools cause a ripple effect of positively impacting our communities as students incorporate their leadership skills to motivate and encourage family and community members to properly fuel their body so they can be active every day.

By partnering with MSU Extension to help implement Fuel Up to Play 60, Kalkaska Middle School has received \$14,131 in grant funding. As a result of this program, students are more likely to become leaders in demonstrating new, healthy lifestyle initiatives.

With COVID-19 altering how food is served in schools, the Fuel Up to Play 60 team decided to use grant funding to increase interest and efficiency for serving breakfast. Funding was used to purchase a stand-up cooler, decorated in Fuel Up to Play 60 graphics. This eye-catching cooler assisted in making breakfast foods easier to access and guaranteed proper food serving temperatures. The team also used funding to establish a morning Fit Club to help increase physical activity options for middle school students. The focus of Fit Club is to demonstrate how "being fit" looks different for everyone and can be approachable and available to all. The team also chose to reach out to community partners to bring in instructors to demonstrate other forms of physical activity so students have the knowledge they need to make healthy choices for themselves.



**Grant funds to date to Kalkaska County Schools through MSU Extension partnerships: \$14,131**

## Keeping People Healthy, continued

### Chocolate Milk for Kalkaska's Athletes

MSU Extension works closely with Kalkaska's athletic teams to help student athletes reach peak performance by staying hydrated with chocolate milk. By partnering with MSU Extension, Kalkaska has received \$1,000 in grant funding to purchase chocolate milk for their teams. Boys' soccer is the most recent recipient of the chocolate milk grant. Provided by the United Dairy Industry of Michigan, the Chocolate Milk: Nature's Sports Drink program encourages athletes to choose chocolate milk after grueling practices and games as it contains nine essential nutrients needed for overall health.



### Healthier Lives through Nutrition Education

MSU Extension Community Nutrition Instructors work to make nutrition and physical activity relatable and easy for those of all ages using a variety of curriculum. Our staff partner with the community to make a difference even in an online world. One of these great partners we worked with was Kalkaska Public Schools. Throughout several series in both the middle school and the high school, students were able to develop new cooking and leaderships skills to help prepare them to be responsible adults. In Kalkaska High School's Life Skills class, 19 students engaged in six weeks of a curriculum called *Cooking for One*. This program guides youth in learning and understanding the importance of a nutritious diet, physical activity, and it demonstrated food safety and cooking skills for those living or about to live on their own. Students got to watch live food demos and share how they would make the food at home. Community Nutrition Instructors used interactive activities to teach each lesson. Students recognized that they could incorporate fruit as a healthy addition to desserts because healthy eating doesn't mean giving up favorite treats. There was even a student who wanted to become a professional chef after graduation who actively participated every class, often starting whole class discussions supporting the lesson. Community Nutrition Instructor Lanae Bump noticed youth in her classes engaging more through the online format, participating in sharing nutritious snacks ideas, identifying food safety habits for the home, and asking more questions. By using Zoom as the learning platform, all students were able to write in responses, make goals, and share ideas by using annotations, chat, and electronic stamps. Talk about Life Skills!

Over at the middle school, more learning occurred with Community in Schools of Northwest Michigan as they were one of the first online education programs in Northern Michigan. By using a virtual platform, 6-8<sup>th</sup> graders were also able to complete a *Cooking Matters for Teens* series.



## Keeping People Healthy, continued

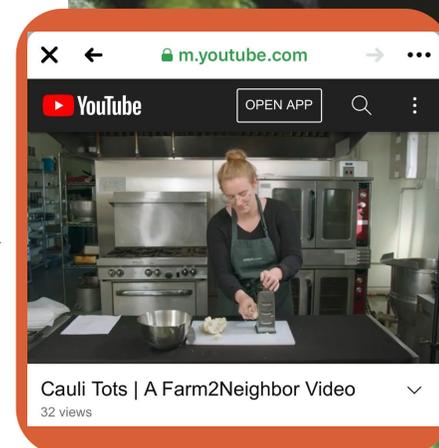
In these classes, students got nutrition education three ways. At the end of the Cooking Matters lesson and cooking demonstration done by MSU Extension staff, a sample of the recipe would be distributed thanks to the teachers at Kalkaska Middle School.

Students were able to build their confidence in cooking the featured recipe of the week by working in groups with the teachers to make the new food. After class, students were given grocery bags with all the ingredients to make at home. We had students making Turkey and Veggie Chili with their families, asking grandparents and parents to help them. A simple nutrition lesson became a way to feed families and develop lasting memories around healthful food.

There was no shortage of learning opportunities for youth and adults alike in Kalkaska County. Many statewide nutrition programs were available to the residents of Kalkaska County in addition to the pre-pandemic in-person programming. MSU Extension instructors also created more than 50 educational videos available on **MiHealth Matters** YouTube Channel for both easy kid friendly recipes and physical activities. In addition to those 50 videos, more than 10 videos were made specifically for the residents of Kalkaska counties that had several hundred views. This project gained the attraction of the Northwest Food Coalition. They then used grant funds to purchase a professional videographer for the creation of another six videos on using pantry staples to be used in Kalkaska and five other counties. This project was focused on showcasing how to make delicious and affordable meals with foods provided through the Farmers to Families relief boxes being distributed throughout the counties. Extension staff recognized the importance of providing applicable and timely resources for those most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. These efforts would not have been possible without the adaptability of community partners, staff, and participants.

### Creating long-term health impacts

Another important piece of creating a health-conscious community is establishing Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) changes around food and physical activity. A long-standing partnership with Kalkaska Area Interfaith Resource (KAIR) Center is a great example of a community partner making changes to support nutrition education. In the past, KAIR has implemented healthy signage around the pantry and has even hosted cooking classes for participants. This year, KAIR and Community Nutrition Instructor Lanae Bump began the process of creating recipes centered around what is in season and highly available at the pantry for the month. It is important to connect nutrition education and food access while being practical about it. Recipes need to be easy to follow any reading level, quick to make, low in cost, and most importantly, tasty. PSE change may be small to start but can have big and lasting impacts to individuals and communities.



**Food pantry video recipes for Northwest Food Coalition**

# SUPPORTING AGRICULTURE & AGRIBUSINESS

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## Supporting Fruit Production

### Tree Fruits

In agriculture, farmers expect unique challenges to arise each year, and 2020 was no exception. The year tested our agility and adaptability as we shifted Extension programs to virtual settings with little advance notice.

- MSU Extension Tree Fruit Educators, Emily Pochubay and Nikki Rothwell, worked closely with their colleagues to develop and deliver a webinar series to serve fruit growers across the state. The series, **2020 Spring Tree Fruit Webinars**, were held over the lunch hour, Monday through Friday, for two consecutive weeks. The series attracted 478 participants from across the state. The Spring 2020 MSU Tree Fruit Webinar Series was a true team effort with overwhelming positive responses from fruit growers and stakeholders.
- The annual **Tree Fruit Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Updates** also went virtual in 2020 to continue offering tree fruit producers and crop consultants in the region timely pest and disease information. Lead Educator, Emily Pochubay, and co-host Nikki Rothwell, hosted weekly hour-long webinars for 11 weeks during the growing season. The program attracted 629 participants comprised primarily of northwest MI fruit growers and local crop consultants, which was the greatest attendance in six years of hosting these meetings. Respondents to a post program survey represented approximately 4,297 acres of apples and 4,628 acres of cherries in Michigan, and all participants reported they improved their knowledge of practices to reduce production risks by attending the meetings. While the program overall was a success and opened doors for virtual meetings in the future, there are challenges to address including more training opportunities for growers to learn how to use the technology and limitations such as access to a smart device and reliable internet and/or cellular connectivity.

## Home Horticulture

2020 was a year like no other for the Consumer Horticulture program in Kalkaska County. Locally, MSU Extension Consumer Horticulture staff provided 15 free online educational opportunities last year to local residents. These were available to stream live or to watch later as a recorded webinar, and in addition to many more free online educational options that were provided by the statewide MSU Extension Consumer Horticulture team.

This past year, Master Gardeners volunteered approximately 30.5 hours in Kalkaska



When you support MSU Extension, you help participants learn profitable and efficient business and production practices.



## Supporting Food and Agriculture, continued

County, a time contribution valued at more than \$870.47. The bulk of these hours were spent on projects benefiting the community like environmental stewardship, therapy gardens, community beautification, and growing food for donation to local food banks.

### Supporting Residents with Research Based Horticultural Information

County residents are always welcome to call, visit, or email the office for assistance with horticultural issues. Additionally, and new for 2020, MSU Consumer Horticulture staff and MSU Extension Master Gardeners hosted a virtual diagnostic clinic via Zoom that was open to all area residents. These virtual plant diagnostic clinics were held every Wednesday, June through September of 2020. Residents were welcomed to Zoom in with samples of plants, insects, diseases and other problems; MSU Extension staff and Master Gardener volunteers provided the expertise to diagnose problems and provide management recommendations. County residents were able to receive answers to their horticultural questions by using either the online service Ask Extension or MSU Extension's statewide Lawn and Garden Hotline (1-888-678-3464), which are hosted by teams of MSU specialists, educators, and MSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteers.

### Supporting Hop Production

MSU Extension has taken a leadership role across the North Central and Northeast U.S. by providing valuable research and outreach to current and prospective growers on best practices for planting, harvesting, and pest management.

- Online Desire to Learn course entitled: **Hop Production in Midwest and Eastern North America** that is open to members of the general public.
- **MSU Hop Bine and Dine Webinar Series 2020**. Monthly March-September.
- MSU Extension also continued to provide leadership for the **Great Lakes Hop Working Group**. The GLHWG is a multi-state collaborative developed and coordinated by MSU that develops priorities for hop research and education and collectively work to address the needs of hop growers across Central and Eastern North America.

### Conferences

Just prior to the pandemic we were able to host the final Great Lakes Hop and Barley Conference in Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti, MI. The conference was attended by 115 people (registrants and speakers). Top Hops Farm was awarded the coveted Chinook Cup. The 2020 conference was the final Great Lakes Hop and Barley Conference. For the last few years, we have considered combining conferences with the Michigan Brewers Guild and in 2021 our efforts paid off. In January, we partnered with the Michigan Brewers Guild and the Master Brewers Association of the Americas (MBAA) to offer a combined virtual conference that was attended by ~250 people. While a virtual conference lacks the in-person opportunities for relationship



**This past year, Master Gardeners volunteered more than  30.5 hours on various projects in Kalkaska County valued at over \$870.47**



**Judging Chinook samples for the annual Chinook Cup at the 2020 Great Lakes Hop and Barley**

## Supporting Food and Agriculture, continued

building and networking, it offers an opportunity to enlist expert speakers from around the world. In addition to expert speakers from around the United States, this year we were able to host Dr. Ann Van Holle, a research scientist at the R&D Department of De Proefbrouwerij, Lochristi, Belgium, who provided an outstanding presentation on “The Relevance of Hop Terroir for Brewers.” Also, of note, the 2021 Chinook Cup was presented virtually during this conference. The 2021 winner was MI LOCAL HOPS in Williamsburg, MI.

### Farm Management

In early 2021, MSU Extension Educator Stan Moore worked with 12 area farms to complete a financial analysis of their farm operation for 2020. Farm financial analyses helps farmers better understand their financial strengths and weaknesses and helps them make better decisions to improve their financial standing. These farms represented around 8 million dollars in gross sales, and around 30 full-time employees (in addition to farm owners).

A key difference in the farm economy this year was the influence of government programs related to Covid-19. The programs provide a tremendous amount of financial help to farms that applied, but also brought a tremendous amount of uncertainty and continually changing program requirements. This uncertainty added to an already very stressful year for the farming community.

Year-end tax estimates provided by Moore help farmers manage the tax implications of their farm management decisions. In 2020, farmers tended to have more positive tax returns, largely due to federal Covid-19 relief programs. Farms that participated in these year-end tax estimates were in a position to better use farm tax strategies. These dollars are then made available for additional purchases locally, contributing to our rural Michigan economy.



**12 Area Farms  
participated in  
Financial Analysis**



**30+ Full Time  
Employees**



**\$8 Million Gross  
Sales**



## Supporting Food and Agriculture, continued

### Assistance to support beginning farmers across MI

The MSU Product Center Food-Ag-Bio assists county residents in developing products and businesses in the areas of food, agriculture, and natural resources. In 2020, the Product Center served 788 clients, helping them to create 139 new jobs and 19 new businesses, resulting in total capital formation of \$9,330,686 statewide.

MSU Extension Innovation Counselors are located around the state, conducting no charge, one-on-one confidential business consulting with entrepreneurs. The assistance provided is tailored to meet the needs of the clients, whether they are start-ups or seasoned business entities. The Product Center's campus-based staff offer fee-based services that range from preparing economic reports and feasibility studies for larger scale projects and grant applications to offering nutritional labeling and Process Authority reviews to meet food safety and regulatory compliance standards. For a complete listing, see Product Center Services.

Finally, the Michigan State University Extension Food Processing and Innovation Center (FPIC), which is managed by the Product Center, is Michigan's leading independent commercial food development, processing, packaging, and research facility. Businesses can rent the FPIC to create and commercialize new food and drink product lines for the marketplace in an industry compliant and cutting-edge facility in Okemos, Michigan.

For the calendar year of 2020, the MSU Product Center conducted two counseling sessions and provided assistance in Kalkaska County to 2 businesses for a total of \$17,000 in new sales.



**2 Counseling  
Sessions**



**New Sales:  
\$17,000**



# FOSTERING STRONG COMMUNITIES

When you support MSU Extension, participants learn how to implement best practices in good governance that keeps communities solvent, productive and engaged; learn effective conflict management skills that help leaders and residents work collaboratively on complex issues; and engage youth leaders in decision-making. In the personal finance area, MSU Extension helps youth and adults alike learn the skills they need to increase their savings, manage their spending avoid predatory lending and reduce mortgage defaults. All of these outcomes help lower the cost of governmental services and lead to personal and community stability, strong neighborhoods and safe communities.

- **New Commissioner School** celebrated 52 years in 2020 by going totally virtual. The program, for newly elected county commissioners, used a combination of live webinars and self-paced online readings and videos. Participants expressed appreciation for the ability to work the study around their busy schedules. Educational outcomes surpassed 2018 results.
- **The Northern Michigan Counties Association** continues its long history of being a place where county commissioners from across the northern lower peninsula gather eight times each year for lively discussion, sharing successes and concerns, learning from each other, and from guest speakers on topics selected by the commissioners who participate. MSU Extension provides the educational staff support. Due to the pandemic, 2020 saw a transition from in-person to Zoom. Participation dropped off a bit at first, but rebounded later in the year, and early 2021 looks even stronger, with participation up 50% compared to the 2020 average. Plans are under way to return to in-person meetings. The joint efforts of Kalkaska and Mancelona Downtown Development Authority for Explore 131 North were featured in the September 2020 program.
- **Building Strong Sovereign Nations (BSSN): Anishinaabek Leadership for Seven Generations Tribal Governance Conference**, a program for elected and appointed tribal officials, also went virtual in early 2021 with recorded sessions available.
- **The Kalkaska County Conservation District** held a morning strategic planning session on July 21, 2021 at the new Railroad Square Pavilion. The focus of the session was to identify priorities and actions to support those priorities moving forward for the next three years. The session began with a focused question, (what program/activity priorities can be implemented in the next 3 years?) to get the group brainstorming responses. Facilitator, MSU Extension Educator Bethany Prykucki, then helped the group organize the ideas in clusters. The District was then able to identify the core idea in each cluster, which helped them determine their next steps. The group of twelve people identified seven priority areas and 37 actions they hope to accomplish in that time-frame.



Participants in the strategic planning session for the Kalkaska County Conservation District.

## Fostering Strong Communities, continued

The Food Security Summit was a six-part virtual series aiming to create space for people to learn about needs and resources and explore a shared understanding and a common vision to address regional food insecurity and hunger in the greater Grand Traverse region. The goals of the Summit were to create additional public awareness through sharing data and stories of care, resiliency, and change, and to highlight a whole-community issue that is rapidly increasing in severity with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Summit series was hosted by the Northwest Food Coalition, in partnership with Food Rescue of Northern Michigan, Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities, and Michigan State University Extension, and with financial support from Rotary Charities of Traverse City. Michigan State University Extension provided use of our Zoom platform for the event and registration support as well as actively participated in the planning of the sessions.

Food insecurity and hunger were already-growing problems prior to the pandemic, and are now magnified. Our food system is broken and we collectively have an opportunity to improve it. These are immediate problems that need quick implementation and long-term solutions rooted in sound community-based policies, programs, and strategies.

The audiences for the Summit included those experiencing food insecurity, supporting a family member or neighbor experiencing food insecurity, working at a food pantry or at an agency providing food assistance, community members wanting to learn and support people experiencing food insecurity, those working at an organization that supports people, or a community that is experiencing food insecurity, or people simply curious about learning more about food and the future of our community.

Over 200 individuals registered for the series. Between 80-120 people participated in each session. Some people participated in one session, and some in all six. The majority of participants were from the Northwest Lower Michigan region, although there were some participants from other regions and states.

The Summit consisted of six 90-minute sessions hosted on Zoom.

- Session 1 - Who In Our Community Is facing Food Insecurity?
- Session 2 - What are the Sources of Food Assistance?
- Session 3 - How do we Make Decisions to Address Community and Individual needs?
- Session 4 - How do People in Need get Access to Healthy Food?
- Session 5 - What Values Drive our Solutions?
- Session 6 - What's Next? Chartering a Path Forward for Food Security for Our Community



Participants in The Food Security Summit virtual series.



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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.