



Manistee 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 online 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 Manistee County.

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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.



A New Experience

The 2020 4-H Fair and Auction was a unique one to be sure, with a short, two month turnaround from the announcement that 2020 fairs would be cancelled to the announcement of a virtual, online platform to show and market for youth. In Manistee County, the youth who participate in the Manistee County Fair made State 4-H stop and take notice of their efforts with their quality photos, authentic showmanship demonstrations, and judges' comments. Many of our judges judged other virtual Fairs in 2020, however Manistee stood out among the rest.



Best of Show!
Judges commended our participants on the quality of their photos and videos.

Gayle Newton, long-time Rabbit Judge at Manistee County Fair, judged five virtual showcases in 2020 and had this to say about her experience: "I really enjoyed judging this show. It was small, but the images were better than the others I have done, and I love that they didn't edit the showmanship videos," she said. "It gave me the opportunity to comment on the fact that they just kept smiling and going on when things didn't go perfectly. That is a part of showmanship and I am glad I could reinforce that. It was authentic to an in-person fair."

Despite our size and quick turnaround, every youth had a bid on their animal on day one and sold at or above fair market value in the end; this whole experience was incredibly educational.

New Community Engagements

Manistee 4-H saw several new community partnerships this year including a renewed partnership with the Manistee County Fair Board, a network of Manistee and Benzie food pantries, and two sportsmen's club.

These partnerships solidify 4-H in the community and provide our youth with the meaningful connections, expanding program opportunities, and the opportunity to live the 4-H values they are taught.

The collaboration of pantries from Benzie and Manistee will offer buyers of Manistee youth 4-H animals at Manistee County Fair the opportunity to donate their purchase to a pantry in need and demonstrate that Manistee 4-H lives its values of caring for our communities and neighbors in need.

Manistee County 4-H Virtual Showcases & Auction:

- **26** 4-H youth participated from Manistee and Benzie Counties 
- **100%** of animals that went through the auction were sold 
- Combined sales from the auction totaled **\$19,054** 

Developing Youth and Communities, continued

Big Bear Gun Club and Dublin Heights Sportsmen's Club are local sportsmen's clubs with interest in reaching local youth through 4-H and Shooting Sports, conservation and wildlife, forestry, and more. These groups contacted Manistee County 4-H this year to begin the process of becoming MSU Extension volunteers and trainers within the 4-H program and discuss the equipment and educational needs of local youth with MSU Extension 4-H and Shooting Sports Staff.

4-H Grows in Manistee

Despite the setbacks of COVID in 2020, Manistee County 4-H can boast new volunteers, a new 4-H Club, and approximately 40 new youth who expressed interest in joining the Manistee County 4-H program. Of those who expressed interest, the rate of enrollment in the program was fifty percent.

Manistee 4-H is also growing beyond "traditional 4-H" or livestock/farming 4-H. This year Manistee 4-H partnered with the Youth Armory in Manistee to provide babysitter training to local and statewide youth, ages 11 and up. **4-H Babysitter Training** helps youth feel confident and prepared to market themselves as safe, responsible, and reliable childcare providers in their communities. It is one of our most popular and successful **Career and Workforce Preparation** 4-H curriculums and we look forward to continuing to provide it through Manistee 4-H.

Another non-traditional 4-H program that was provided to a local community partner was **Mindful Mechanics and the Importance of Self-Care**. This program curriculum is part of Michigan State University Extension's Youth Emotional and Social Wellness series that has been developed to help youth of all ages learn and develop good mental wellness behaviors when dealing with stress, social, or emotional crises. Manistee 4-H and MSU Extension Staff provided a three-part series to Youth Commitment Scholars through Launch Manistee's Community Foundation.

The success of this program was overwhelming and the head of the Commitment Scholar program passed along the impact on one student in particular:

"I just want to express my gratitude for your support and partnership in planning and implementing this month's Self-Care Series with our Manistee Commitment Scholars. I am so appreciative of your knowledge, time, and authenticity in sharing with our students. I know that this will have a positive and lasting impact. In fact, I received a note from a scholar yesterday evening expressing how helpful and important this was to her and that hearing, "self-care isn't selfish" is something she "will never unhear." She has dealt with some difficult times and wanted to express her gratitude for this message."

Manistee County 4-H is growing, despite COVID setbacks, and growing beyond traditional 4-H, with the goal in mind to make the best better, starting in our communities and our youth.

4-H programs like these reduce youth substance abuse and suicide rates in communities, connect youth to meaningful mentors to help them develop the coping strategies they need to ensure their mental health and well-being, and give them local resources to contact and engage with if they need assistance.

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.

Healthier Lives through Nutrition Education

MSU Extension supports individual and community level, or public health approaches, to prevent obesity. Through the United States Department of Agriculture Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed), we provide a combination of educational strategies, accompanied by supporting policy, systems, and environmental change interventions aimed to increase likelihood limited resource youth, adults, and seniors can make healthy choices.

Virtual SNAP-Ed Programming

While COVID-19 certainly changed the format of MSU Extension programming, many area residents were still able to get nutrition education they need through short food demonstration videos and recipe distribution. MSU Extension Community Nutrition Instructors took the change from face-to-face teaching to virtual teaching in stride. We trained in virtual platforms such as Zoom and Google Meets. Power Point presentations were created using our evidence-based curriculum. Videos were created for social media during the Spring and Summer months to encourage and educate on the use of seasonal fruits and vegetables. Videos featured a recipe and information on how to prepare or store the produce. They can be viewed on the [MI Health Matters YouTube channel](#).

- [Let's Talk About Asparagus](#) – by Michelle Smith, Grand Traverse County
- [Chocolate Cherry Energy Bites](#) – by Jane Rapin, Leelanau County
- [Refrigerator Pickles](#) – by Caitlin Lorenc, Benzie County
- [Arugula Pizza](#) – by Caitlin Lorenc, Benzie County
- [Blueberry Yogurt Pops](#) – Lanae Bump, Antrim and Kalkaska County



Keeping People Healthy, continued

Video recipes for local food pantries

Videos were created for social media during the Spring and Summer months to encourage and educate on the use of seasonal fruits and vegetables. Videos featured a recipe and information on how to prepare or store the produce. MSU Extension partnered with the Northwest Food Coalition to develop and create video recipes with produce procured by the Farm2Neighbor program using local professional video production company, iSee Communications. Videos featured locally grown produce provided to over fifty local pantries and meal sites. You can watch the videos here:

<https://northwestmifoodcoalition.org/farm2neighbor/videos/>

- [Three Sisters Soup](#)
- [Cauliflower Tots](#)
- [Eggroll in a Bowl](#)
- [Parsnip Fries](#)
- [Root Fruit Salad](#)
- [Sweet Potato Oatmeal Chocolate Chip Bars](#)



Over **2,400**
Viewers Reached

SNAP-Ed Programming for Adults

MSU Extension developed a new partnership with District Health Department #10 and Munson Healthcare. Residents of Manistee County are eligible to receive a prescription for free fruits and vegetables, as well as access to free virtual nutrition education through the **Prescription for Health Program**. Funded through the Michigan Health Endowment Fund, this program is designed specifically to support individual and community health.

Traditionally, the Prescription for Health Program nutrition education classes would be offered at local farmers markets. Due to COVID-19, programming transitioned to live virtual nutrition classes, including a self-paced online course. The virtual nutrition education series are six-session classes taught by MSU Extension community nutrition instructors. Topics covered include cooking for one, everyday strategies to incorporate more fruits and vegetables into meals, and enjoying daily movement.

Following the education series, participants receive up to \$100 in vouchers for purchasing fruits and vegetables. These vouchers can be redeemed at the Manistee Save-A-Lot grocery store.

"I would like to tell you again how much I enjoyed this class. At 65 years old, you think you know almost everything you need to know, but this class taught me that as we age, there are still simple things we can do to help us stay the healthiest we can be with a few simple changes and/or additions to our existing life style. You all made me laugh each and every class, taught me something I didn't know before and expanded on things I already knew. You were all very professional, yet injected laughter and silliness at the right moments to keep the class light and upbeat. Although working from home for you was a challenge I'm sure, it never showed that you were uncomfortable, which made it that much more enjoyable."

~ Prescription for Health Program participant

SUPPORTING AGRICULTURE & AGRIBUSINESS

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

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 advanced 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, 86 of whom resided in northwest Michigan. 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 Michigan 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 Manistee 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.

"It was a great method to deliver important and timely information in today's environment."

"I think MSU has done a great job adapting with the times. I'm very thankful for our Extension agents and what they do to help out our fruit industry."

~Tree Fruit Webinar participants

Supporting Food and Agriculture, continued

Additionally, through volunteer outreach, MSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteers shared science-based gardening knowledge, engaged citizens and empowered communities in environmentally responsible gardening practices. They volunteered time to projects such as the Youth Armory Project and Sophia Street Community Garden, helping to improve food security, improve community, and developing youth through gardening.



MSU Extension Master Gardener Jessica Rozga-DeBoni assisted with the new pollinator garden at Sophia Street Community Garden. (Photo Arielle Breen/ News Advocate)

This past year,
Master Gardeners
volunteered more than



40 hours

on various projects in
Manistee County valued
at nearly **\$1,200.**

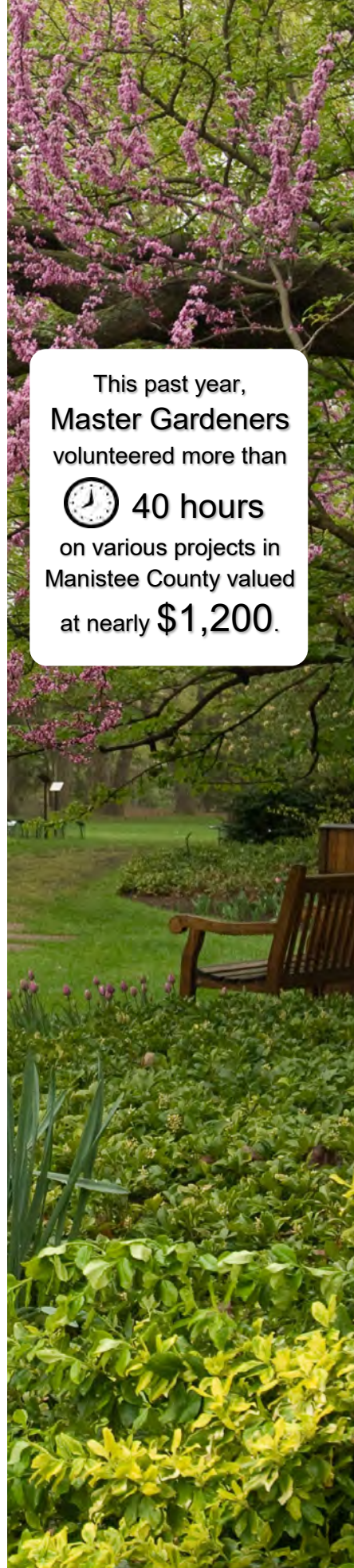
Supporting Manistee County Residents with Research Based Horticultural Information

- 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 welcome to Zoom in with samples of plants, insects, diseases and other problems, while MSU Extension staff and Master Gardener volunteers provided the expertise to diagnose problems and provide management recommendations. In addition, Manistee 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 held monthly March-September.



Supporting Food and Agriculture, continued

- 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 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.



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

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 assists farmers in better understanding 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).



12 Area Farms
participated in
Financial Analysis



30+ Full Time
Employees



\$8 Million Gross
Sales

Supporting Food and Agriculture, continued

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.

Assistance to support beginning farmers across MI

The MSU Product Center Food-Ag-Bio assists Michigan based businesses in developing products and businesses in the areas of food, agriculture, 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 [PC Services](#).

Finally, the MSU 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 located in Okemos, Michigan. See [Food Processing Innovation Center](#) for more information..



3 Clients



30 Total
Employees



53 Counseling
& Research
Hours



Annual Sales:
\$100,000

2018-2021 MSU
Product Center
Impacts in
Manistee County.



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.

- **Planning and Zoning for Solar Energy:** This program introduces communities to regulating solar energy in a way that fosters the use of the technology while also considering the unique scale and landscapes within their community.
- **Open Meetings Act, Remote Meetings, and COVID-19:** MSU Extension educators went to work when Open Meetings Act regulations rapidly changed in March of 2020. MSU Extension Educator Mary Reilly partnered with Manistee attorney, Richard Wilson and Networks Northwest Community Development Director, Kathy Egan to create a video that provided the most current information available on remote meetings. Over 330 people watched that video throughout Michigan within a few days of it being released.
- **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 (NMCA)** continues its long history of being a place where county commissioners from across the northern lower peninsula gather (virtually for now) 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. Manistee County's Richard Schmidt is an active participant and serves as Secretary for NMCA.



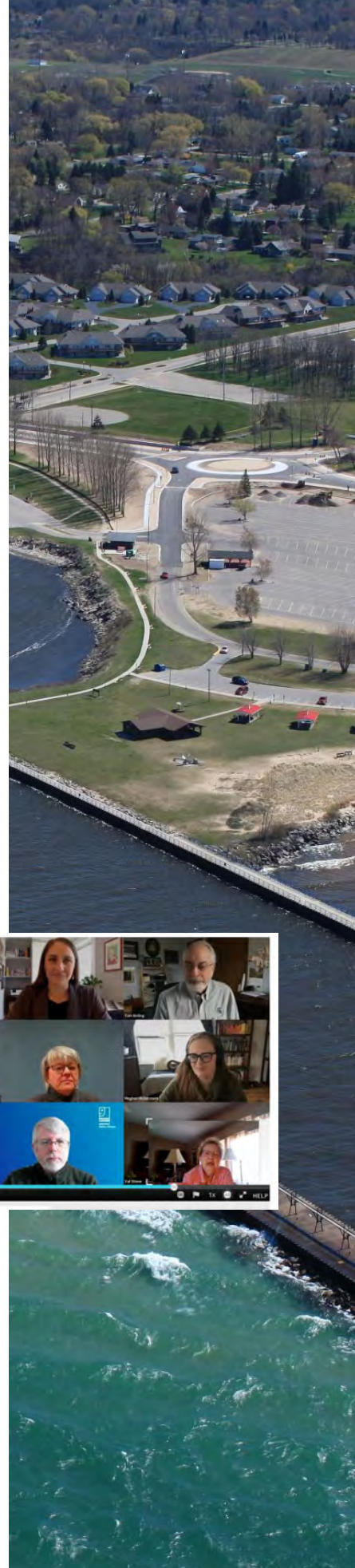
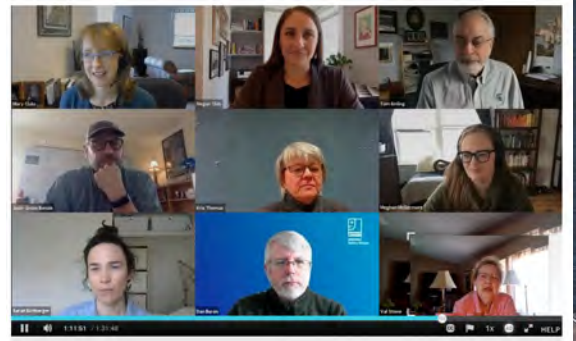
Fostering Strong Communities, continued

- **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 Citizen Planner Program** is an intensive, six-week course offered through video conferencing in 2020. Through 18 hours of instruction and engaging activities, participants learn the fundamentals of their roles and responsibilities and best practices for planning and zoning in Michigan. The course is designed for planning commissions, zoning board of appeals, elected officials, zoning administrators, and interested public. Participants can earn a Citizen Planner certificate by successfully completing all six sessions.
- **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.



Fostering Strong Communities, continued

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 needs of the community and individuals?
- 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 in our community

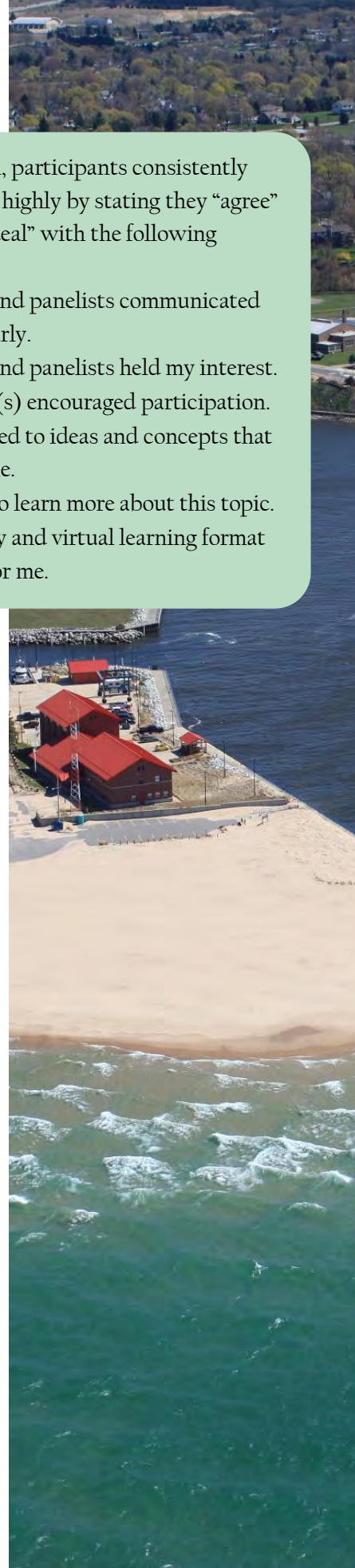
Enhancing & protecting our Great Lakes coastal resources

Michigan Sea Grant Extension integrates Great Lakes research, outreach, and education to help our communities respond to issues related to coastal businesses and economies (human activities along the coast), protecting and restoring aquatic ecosystems, managing fisheries, preventing and controlling invasive species, and more. Michigan Sea Grant was active in Manistee County during 2020/2021 in specific ways:

- 2020 was a record year of high Great Lakes water in Manistee County, across the rest of Michigan and all along the Great Lakes coast. Michigan Sea Grant Extension worked with both the Manistee County Conservation District and the Manistee County Board of Commissioners to present informational sessions on high water, erosion and inundation issues and facilitate information sharing on permitting by state and federal agencies.
- In January 2020, a program was held in the Ramsdell Theatre with over 90 people in attendance. Presentations from Michigan Sea Grant Extension, NOAA National Weather Service Gaylord, and EGLE Water Resources Division were delivered along with questions and answers. Also, a special presentation was given remotely to the Manistee County Board of Commissioners in June 2020 by Michigan Sea Grant Extension Educator Mark Breederland and follow-up with individual County Commissioners took place as well.
- The first eight months of 2020 broke monthly record highs since the period of recording began in 1918, however, due to dry conditions, 2021 is well below the 2020 record highs and static water levels are down about 16" from 2020 levels per month. Michigan Sea Grant will continue efforts in program areas of healthy coastal ecosystems, sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, resilient communities and economies, and environmental literacy and workforce development in Manistee County during 2021/2022.

After each session, participants consistently rated the Summit highly by stating they “agree” or “agree a great deal” with the following statements:

- The speakers and panelists communicated their ideas clearly.
- The speakers and panelists held my interest.
- The facilitator(s) encouraged participation.
- I was introduced to ideas and concepts that were new to me.
- I am inspired to learn more about this topic.
- The technology and virtual learning format worked well for me.



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