

# Agriculture



Mason County boasts a diverse agricultural economy that produces over \$52.8 million annually, 60% in crop sales and 40% in livestock.

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

**Highlights of MSU Extension actions taken in 2017-18:** Mason county has multiple host sites for ongoing monitoring and trapping of the invasive spotted wing drosophila, a serious pest of sweet and tart cherries. The Mason county sites included in this work are part of a larger network stretching across the west central region that informs on-farm decision making for tree fruit farmers. With a grant from the Michigan Cherry Committee, Mason county fruit farms hosted a 2018 field research project to reduce orchard suitability for spotted wing drosophila.

MSU Extension's apple maturity network includes multiple Mason county fruit farms, providing weekly updates on the maturity status of 12+ varieties of apples from mid-August through the end of October, ensuring that area farmers are able to harvest each variety at peak maturity for maximum longevity and quality.

Farm visits to Mason county are conducted each week since early May, providing information to growers who have requested diagnosis on declining trees and pest management information.

Processing peach farms from Mason county participated in a widespread effort to determine if processing peaches need to be managed for spotted wing drosophila, with research funds secured from the Michigan Tree Fruit Commission. Thanks in part to contributions from Mason county growers we now know that growers do not need to manage these fruits for this pest, reducing cost of production and pesticide use.

Farmers in Mason county participated in a research "Project GREEN" funded effort to categorize the status of resistance to a common commercially used antibiotic on their farms.



Roots of a sick tree that MSU Extension educator David Jones helped to diagnose earlier this year.

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# Mason County

## 2017-18 ANNUAL REPORT

### BY THE NUMBERS

- 100** Over 100 years of serving Mason County
- 5** Extension professionals located and providing education in Mason County
- 2,500** Almost 2,500 Mason County adults and youth participated in MSU Extension programs
- 1,800+** youth in 4-H and school enrichment programs
- 350** Over 350 adults and youth participated in health, nutrition, and food safety programs
- \$6,146,754** total economic impact in Mason County
- 200** Almost 200 residents participated in agricultural services and programs
- 46** MSU Extension helped 46 residents and elected officials with community and economic development, natural resources and local government education

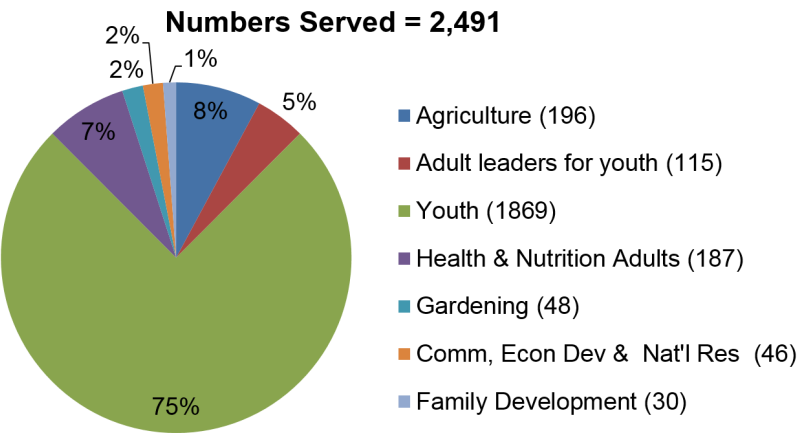
### MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT COORDINATOR

Michigan State University (MSU) Extension partners with Mason 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 Mason County residents need it most.

We're passionate about serving Mason 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*

Shari Spoelman, Interim District Coordinator



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# Program Highlights



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

## 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 2017, the team provided homeowner education, money management, foreclosure counseling and Step-Forward Michigan assistance in Mason County.



4-H youth prepare for showing their rabbits at the fair.

## 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

4-H is the largest youth development organization in Michigan. Connected at the national level, MSU’s program promotes the traditional 4-H clubs and fair projects, as well as many other leadership and life-skills development opportunities for youth. 4-H provides experiential learning opportunities that allow youth to explore new interests and discover their passion. In 2017 Mason County had 25 4-H clubs serving 301 youth with 115 adult volunteers. The total number of youth served in the county was 1,869.



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

## 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 Mason County MSU Extension office is fortunate to have a Master Gardener on staff that assists many customers with basic home gardening concerns.

# Program Highlights

## GLOBAL & CULTURAL EDUCATION

Helping young people to explore and to appreciate what people around the world have in common and what makes them unique is critically important in society today. Michigan 4-H offers a variety of opportunities for kids and adults to learn more about our global community. In some cases, that perspective is gained through activities or projects that include art and letter writing. In other cases, it is gained through actually traveling to a different state or to other countries such as Belize, Norway, or Japan.



The Japanese and Korean exchange visited the Mason County board of commissioners in 2017.

## 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

Providing assistance to help residents and businesses keep food safe is a hallmark of cooperative extension services across the country. In Mason County we provided ServSafe education for restaurant staff, home food preservation (canning, freezing and drying,) cottage food law trainings, assistance with food pantries, and pressure canner gauge testing.



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