



# Mason County

## 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

### BY THE NUMBERS



Almost 1,700 Mason County adults and youth participated in MSU Extension programs



537 youth participated in 4-H and school enrichment programs



606 youth and adults participated in health and nutrition programs



37 programs were offered by Mason County staff. A total of 30 MSU Extension staff delivered programs to Mason County residents.



403 Mason County residents participated in SNAP education programs



598 Mason County residents participated in 151 unique virtual programs.



922 users visited the Mason County website, viewing 2524 web-pages.



619 phone calls and walk-ins were assisted by MSU E Clerical Support

### MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR

Once again I am delighted to share the results of another successful year of partnership between Mason 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. Over this past year, we've empowered families and individuals to live healthier lives, supported new and local businesses, created opportunities for youth leadership development and career exploration, helped farmers with business management and mental health, and much more. Our staff live and work alongside county residents, are rooted in community relationships and are responsive to community needs.

Of course this year was a year like no other, and the following pages allow me to share my pride in how well MSU Extension has responded to the challenges both broadly as an organization, and of course locally through our continued delivery of programs and services made available to our local communities.

Our partnership with you makes this all possible. On behalf of the MSU Extension team serving Mason County, thank you for another great year. We look forward to your continued support and hope you'll be able to join us during one of our upcoming programs.

James Kelly, District Director

# Unprecedented Times - Director's note

Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) brings the science, programs and resources of Michigan's land grant university to organizations, communities and individuals throughout the state. Our outreach and engagement is built on a local basis, thanks to our county partnerships and more than 600 faculty and staff in offices across all 83 counties.

Historically, most of our relationships have been maintained through in-person meetings and programs. Over the last few years we have built up the breadth and quality of our website at [extension.msu.edu](http://extension.msu.edu) which now averages 1.25 million visitors per month. In 2020, we expanded our capacity to provide high-quality virtual education.

2020 will be a year to remember for many reasons. The creativeness, dedication, teamwork, and resilience that our MSUE professionals exhibited during this global pandemic has been outstanding. This has been a difficult time for communities, families and staff, and I am proud of the work we have done to continue to provide high-quality educational programs throughout Michigan.

Forced to focus on online programming, MSUE staff were given an opportunity to do something they have wanted to do for a long time - convert their in-person programming to a digital format. Digital formats don't work for everyone or every program, but to expand our reach and to help more people incorporate the evidence-based learning from a major university into their homes, families, businesses and communities, it has always been a goal worth pursuing.

Many were moving in that direction already; the pandemic required others to move there faster.

Working from home with the tools and support needed to help them succeed in a remote environment, MSUE educators have continued to assist farmers through the growing season, elected officials and decision makers, parents, families and youth by meeting with them on virtual platforms through online meetings and webinars. With the work they have accomplished over the last months, staff reported to me that they have learned that:

- programs that are produced for a live audience and recorded allow more people to view the meetings in a time convenient for them;
- we are reaching audiences that would not be able to attend our programs in the past because of time, travel and disability;
- we are reaching local, regional, state, national and global audiences;
- we are able to share our expertise, ideas and best practices more efficiently across the state;
- a digital divide still exists, not all programs work in an on-line format, and nothing will replace our local, face to face, relationship-based work.

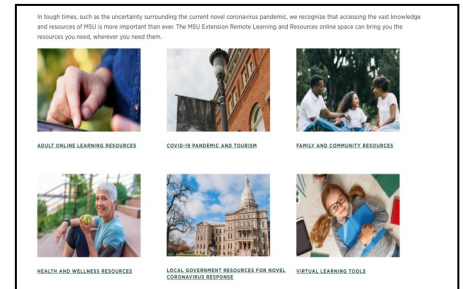
In the end, I believe the experience in on-line program development and investment in capacity will not only augment but strengthen our face to face work (once that resumes). Our programs will have greater reach than ever before and MSUE will be a leader in virtual education.

Please contact me for more information and thank you for your continued support!

# Broad Response to Novel Corona Virus

In late March, MSUE pivoted all of our programming to online formats to comply with the original Stay Safe, Stay Home order (EO2020-42). Within six days of that order, we launched the Remote Learning and Resources website and our teams immediately began modifying programming to a digital format that would provide equal educational value right in people's homes. This online space provided a platform to launch this effort and since then has become a robust virtual one-stop-shop for everything MSU Extension has to offer online. This site has evolved over the last few months and houses educational resources:

- to help parents keep their children on track with learning at home;
- an extensive list of online programs for adults;
- a calendar of virtual events;
- educational videos;
- relevant, responsive and evidence-based articles authored by MSU Extension's vast network of experts;
- resources for local governments and communities navigating the effects of the pandemic and more.



Within a few days into the quarantine, staff had new programming spooled up and ready to present digitally. A few noteworthy examples include:

- Staff members quickly pivoted from a face-to-face program offered in a few locations to a series of one-hour presentations called **Adulting 101**. Topics include things such as what to look for when renting, tips and tricks for easy cooking, how to keep your finances in order and the right way to do household tasks such as ironing and setting a table. The series attracted more than **3,000** participants statewide and was recommended by school districts. This program has now become a regular recurring series and engaged a team of program staff to share in its delivery.
- **Cabin Fever Conversations** became a highly popular series of 11 webinars via Zoom and Facebook Live designed to get people's minds off of being cooped up inside and get them thinking about their garden spaces. Sessions focused on lighthearted but educational conversations about gardening featuring guests who discuss topics like seed saving, houseplants, pollinator health, community gardening and container gardening. The webinar's success of more than **500 attendees per session** has prompted organizers to continue programming during winter 2021. This program also provided a great learning opportunity for staff who had never presented live webinars and created comical do's and don'ts to live programs for staff to learn from to improve their work.
- **Educational Resources for Parents**, teachers and families were compiled to assist with remote and home-based learning. 4-H Curriculum, videos, tip sheets and virtual learning tools were developed and continue to be added to and improved as we begin the Fall school year.
- **Rapid Response For Agriculture** was a site developed in 2019 to provide a single point for farmers to access resources developed in response to several weather related emergencies. In 2020, our agriculture team immediately rose to the challenge to assist the industry with resources and management tools to aid them through the pandemic emergency. One first response was a series of articles and best practice options for the floriculture industry who were limited in the ability to sell to their wholesale markets. Other resources were aimed at keeping farm employees safe and how to best manage operations while still meeting consumer demands for a fresh, safe food supply during emergency conditions created by Covid-19.

# Broad Response to Novel Corona Virus (cont.)

- **MSU Extension CHAMP:** COVID-19 Hazard Assessment and Mitigation Program is one tool found on the rapid response site. This tool was designed to help ag operations reduce the risk of worker exposure to COVID-19 and mitigate disease spread. It assists farms and ag related businesses with designing a pandemic preparedness plan, conducting a hazard assessment to identify risks for exposure, and developing mitigation practices supporting worker safety and health. These agriculture-centric, pandemic preparedness education and support materials were designed to align with federal, state and local guidance.

## Going Virtual with Traditional Face to Face Programs

- **Annual Research Project and Demonstration Field Days** highlight on-farm research collaborations between MSU Extension, MSU AgBioResearch and local growers. These in-person daylong experiences have always been held in-person, on farms. In 2020, these events were moved to a digital format. The program and attendance of these events so far has been impressive. Moreover, the production of these events will allow the visual results to be shared at other meetings.
- **Fruit Crop Research and Scouting** carried out by the **MSUE Fruit team** is especially important to the economy of District 5. The Integrated Pest Management meetings that occur every Monday during the growing season have been held face to face for decades reaching a handful of Michigan famers each week with the remainder waiting for the written report to be broadcast. Taking this program virtual has brought in growers from all the fruit growing regions in the state as well as several people from other parts of the and the world. Also, the sessions were recorded, allowing growers to hear the latest on pest and disease conditions at their own convenience. Information shared during these meetings is critical to the sustainability of agriculture in west Michigan. Fruit Field Days were also successful for this team and included the Viticulture Field Day in July and Peach Field Day held in August.



Chase Township farmer Jack Thornton was featured in statewide education during a virtual field day event.

- **Food Safety Education** teaching capacity was increased by MSUE in early 2020 with the ServSafe Certification program for food managers and workers scheduled to be offered throughout the district. However, without national approval to provide the course on-line our programming efforts were put on hold in April. The Food Safety Team worked quickly to modify other face to face curricula into web-based offerings and expanded their educational reach to engage food service workers, homemakers, and families in weekly educational sessions. The sessions were designed to answer questions about food preservation, cottage food law, and food pantry safety. With an emphasis on engaging young people during the quarantine, the team focused on youth focused topics and seasonally themed cooking workshops. They have maintained a weekly programming schedule since May 2020 which has significantly increased their reach across the state.

# Program Highlights

## NATURAL RESOURCE PRESERVATION

Our natural resources programs improve public understanding, help landowners and communities use those assets for sustainable long-term social and economic development and conserve natural resources for future generations. In Mason County those programs include water resource education, Lake Michigan water level presentations, commercial fishery consultations, local lake studies to advise on plant and animal invasive species issues, and more.



Wild rice in upper Hamlin Lake.

## 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 provides assistance to many customers with basic home gardening concerns. Additionally, 30 soil tests were completed for Mason County residents in 2020.



Gypsy moth caterpillars were back in 2020.

## FARM CONSULTATIONS

Providing support to farms in Mason County resulted in improved financial performance. Mason County Farmers participated in Farm Financial Analysis programs, Manure Management Field Days, the Bine and Dine Hop Webinar series, and Bumble Bees of the Great lakes. The farm financial analysis education sessions included succession planning and Farm Stress Management consultations.

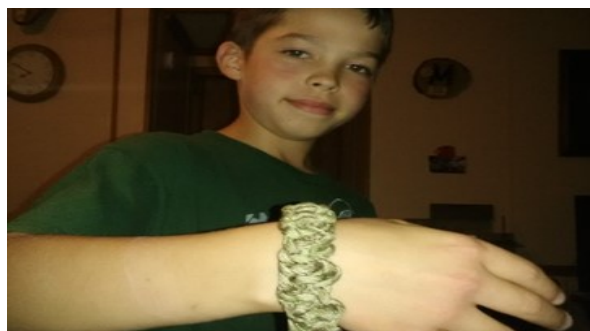


Manure management makes a difference.

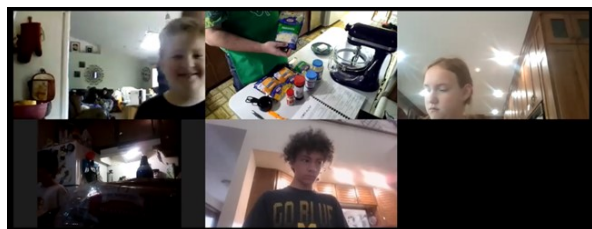
# Program Highlights



4-H Program Coordinator Aaron Myers lead multiple virtual cooking activities in 2020.



A 4-H member shows off completed bracelet as part of the home activity project.



Mason County youth participate in virtual fun!



4-H promotion on Instagram.

## 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 opportunities for youth. 4-H provides experiential learning opportunities that allow youth to explore new interests and discover their passion.

In 2020, Mason County had 46 screened adult volunteers and 162 youth enrolled as 4-H club members. In addition, 537 Mason County youth aged 5-19 took part in learning opportunities with MSU Extension.

New clubs and new partnerships were formed in 2020, resulting in an 11% increase in enrollments when compared with last year. A wide variety of programming was offered to 4-H members, drawing on expertise from all across the state. Locally, 4-H hosted interactive cooking sessions, sent out activity kits to families, taught students how to create and edit video content, hosted the 4-H League of Clovers Gaming Society and E-Sports team, just to name a few.

Mason County 4-H youth were also able to participate in the Michigan State Fair 4-H Virtual Showcase this year with Mason County 4-H youth from Circle Rocking S Farms 4-H club taking part in the arts and crafts, photography, sewing, and flower arranging competitions, earning several first place finishes in their categories. The 4-H Virtual Library on our Mason County 4-H Facebook page is a collection of simple projects for youth to take part in at home. The collection of videos, thus far, has generated over 2700 views on the Facebook page..

Mason County 4-H Tech Wizards has also seen great improvement this year with youth participants at the Mason County Central site doubling at the start of 2020 when face-to-face programming was occurring in schools..

# Program Highlights

## SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL HEALTH

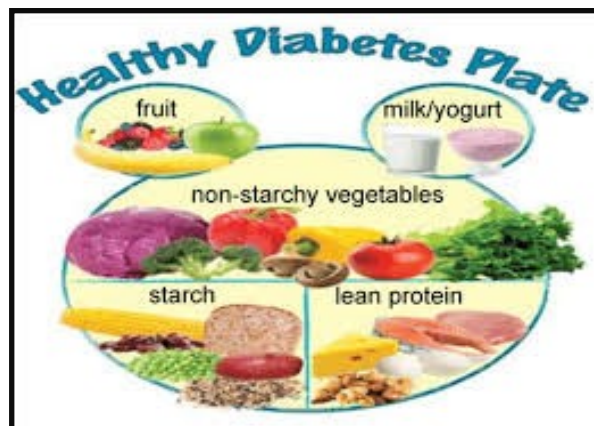
MSU Extension promotes social and emotional well-being, helping young people to focus on social and emotional wellness. Programs delivered encompass education on forming and maintaining satisfying and healthful relationships, taking another's perspective, resolving interpersonal conflict, feeling capable and whole, expressing emotions, navigating stress, and having supportive relationships. Mason County youth participated in Mindfulness training.



Mindfulness training has been shown to decrease anxiety and negativity.

## ADULT HEALTH & WELLNESS

Access to high-quality and affordable programs such as those that MSU Extension provides is essential to saving lives, reducing disabilities, and lowering the costs of everyone's medical care. In Mason County, programs offered included "Eat Healthy, Be Active", and "Dining With Diabetes". In addition, several adult groups participated in nutrition and cooking classes in a partnership with the Lakeshore Resource Network.



Dining with Diabetes educational material.

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Building strong communities through supporting economic development is a vital role of MSU Extension. In October 2019, the Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities workshop drew 100 attendees from 50 Michigan communities to Ludington. In 2020, a follow up presentation was made regarding "First Impressions: Tourism" for Ludington. At that session data from first time visitors to Ludington was shared with community leaders.



Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities conference.

# Program Highlights

## PRODUCT CENTER COUNSELLING

Strong counties provide resources to assist entrepreneurial activity within the region. MSU's Product Center helps Michigan entrepreneurs and businesses to develop and launch new product and service ideas into the food, agriculture, and bioenergy markets. In 2020, the MSU Product Center was contracted by a Mason County company to conduct a feasibility study for the expansion of sales in new markets. This study developed an estimated economic impact and job growth potential. Results from this study may be used by the company to access both private and public funding to support the expansion.



As an early-stage company, low-cost, support services are important to our success and sustainability, " said Danielle Bradfield, Hey Sugar Company Owner.

## GOVERNMENT & COMMUNITY VITALITY

Providing education and technical support to help create successful commissions and teams is the foundation of the work of MSU Extension's Government and Public Policy Educators. Mason County residents received support with solar ordinances in Hamlin Township, participated in New County Commissioner training, benefitted from a First Impressions Tourism Assessment, and received Ballot Proposal Education,



**FIT Community Next Steps**

## GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING

MSU offers a variety of opportunities for youth and adults to learn more about our global community and develop an appreciation for diverse perspectives and cultures. The Mason County Leadership and Civic Engagement educator hosted multiple sessions attended with youth and adults from around the world sharing their culture and responding to questions. The sessions were attended by residents of Mason County, along with residents from around the state.



"I really liked the opportunity to learn about different cultures and the opportunity to talk to the person directly." **Webinar Participant**

# Developing youth and keeping people healthy



*Working to improve health in the community through nutrition and physical activity.*

*It is estimated that every \$1 spent on nutrition education saves as much as \$10 in long-term health costs.*

In Mason County, we believe that an investment in youth is an investment that can transform lives. By providing opportunities to learn, be active, and to improve the quality of diets, MSU Extension is encouraging healthy behaviors that help reduce health care costs by preventing chronic health conditions.

In 2020, a collaboration between MSU Extension, Lakeshore Food Club, and LiveWell Mason County launched that distributed 110 grab-and-go garden kits in April to get families started on their gardening goals through a program called Deep Roots. The program provided community engagement with Mason County Garden Club, Ludington and Scottville libraries, Little Red Organics, Always's Shady Lane Farm, and quickly developed a Facebook following of over 300 community residents.

Weekly education and garden giveaways were developed for community engagement related to showcasing their gardens, submitting gardening questions or challenges, creative expression in the garden, healthy food creations, pest management, attracting butterflies/bees and garden focused activities that involve the family. Three small food donations were made to Lakeshore Food Club from the garden. This sustainable project is transitioning into "Roots Mason County", a community partner initiative focusing on community family engagement around literacy, food security, and nutrition/cooking skill development. This is a strong collaboration between MSUE, Spectrum Health, Lakeshore Food Club, Great Start, DHD#10, and Family Link.



Hands-on learning at it's best!



Ludington High School students highlight a promotional cling-on.

In addition, our MSU Extension Community Nutrition Instructor taught classes to approximately 350 Mason County students, and led a policy, systems, environment initiative at Ludington HS that impacted food delivery to over 600 students. The project resulted in reduced food waste through a food waste study, new menu items in the lunchroom, and a lunch room marketing plan to encourage students to make healthy food choices. The project was so successful that it is being featured as part of MSU Extensions impact on health and nutrition in schools through a video requested by the State Board of Education.

Michigan State University Extension helps people improve their lives by bringing the vast knowledge resources of MSU directly to individuals, communities, and businesses. For more than 100 years, MSU Extension has helped grow Michigan's economy by equipping Michigan residents with the information they need to do their jobs better, raise healthy and safe families, build their communities, and empower their children to dream of successful futures. For more information about the programs we offer please refer to the contact information below.

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Mason County Michigan State University Extension



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