



Montcalm County

2019 ANNUAL REPORT

BY THE NUMBERS



1,691 youth participated in 4-H, early childhood or after school programs



1,149 adults and youth benefited from health and nutrition programs



Montcalm County students received \$1,649,951 in financial aid from MSU



More than \$499,071 was spent with local businesses

MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR

In 2019, Michigan State University Extension helped its partner, Montcalm County, meet needs of County residents through education, consultation and collaboration. Your local MSU Extension staff and the statewide network of Educators provided information and expertise to local farmers, government officials, local and state employees, as well as, County youth and adult residents. MSU Extension has over 200 programs and continually strives to meet the needs of Michiganders with research backed, unbiased information to help improve their lives.



This annual report gives examples of some of MSU Extension's accomplishments and the impact that we continue to have in the County. Thank you for the opportunity to share our most valuable resource – our people. Whether taking phone calls, answering the many walk-in questions or providing education programs to groups or individuals, we strive to provide answers to questions that help solve real problems right here in Montcalm County.

Bill Hendrian,
District 8 Director

CONTACT



Montcalm MSU Extension
211 W. Main St.
Stanton, MI 48888



canr.msu.edu/outreach
msue.montcalm@county.msu.edu



Michigan State University Extension



989-831-7500



@MSUEExtension

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

Extension

Program Highlights



MSU Extension is working to raise awareness and to provide education regarding CWD through conversation and outreach.

CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE

In 2015, Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) was detected in Michigan. Since that date, 119 deer have tested positive for CWD across nine Michigan counties. In 2017, the Michigan Natural Resources Commission established the Chronic Wasting Disease Working Group to develop recommendations on steps and actions to mitigate or eliminate CWD in Michigan. A key recommendation proposed by the working group was the development of public education. Toward this effort, MSU Extension and the MDARD collaborated late in 2019 to hire Katie Ockert, MSU Extension Educator, to create, deliver, and evaluate local and statewide communication strategies and innovative educational programs that meet current and projected outreach needs related to white-tailed deer management and CWD.

HEALTH & NUTRITION

In 2019, Community Nutrition Instructor, Bonnie Havlicek, brought health and nutrition education to the residents of Montcalm County. In November, Bonnie retired from MSUE but her work is continuing through our new Instructor, Natasha Depue. Wherever Bonnie programmed she left smiles on faces and practical information about preparing healthy meals and snacks. Bonnie cared about those most vulnerable in our community and did her best to make sure the elderly and those of lower income had access to research-based nutrition information and an awareness of the different options available to connect local residents to local, healthy foods. Bonnie, a proponent of fresh local food, did a lot of programming in conjunction with local farmers markets and was a proponent of local food drives.



MSU Extension aims to improve the knowledge, skills and behavior of how individuals view nutrition.

COOKING MATTERS

In early 2020, Natasha DePue joined the Montcalm County MSU Extension team as the Community Nutrition Instructor. Natasha will serve the residents of Montcalm County by continuing to work with local partners to deliver programs like Cooking Matters, a six sessions series that involves instruction and the opportunity to prepare a meal together. Other benefits include opportunities to learn about healthy fruits and vegetables that are not as common and helping to empower the participant to expand their healthy choices. Natasha is looking forward to bringing these resources to the community. For more information on programming, please contact Natasha at depueat@msu.edu.



MSU Extension helps to equip people with the knowledge and resources to make healthy choices for themselves and their families.

Program Highlights



Through structured 4-H activities, Montcalm County youth gain a variety of skills to help them become successful in communication, teamwork and organization.



Youth learned about animal science by participating in a number of fun projects and trainings in the Embryology Program.



MSU Extension is here to assist farmers, families and individuals within the farming community when issues arise.

4-H SPRING BREAK

During Spring Break 2019 in Montcalm County, 4-H hosted six events across the county for the community. Five of these events were free and included roller-skating, craft making, swimming, baking, and a trip to the IQ Hub in St. Johns. Bowling was the other event where participants paid a discounted rate. Between these activities, over 115 youth participated throughout the week. We would like to thank West Michigan Composting for their donation that made these free and discounted events possible and hope to do it again in the future. It's through donations and partnerships like this that MSU Extension is able to offer Montcalm County youth opportunities like this one.

4-H EMBRIOLOGY

New in 2019 was 4-H Embryology in Montcalm County. Third grade students at Cedar Crest Elementary in Greenville and a combined class including 3rd graders at Flat River Academy got to experience hatching chicken eggs in their classroom while learning about the development, how to care for eggs and for chickens. Students loved to candle the eggs which allows them to see shadows of the development that is taking place inside the egg during the 21 days of incubation. Students were ecstatic when the chicks began to hatch and they loved keeping the chicks and caring for them for one week before they were placed in their forever homes. Embryology is a great program for students to learn responsibility, time management, nurturing, science literacy and much more!

FARM BILL

Beginning in the fall of 2019, MSU Extension agricultural educators held a series of special meetings throughout the state to help area farmers wade through the intricacies of the Federal Farm bill. Due to the excessive moisture that many farmers battled during the spring planting season of 2019, some prevented planting occurred and many crops did not produce up to expectations. These and other factors made decision making around the Farm bill and its offerings very important. Educator, Roger Betz and others spent hours explaining the options available to farmers, weighing a three-year cycle of financial outcomes and using a financial tool, developed by Roger, to calculate program options and tax implications.

Program Highlights

VIRTUAL FARM RESOURCES

Monica Jean, District 8 Field Crops Educator, and the MSU Extension field crops team have developed several online programs. Farmers and agribusiness across Michigan listen in to these programs which include the Field Crops Webinar series, Virtual Breakfast and "In the Weeds" podcast. The webinar typically has 90 attendees and offers nine different topics. In 2019, 50% of attendees reported changing an aspect of their farm, which affected 14,000 acres and saved farmers in Michigan \$99,000 by managing risk and improving production efficiency. In 2019, 921 people participated in the Virtual breakfast, a live presentation with specialists during the growing season. The "In the Weeds" podcast began in late 2019 and currently has 12 posted podcasts played 1,300 times.



"In the weeds" discusses critical issues facing our farming industry every other week. Farmers can participate by phone, mobile device or by playing the audio. <https://www.canr.msu.edu/>

AGRICULTURE SERVICES

Of the almost 1,200 calls or walk-in inquiries to our Montcalm County office, many were farm related questions, soil sample inquiries or pesticide related topics. In addition to working with area farmers, MSU Extension agriculture educators answer resident's questions about their gardens, weeds, or pests. Educators also participate in agriculture field days along with MSU AgBio Research. The goal is to stay informed on the latest research and make sure that all Montcalm County residents have access to the information they need to improve their gardens and fields. Agriculture educators from throughout the state serve the needs of Montcalm County in addition to the position housed right in the Stanton office. This position is currently waiting for a new educator to be announced fall of 2020.



MSU Extension is also here to assist farmers, families and individuals with issues such as succession & estate planning, budgets, and cost production.

OVER THE COUNTER

Many residents like the personal touch or for other reasons come visit with us at the office. Many 4-H youth, volunteers and parents attend meetings or drop off information, fees, or just to say hello. Many local residents would like a plant or insect identified. Gardeners and farmers often stop by to pick up soil test kits. In fact, in 2019 Montcalm County residents used 183 soil test kits. When someone visits the local office, the local support staff are the link to many MSU Extension services. Whether it is by appointment, by phone, or by walk-in, our local office is here to serve the needs of Montcalm County.



Michigan State University Extension continues to serve the residents of Montcalm County and we welcome you to stop in and say hello.

Featured County Story



Helping Michigan's Hardest-Hit Homeowners

For further information or to see if you qualify for assistance you can go to StepForwardMichigan.org for a list of FAQs and access an online application and a list of documents that are required to submit an application. Photo: StepForwardMichigan.org

STEP FORWARD MICHIGAN

In 2019, Step Forward Michigan or lenders approved 34 distressed homeowners in Ionia, Montcalm and Gratiot Counties who received nearly \$144,000 in delinquent mortgage and property taxes assistance, thus keeping their homes. MSU Senior Extension Educator, Brenda Long, works on a daily basis with those who are hardest hit. In Montcalm County alone, she met with 68 individual homeowners to provide foreclosure counseling. She also took 171 calls from Montcalm county residents to discuss the potential loss of a home or to redirect struggling homeowners to needed resources.

Some of Brenda's Step Forward success stories include a disabled Vietnam Veteran who had received a Summons and Complaint from his mortgage company with a court date. Brenda referred him to Legal Aide, who filed a motion to set aside the default. In working with Brenda he received nearly \$12,000 to bring his mortgage current. A single mom was behind on her mortgage due to cancer treatments which caused her to miss work frequently. By working with Brenda, the mother was able to bring her mortgage current and keep her home and a stable environment for her child. These are just two examples of the many families that Brenda has helped by guiding them through the Step Forward application process.

Brenda regularly makes one-time presentations about various money topics. She teaches money management classes and homeownership classes – 215 Montcalm County residents took classes offered by Brenda in 2019.



MSU Extension staff located in Montcalm County

Bill Hendrian	District 8 Director	231-843-4395	hendria2@msu.edu
Natasha DePue	Community Nutrition Instructor	989-831-7506	depuenat@msu.edu
Tarin Minkel	4-H Program Coordinator	989-831-7514	minkeltj@msu.edu
Vicki Newcomb	Office Manager	989-831-7500	newcombv@msu.edu
Coming Soon	AABI Field Crops Educator	989-831-7509	

Additional MSU Extension staff serving Montcalm County

Roger Betz	Farm Management Educator	269-781-0784	betz@msu.edu
Isabel Branstrom	Consumer Horticulture Educator	517-676-7301	branst2@msu.edu
Katie Courtade	Supervising 4-H Educator	616-527-5357	courtad3@msu.edu
Faith Cullens	Dairy Educator	989-224-5249	cullensf@msu.edu
Christi Demitz	Disease Prevention Educator	616-632-7881	demitzch@msu.edu
Lori Eccles	HNI Supervising Educator	517-543-4472	ecclesl@msu.edu
Pagie Filice	RIPPLE Invasive Species Educator	517-676-7291	filicepa@msu.edu
Charles Gould	Bioenergy Educator	616-994-4547	gouldm@msu.edu
Tom Guthrie	Equine Educator	517-788-4292	guthri19@msu.edu
Abigail Harper	Community Foods Educator	517-676-7298	harperab@msu.edu
Sheilah Hebert	Maternal Infant Health Educator	517-432-3076	murphysh@msu.edu
Christine Heverly	Youth Development Educator	989-224-6454	sisungch@su.edu
Monica Jean	Field Crops Educator	989-224-5240	atkinmon@msu.edu
Brenda Long	Housing & Financial Educator	616-527-5357	longbr@msu.edu
Diane Longanbach	Product Center Counselor	989-875-5293	longbach@msu.edu
Joyce McGarry	Food Safety Educator	517-887-4587	mcgarry@msu.edu
Katie Ockert	Chronic Wasting Disease Educator	517-527-5357	ockertka@msu.edu
Rachel Puckett	AmeriCorps Program Director	517-676-7207	pucket21@msu.edu
Jade Richards	Behavioral Health Instructor	517-887-4575	richa572@msu.edu
Erica Rogers	Environmental Mgmt. Educator	989-875-5296	roger392@msu.edu
Dave Rowley	Govt. & Public Relations Educator	989-875-5233	rowleyd2@msu.edu
Holly Tiret	Social Emotional Educator	616-632-7893	tiret@msu.edu
Casey Zangaro	Swine Educator	989-875-5292	zangaroc@msu.edu

Supporting MSU Extension

For more than 100 years, MSU Extension staff have been helping people in our communities. MSU Extension values the opportunities made possible by our federal, state and local partners. In addition, our staff often seek grants that focus on particular needs that enable us to focus our efforts where necessary. In fact, grants made up the largest percentage of our statewide funding in 2019. Another important resource comes from donors. MSU Extension receives generous support from individuals and organizations who are passionate about specific work we do and want to make possible even more education. Donors fund local programs or offer opportunities to youth to participate in activities beyond the local program. Gifts sometimes fund research positions or just help boost local operations. To learn more about giving to MSU Extension, visit extension.msu.edu/giving.

Through successful partnership and collaboration with Ionia County, MSU Extension is able to continue its local presence and to provide vital educational resources and programming in such areas as community and economic development, agriculture, land use, health and nutrition, and youth development.

Thank you Montcalm County!



MISSION:

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

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