



Muskegon County 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

BY THE NUMBERS



Over 3,000 Muskegon County adults and youth participated in MSU Extension programs



953 youth participated in 4-H and school enrichment programs



753 youth and adults participated in health and nutrition programs



43 programs were offered by Muskegon County staff. A total of 25 MSU Extension staff delivered programs to Muskegon County residents.



453 Muskegon County residents participated in SNAP education programs



506 Muskegon County residents participated in agricultural and gardening services



1,191 Muskegon County residents participated in 326 unique virtual programs.



2,319 users visited the Muskegon County website, viewing 6, 871 web-pages.



9,737 people accessed the Muskegon County MSU Extension Facebook page..

MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR

Once again I am delighted to share the results of another successful year of partnership between Muskegon 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 Muskegon 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 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.

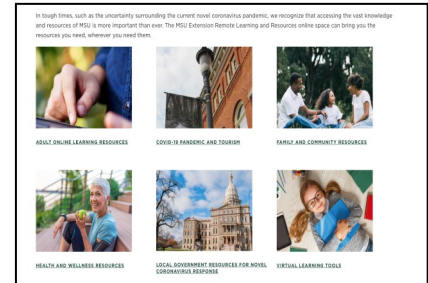
In the end, I believe the experience in on-line program development and investment in capacity will not only augment but strengthen our face to face work (once that resumes). Our programs will have greater reach than ever before and MSUE will be a leader in virtual education.

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 past year 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 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.
- **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.



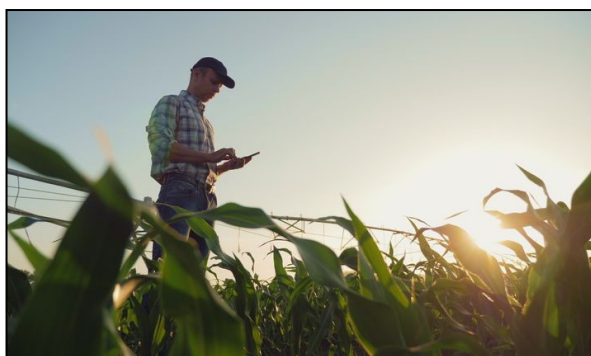
Chase Township farmer Jack Thornton was featured in statewide education during a virtual field day event.

- **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



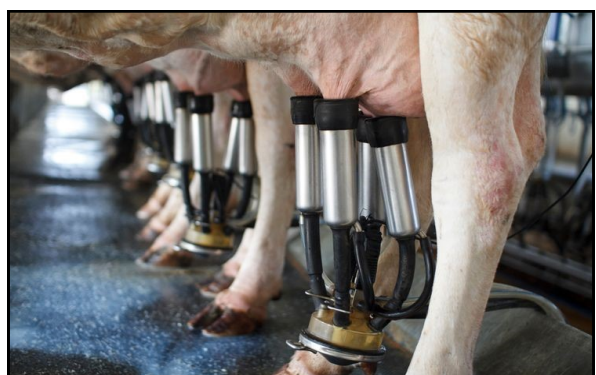
An Introduction to Cost Production webinar.



The Farm Records Book for Management is a free tool to track farm income and expenses.



Gypsy moth caterpillars were back in 2020.



FARM BUSINESS

Providing business support to farmers in Muskegon County resulted in improved financial operations for many farms. Our Farm business educator provide business support to farmers in Muskegon County that resulted in improved financial operations for many farms.

Our Farm business educator had direct contacts with 110 farmers between email, Zoom and phone calls in the last quarter of 2020. In addition she reached at least 3235 customers via digital content: 104 with printed materials, 580 with accounting spreadsheets, 4 with podcasts, 13 with videos, 30 with paper letters, and 2495 with newsletters, plus more via social media.

Other farm visits in Muskegon County focused on succession planning with farm financial analysis, Farm Bill education sessions, and Farm Stress consultations. Virtual sessions on tax preparations , lending tips, and future farm financial trends were also well attended.

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 Muskegon County MSU Extension office provides assistance to many customers with basic home gardening concerns. Additionally, 43 soil tests were completed for Muskegon County residents in 2020.

DAIRY FARM CONSULTATIONS

Providing support to dairy farms in Muskegon County resulted in improved performance of those farms. In Muskegon County, in 2020, parlor performance data was gathered to determine appropriate milker training,. The training resulted in improved protocols and improved milk quality.

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 supported 22 businesses in Muskegon County and contributed 97 hours of direct counseling support to these businesses. Counseling support assisted businesses in: developing new products, finding packaging solutions, securing licensing, marketing, pricing and distribution. The MSU Product Center works collaboratively with Kitchen 242 and the Muskegon Farmers Market to support food business entrepreneurs.



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

SHORELINE PROTECTION

MSU Extension provides education that assists in protecting the natural resources we all enjoy. In 2020 high water levels caused significant erosion along lake and river shorelines. Workshops and education focused on bank erosion, slope stability, nature based solutions, ice issues and the benefits of collaborating with neighbors was offered to area residents. Local educators gave multiple presentations on best practices and worked with statewide partnerships to help mitigate the issues.



Local residents participant in shoreline erosion discussions.

WATER RESOURCE EDUCATION

MSU Extension's focus on lakes, streams, and watersheds brings together educators and researchers with local, state, regional, and federal agencies and stakeholder organizations to protect and promote the sustainable use of the state's distinctive aquatic resources. In 2020, through the Water School Online Webinar Series, elected officials, decision makers, and community leaders developed a greater understanding of water quality issues surrounding individuals, communities, and the state resources.



Water school included sessions on water quantity; water quality; water finance and planning; and water policy issues.

Program Highlights

NUTRITION EDUCATION

MSU Extension's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP-ED) 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. Most 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. In Muskegon County, participants enrolled in virtual programs on various topics in 2020 and Extension staff also initiated policy, systems, and environment changes in various communities.



In-person and virtual programming continued to teach youth about healthy nutrition.

FOOD SAFETY

Providing assistance to help residents and businesses keep food safe is a hallmark of cooperative extension services across the country. In 2020 in Muskegon County, we provided ServSafe education for restaurant staff, classes in home food preservation (canning, freezing and drying), assistance to food pantries, and "Safe Food Healthy Kids" classes for childcare providers. Our Muskegon County Food safety educator participated in programming that reached 2,617 people.



ServSafe participants learn how to help prevent foodborne illnesses.

HEALTHY LIVING

MSU Extension helps people apply research to make positive changes in their lives. We empower individuals with the knowledge they need to make healthy choices. Programs such as the Matter of Balance program reduce the fear of falling and increase activity levels among older adults. Chronic Pain PATH (Personal Action Towards Health) introduces participants to various self-management tools which empower them to take an active role in managing their pain.



Learning about healthy food choices for diabetics.

Program Highlights

COMING TOGETHER For Racial Understanding

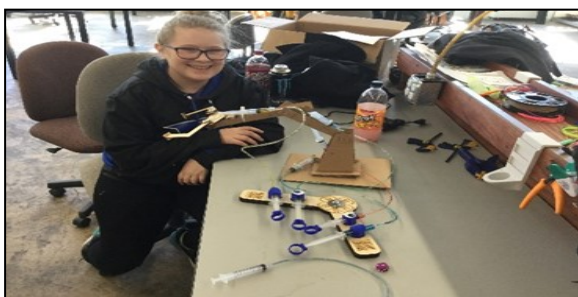
Multiple community groups are looking to engage in healthy dialogue regarding race issues.



Mentor training being put in to practice.



Youth explore what it takes to become a doctor of Osteopathy in the Osteoscholars program.



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

MSU Extension recognizes diversity as an important factor in a healthy and vibrant community. In 2020 MSU Extension provided training for community partners in Muskegon County, using the Facing Racism in a Diverse Nation curriculum, to prepare them to lead community dialogues. This curriculum and training are part of our overall Coming Together for Racial Understanding effort. Community conversations were lead by staff and are scheduled within various community groups in coming months.

LEADERSHIP & MENTOR EDUCATION

MSU Extension's team of knowledgeable leadership and mentor educators share best practices with university-backed, research-based programs and resources to help Michigan youth navigate through whatever challenges life throws their way. In 2020, the team provided lessons on money management, conflict resolution, and financial literacy to various groups in Muskegon County to from the Youth Transitional Center, to Muskegon and Oakridge High School and more. Presentations resulted in

OSTEOSCHOLARS

Partnering with the West Michigan Osteopathic Foundation, MSU School of Osteopathy, and Mercy Health, MSU Extension has been supporting Osteoscholars in Muskegon County since it's inception. This program prepares students for a medical career by increased exposure to the healthcare system, hands-on training, guest speakers from the medical field, and an on-campus medical camp at MSU. All of these efforts occur with the goal of increasing the number of certified doctors that might one day look to return home to Muskegon County.

4-H TECH WIZARDS

Recognizing the importance of supporting youth in developing a strong interest in STEAM focused careers, the 4-H Tech Wizards program continued to provide programming options at Mona Shores Middle School and Oehrli Elementary in Montague.

Investing in Muskegon County Youth with 4-H

*According to research completed by the Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development at Tufts University, 4-H'ers are **4X** more likely to make contributions to their communities, **2X** more likely to be civically active, and **2X** more likely to make healthier choices.*



In Muskegon County, we believe in the power of young people. By providing opportunities to learn and lead, 4-H helps youth become informed and engaged community members. While exploring new topics and activities in an experiential way, youth build the skills they need for life.

In 2019, Muskegon County 4-H had a total of 105 screened adult volunteers (a 5% increase) and 353 youth enrolled as 4-H club members. In addition, 600 children aged 5 to 19 took part in other learning opportunities with MSU Extension. Essential skills youth develop while participating in 4-H include problem solving, decision making, leadership, resiliency, and communication.

4-H is unique in that it offers experiences to young people who live in cities or rural areas by providing the opportunity to participate in community 4-H clubs, learning experiences in school classrooms, day and overnight camps, and other special interest events. In 2020, the program offerings were even more broad as a diverse network of program coordinators led hundreds of virtual programs ranging from photo contests, reading clubs, social and emotional health programs, scavenger hunts, STEAM activities, just to name a few.

Beyond the excitement of learning something new through a project, youth have the opportunity to participate in leadership conferences, travel the world, become involved in their community through service, and meet new friends in a safe and comfortable setting. A young person's experience in 4-H makes a difference for a lifetime by allowing them to grow and appreciate the importance of being a good citizen, strong leader, and person of character.

Leaders also help youth achieve their personal goals and provide encouragement and a support system. The relationships built among adult volunteer leaders and youth also have lasting effects. From 4-H experiences, youth gain important leadership, citizenship, and life skills that can be applied to daily living, used in their community, in future jobs, or when they continue their education. Although it may be years before a youth realizes and truly appreciates the influence of the 4-H leader that served as positive adult role models, one can be certain that volunteer leaders are truly making a difference for life.



4-H Member of the Month, Aubree from Stable Beats 4-H Club.

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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