

NEWAYGO COUNTY ANNUAL REPORT 2025

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Message from the District Director



I'm pleased to share the results of another successful year of collaboration between Newaygo County and Michigan State University (MSU) Extension. Your continued support has allowed us to make a meaningful impact on youth, families, businesses, and communities. This year, MSU Extension delivered a wide range of research-based educational services—helping individuals lead healthier lives, assisting new and local businesses, expanding youth leadership and career exploration opportunities, supporting farmers with business management and mental health resources, and more.

Our staff live and work alongside county residents, building strong community connections and responding directly to local needs. We maintained our online presence through virtual courses, timely responses to questions on topics from gardening to food safety, increased social media outreach, and a wealth of research-backed resources on our website.

Thank you for your ongoing partnership. On behalf of the MSU Extension team serving Newaygo County, we appreciate your support and look forward to another year of working together—and hope to see you at an upcoming program.

James Kelly
District Director

Staff

- Ryan Coffey Hoag – Land Use Planning
- Erick Elgin – Water-Resource Educator
- James Kelly - District Director
- Marge Manning – Office Manager
- Laurie Platte-Breza – 4-H Program Coordinator

Overall Impact



5,778 Total reach of activity in Newaygo County (Programming, consultations, office visits, soil tests, tip-line calls)



1,143 participants from the county attending programs.



3,167 client consultations



269 programs (across the state) attended by participants from this county.



42 programs hosted in Newaygo County



24 answered Ask Extension questions



107 volunteers



30 community coalitions and partnerships within the county that MSU Extension employees are members of

Communications Outreach



477,815 contacts through social media, web activity, e-newsletters, articles, radio and handouts.



59,400 Facebook views on the Newaygo County/4-H page



199 Plat books, soil tests, and other resources sold in Newaygo County.

Youth Programming



595 4-H youth enrollments



101 total volunteers



55 4-H Clubs



84,410 in dollar value
4-H volunteer time



1,178 total youth participants



Community Engagement

Newaygo County 4-H strengthened its visibility and community engagement through participation in the Fremont Harvest Parade. Despite a slow start, 23 youth, parents, and volunteers ultimately represented 4-H, helping the float win both Best Decorated and People’s Choice awards. Their enthusiastic involvement highlighted strong community support and showcased 4-H as a vibrant, valued presence in the county.



4-H World Travels

After a decade without international travel, Newaygo County 4-H saw a revitalized global learning experience as two youth participated in trips abroad. Their journeys to Japan and South Korea built confidence, broadened cultural understanding, and inspired them to encourage other local youth to pursue international opportunities. Their enthusiasm is helping reignite interest in global 4-H programs across the county. The photo shows Nick DeRoule at the airport.



Special Interest Clubs Flourish

Newaygo County 4-H expanded access to hands-on learning through its Special Interest (SPIN) Clubs, offering short-term, high-impact experiences for busy youth and families. Partnerships with NCCA-Arts Place allowed members to explore creative projects—from clay butterfly baths to tie-dye—while strengthening volunteer engagement and introducing more young people to 4-H. These flexible clubs continue to broaden participation and spark new interests across the county.

Health and Nutrition Education



387 County residents who participated in health and nutrition programs.



7 Sites receiving nutrition or physical activity policy, system, or environmental education in county.



6,210 people impacted by the 10 nutrition or physical education policy, systems, and environmental changes implemented in the county..



Peak Performance

A Peak Health & Nutrition session with the Grant High School wrestling team generated strong engagement and meaningful impact. Athletes actively sought guidance on hydration, fueling, and performance-focused nutrition, resulting in an extended Q&A that revealed significant interest in applying healthy habits to their sport. Coaches reinforced key messages and initiated conversations about expanding nutrition education to additional teams, creating new opportunities for broader athletic outreach. This session strengthened school partnerships, increased athletes' practical nutrition knowledge, and opened the door for continued collaboration across Grant's athletic programs.



Cooking Up Success at the Senior Center

The Newaygo County Council on Aging's annual cooking program for cognitively impaired adults continues to demonstrate powerful, lasting impact. Now in its third year, 21 participants showed remarkable skill and memory retention—independently recalling kitchen tools, safety steps, and recipes from previous classes. Their confidence, teamwork, and sense of accomplishment have grown significantly, proving that meaningful progress is possible with consistent support. This year's session reaffirmed the program's value in fostering independence, joy, and continued learning.

Disease Prevention



Mindful Eating

MSU Extension delivered a *Stress Less with Mindfulness – Mindful Eating* session for the Corewell Diabetes Support Group at Tamarac Wellness Center in Fremont, providing participants with practical tools to reduce stress and make more intentional food choices. The session helped individuals distinguish physical hunger from emotional eating, identify personal triggers, and practice mindful, sensory-based eating to support diabetes self-management. This combined training strengthened participants' confidence in managing stress and making healthier food decisions—key behaviors that directly support improved well-being and chronic disease management.

Conservation Education Programming



The 2025 Conservation Stewards Program brought together 25 participants for an intensive eight-week experience in ecosystem management and conservation leadership. Through hybrid coursework, hands-on field instruction, and applied conservation projects, participants strengthened their ability to care for local natural resources and support community-led stewardship efforts. With strong collaboration from regional partners, this cohort expanded Newaygo County's network of trained conservation advocates, creating lasting impact on the protection and restoration of local land and water systems.

Community Vitality



White Cloud Insights

The First Impressions Tourism (FIT) program provided the City of White Cloud with critical, visitor-driven insights to guide future tourism and economic development. Through assessments by five trained evaluators, community leaders gained a clear understanding of White Cloud's strengths—especially its strong outdoor recreation assets—and key opportunities for improvement, including downtown appeal, visitor information access, and business visibility. The results now serve as a roadmap for strengthening White Cloud's identity as a trail-based destination and enhancing the visitor experience across the community.



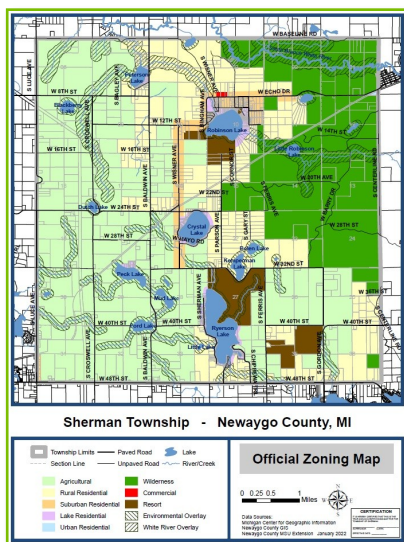
TrueNorth Professional Development

MSU Extension partnered with TrueNorth Community Services to deliver a customized professional development session. Designed for a diverse staff team working across multiple program areas, the training equipped participants with practical tools to strengthen program quality, enhance participant engagement, and support continuous improvement within their roles. The intended impact of this session was to help TrueNorth staff build stronger developmental relationships, deepen their self-awareness as practitioners, and apply positive youth development principles across their daily work. This collaboration reinforced MSU Extension's role as a trusted community partner and provided TrueNorth staff with actionable approaches to improve the experiences and outcomes of the individuals and families they serve.

Product Center – Small Business Support

- 4 clients served
- 20 hours of consulting and research from MSU Product Center

Land Use Education



MSU Extension's Land Use Educator Ryan Coffey, delivered significant impact across Newaygo County by providing planning and zoning support to **24** of the county's **29** local units of government. This assistance strengthened local decision-making, improved ordinance clarity, and supported long-term community planning efforts. Ryan helped communities update zoning maps, review master plans, navigate property development questions, and improve public engagement processes. He supported townships and cities in addressing complex issues such as solar and renewable energy projects, short-term rental regulation, agricultural land use, housing development, environmental compliance, and major infrastructure considerations. Several jurisdictions also received guidance on zoning board of appeals procedures, meeting notices, and ethical decision-making—areas that directly influence transparency and governance.



This broad support helped Newaygo County communities adopt more consistent practices, reduce legal risk, and build confidence in handling land use challenges. The result is stronger local capacity, better-informed public decisions, and more resilient township and municipal planning throughout the county.

Local Government



Newaygo County residents took the 2025 Citizen Planner training. It had a strong positive impact on participants, significantly increasing their planning knowledge, confidence, and ability to serve their communities effectively. Nearly all respondents reported substantial knowledge gains, over 93% felt more confident in their roles, and a similar share rated the program as valuable for their personal and professional growth. Participants also indicated they will apply what they learned by improving meeting preparation, fostering community involvement, and using planning concepts in real decision-making—showing that the program not only builds skills but also supports more informed, engaged local governance.

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