

OAKLAND COUNTY ANNUAL REPORT 2025

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Message from the District Director



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At Michigan State University Extension, we transform lives through education—supporting individuals, families, and communities across Michigan. From agriculture and environmental education to youth development and community engagement, our 600+ staff deliver trusted, research-based knowledge where it’s needed most.

In 2025, we empowered families, strengthened youth and continued to deepen our community impact. This year also marked an important transition, as MSU Extension moved out of the county health department and the county's general fund and is now proudly aligned within the Oakland County Parks Department, strengthening our connection to place-based learning, conservation, and public spaces. With strong partnerships and deep community roots, we are building a stronger Michigan and a better Oakland County. Thank you for being part of our journey.

Impact



16,768 reached through community events and fairs



873 answered Ask Extension questions



\$3,498,482 worth of time has been contributed by volunteers



838 volunteers



3,842 participants in health and nutrition classes



1,616 consultations



4-H Youth Programming



1,248 of 4-H youth enrollments



8,040 of total youth participants



265 of total volunteers



Chicken Embryology SPIN Club at Notre Dame Academy

Third grade students hatch eggs in an incubator in their classroom while learning about embryo development, scientific record keeping, and fun chicken facts.

I scream, you scream, we all scream for ice cream!

Einstein's little geniuses celebrated the new year with an ice-cold treat. Using hands-on STEM activities to re-engage and re-focus our youth for this year's success. Elementary students learned how to make ice cream in under 5 minutes with just 5 ingredients. A self-made treat we couldn't beat!



4-H Discovery Day

Discovery Day is one of Oakland County's largest 4-H events. It is an all-day event open to the public and provides an opportunity for Oakland County 4-H clubs to showcase their 4-H projects and recruit new youth and volunteers.

Oakland County Extension Master Gardeners

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION



3,609 Monthly Oakland Gardener readers



3,783 People reached through Smart Gardening outreach efforts in 2025

"Amazing newsletter every month. You and your team do a great job."

Reader comment



52 NEW Oakland County Extension Master Gardeners welcomed in 2025



Novi Home Show 2025

MSU Extension Educators and Smart Gardening trained Extension Master Gardener (EMG) volunteers engaged with attendees at the Novi Home Show through presentations, and youth activities to reach a **total of 742 people**.

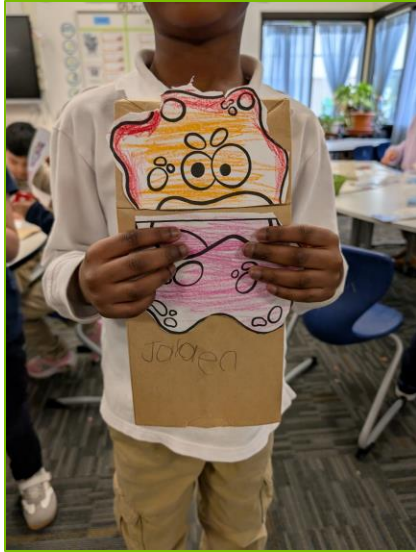
"I always turn to MSU Extension when I have gardening questions! I know you will always have an answer that I can trust. "

Home show participant



Extension Master Gardener Onboarding 2025

Trainees participated in guided tours of active project sites. The goal of these sessions was to ensure volunteers feel prepared, supported, and connected as they begin their service in the community.



Creative Germ Puppets: A Fun Hands-On Hygiene Lesson

Kindergarten students at International Languages Academy (WHRC) participated in MSU Extension’s Show Me Nutrition program and enthusiastically created colorful germ puppets using paper and paper bags, turning a simple craft into a fun, hands-on learning experience. As they colored and assembled their unique designs, the activity helped introduce important concepts about germs and hygiene in an engaging and memorable way. The students enjoyed bringing their puppets to life, making the lesson both creative and educational.

"We always prioritize attending the MSU Extension programs when we see them on the calendar."

Participant in Strengthening Family Connections Through Mindfulness and RELAX



Cooking Matters: Building Confidence in the Family Kitchen

Strong participant commitment, with consistent attendance and engagement, was the key to this program. Over time, participants experienced a meaningful shift in mindset, moving from seeing cooking as difficult and time-consuming to viewing it as enjoyable and manageable. They gained confidence in preparing healthy meals at home, which positively impacted their family life by creating more opportunities to cook and spend time together.

Health and Nutrition Programming

Supporting Families, One Space at a Time

Key Grace Academy, a small K–8 school in Madison Heights, is transforming part of its daycare into a cozy, private lactation space for breastfeeding families. With strong parent input, staff support, and grant funding, the initiative aims to create a safe, comfortable environment for infants and ensure long-term care through ongoing maintenance and community support.



Before funding came to an end MSU Extension implemented 35 policy, systems or environmental changes to sites, which impacted over 2,500 individuals and reached over 1,000 individuals through the classroom.

Strawberry Preservation Workshop



Youth have a stronger connection to where their food comes from and interest in cooking and food preservation when they are involved in these experiences firsthand. This is exactly what 4-H youth were able to experience at the 4-H Strawberry Preservation Workshop at Tollgate Farm. Youth, ranging from kindergarten to 6th grade, came to Tollgate Farm for this two-hour program. The children visited the farm's strawberry patch where they learned about production, harvesting, and local agriculture. Then, they learned how to safely preserve strawberries by making their own freezer jam with a research-based recipe and food safety practices.



Empowering Michigan's specialty cut flower growers through farm tours

The specialty cut flower industry in Michigan has seen a surge in interest over the past decade, attracting many new growers with limited agricultural experience. These aspiring farmers often lack formal training in both horticulture and business planning. Recognizing this gap, MSU Extension launched the Specialty Cut Flower Farm Tour Series to provide hands-on learning and peer-to-peer engagement.

"The wealth of information was invaluable. Thank you so very much - much appreciated."



From Education to Action: Seed Sowing

The Seed Sowing workshop at Henry Ford Hospital's West Bloomfield campus combined hands-on learning with community impact. MSU Extension Master Gardeners strengthened their seed-starting skills while directly supporting the Henry Ford Greenhouse in launching this year's herbs, vegetables, and flowers, reinforcing sustainable gardening practices and community partnerships.

Driving Business Growth and Job Creation in Oakland County

Through the Product Center, we supported Oakland County entrepreneurs and small businesses, generating measurable economic impact through targeted, one-on-one assistance.

Impact Highlights:

- **\$1.25 million** in increased sales
- **\$5.4 million** in annual sales supported
- **35 jobs** created
- **9 jobs** retained
- **60 businesses** served





Conservation Stewards help combat Oak Wilt Disease in northern Oakland County

The Michigan Conservation Stewards Program (CSP), first offered in Oakland County in 2006, equips adults with the skills to support land and water stewardship in their communities. In Fall 2025, **30** new stewards joined more than 266 alumni.



As part of the program, participants complete capstone projects addressing real-world conservation needs. Graduates, along with their families and classmates of Blue Heron Headwaters Conservancy, collected and planted over 1,000 white oak acorns across Oakland County.

Their project helps combat oak wilt, a disease that has been devastating red oak trees in Michigan. Because white oaks are more resistant, planting them ensures forests can continue to thrive even as red oaks decline.

Oak trees are a vital keystone species, supporting insects, birds, and entire ecosystems. Efforts like this help protect biodiversity and the future of Michigan's natural landscapes.



“One of my favorite aspects of this capstone project was collaborating with Kari, a fellow Conservation Steward from the Fall 2025 cohort. The project was successful because of how much help from community we received along the way. Kari crowdsourced the acorns, and we brought in our kids and family to help us plant them! Kudos to Blue Heron Headwaters Conservancy for designing a project that was clearly delineated and actionable.”

Elena Mityaeva- 2025 CSP Oakland graduate

Tollgate Farm and Education Center



The 160-acre farmstead provides non-formal learning for children, families, and adults, offering the unique opportunity to experience hands-on agriculture in an urban environment.



Sweet Success: Maplefest 2025 Draws Large Crowds

Tollgate Farm and Education Center once again tapped into the sweet traditions of spring with its beloved annual Maplefest, welcoming families from across Southeast Michigan to explore the wonder of maple syrup production.

PumpkinFest A Celebration at Tollgate Farm

Tollgate Farm hosted their annual PumpkinFest in October. Families rode wagons out to the Scarecrow Trail and pumpkin patch, enjoyed live music, and met friendly farm animals. Hands-on activities, such as decorating mini pumpkins and playing themed games, concessions and educational displays added to the experience. PumpkinFest offered something for everyone.



An “all-you-can-eat” pancake celebration, complete with locally made maple syrup. “It’s not just about the pancakes,” one attendee shared. “It’s about learning where our food comes from—and having fun doing it.”

Tollgate Farm and Education Center



Planting Seeds of Purpose

MSU Extension Tollgate Farm and Education Center launched an inspiring new partnership with the Living and Learning Enrichment Center in Northville, a nonprofit dedicated to enhancing the lives of individuals with disabilities. This collaboration created meaningful work-based learning opportunities for Living and Learning participants, transforming Tollgate Farm into a space for skill-building, confidence, and community connection. Twice a week throughout the summer, participants worked alongside a Living and Learning staff coach with the aid of Tollgate team members.

 3,169 Number of school participants in 2025	 898 Number of campers in 2025	 59 CSA members 2025	 2,376 Number of public event attendees in 2025
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Farm Sprouts Early Learner Program Launches

MSU Tollgate Farm & Education Center is celebrating the wildly successful launch of its newest early childhood initiative, Farm Sprouts, a hands-on farm adventure designed for children ages 2–4. Since its debut, the program has quickly become a community favorite, with all initial sessions selling out and demand continuing to grow.

Thank you to all our partners who share our mission of helping people improve lives through education.

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| A Mothers Touch Daycare - Novi | Great Lakes Ace Hardware | Oakland Schools Technical Center |
| Alex and Marie Manoogian Charter School | Growing Pontiac | Orion Township Public Library |
| Alzheimer's Association of Michigan | Hess-Hathaway Park – Waterford Twp | Pontiac Academy for Excellence |
| Anderson Middle School - Berkley | Highland Township Public Library | Pontiac Public Schools |
| Ann Arbor Bonsai Society | Hinoki Foundation | Pontiac Public Library |
| Avondale GATE School | Holly Township Library | Royal Oak Manor |
| Baldwin Center of Pontiac | Honor Community Health | SEMBA (Southeastern Michigan Beekeepers Association) |
| Beverly Hills United Methodist Church | International Technology Academy - Pontiac | Senthamil International Learning |
| Birney Middle School - Southfield | Key Grace Academy - Madison Hts | SILAMBU Tamil School – Farmington Hills |
| Bound Together - Pontiac | Kiwanis Club of Pontiac | Solberg Tower Senior Housing Center |
| Bowers School Farm – Bloomfield Hills | KMG Prestige Residences at Sakura | Sorenson Nature Center - Holly |
| Camp Dearborn – | La Casa Amiga - Pontiac | South Oakland YMCA |
| Dearborn Parks and Recreation | Lake Orion Methodist Church | Southern Michigan Orienteering Club (SMOC) |
| Center for Success - Pontiac | Little Shepherds Homeschool | Southfield Parks & Recreation |
| Centro Multicultural La Familia | Madison Elementary School | Southfield Public Library |
| Clarkston Family Farm | Madison Heights High School | Springfield Township Parks and Rec Dept. |
| Clinton River Festival | Master Gardener Society of Oakland County | St. Fabian Catholic School |
| CNS Healthcare | Michigan State Fair Board | Susick Elementary - Troy |
| Lyon Township Public Library | Michigan State University Credit Union | The Farm at Trinity Health - Pontiac |
| Corewell Health | New Beginnings Ranch - Holly | VIBE Credit Union |
| Costick Activities Center – Farmington Hills | Notre Dame Academy - Pontiac | Walled Lake Consolidated Schools |
| Cranbrook Institute of Science | Novi Chamber of Commerce | Walled Lake Farmers Market |
| DaVita, Inc. | Novi Christian Academy | Walled Lake Head Start |
| Detroit Zoological Institute | Novi Community School District | Walled Lake Villa - KMG Prestige |
| Einstein Elementary – Oak Park | Novi Parks and Recreation | Waterford School District |
| English Gardens | Novi Public Library | Weingartz |
| Farmington Hills Nature Center | Oak Park Parks and Recreation | Henry Ford Hospital Greenhouse – West Bloomfield |
| Farmington Public Libraries | Oak Park Preparatory Academy | West Bloomfield Parks and Recreation |
| Farmington Public Schools | Oakland County 4-H Horse Council | West Bloomfield Township Public Library |
| Ferndale Area District Library | Oakland County Environmental Health | |
| Ferndale Public Schools | Oakland County Fair Board | |
| Friends of Royal Oak Township | Oak Park Farmers Market | |
| Friends of the Animal Barn - Tollgate | Oakland County Government | |
| Friends of the Novi Public Library | Oakland County Parks and Recreation | |
| Friends of the Rouge | Oakland Family Services - Pontiac | |

A special thank you to Oakland County Parks Commission and their continued support!

 **Ask Extension**
[www.canr.msu.edu/
 outreach/ask-an-expert/](http://www.canr.msu.edu/outreach/ask-an-expert/)

 **Food Safety
 Hotline**
 1-877-643-9882

 **Lawn and Garden
 Hotline**
 1-888-678-3464

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