

OCEANA COUNTY ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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Message from the District Director



I'm pleased to share the results of another successful year of collaboration between Oceana County and Michigan State University (MSU) Extension. Your ongoing support has enabled us to positively impact the lives of youth, families, businesses, and communities. MSU Extension offers a diverse array of research-based educational services to county residents. Over the past year, we've helped families and individuals adopt healthier lifestyles, supported new and local businesses, provided opportunities for youth leadership development and career exploration, assisted farmers with business management and mental health, and much more.

Our staff, who live and work alongside county residents, are deeply embedded in community relationships and are responsive to community needs. We've embraced Oceana County residents in our online community: offering virtual educational courses, answering questions on topics from gardening to food safety, increasing program awareness through social media, and providing a wealth of research-based resources on our website. Our partnership with you makes all of this possible. On behalf of the MSU Extension team serving Oceana County, thank you for another remarkable year. We look forward to your continued support and hope you'll join us for one of our upcoming programs.

James Kelly
District Director

Staff

- Lisa Fleury – Community Nutrition Instructor
- Reillyn Ford – Research Assistant
- Emily Lavelly – Tree Fruit Educator
- Jennifer Payne – 4-H Program Coordinator
- Amber Pumford – 4-H Admin Support
- Kathy Walicki – Office Manager
- Ben Werling – Vegetable Educator

Overall Impact



4,310 Total reach of activity in Oceana County
(Programming, consultations, office visits, soil tests, tip-line calls)



1,168 participants from the county attending programs.



403 client consultations



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



27 programs hosted in Oceana County



38 answered Ask Extension questions



103 of volunteers



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

Communications Outreach



75,8957 contacts through social media, web activity, e-newsletters, and handouts.



274 Plat books, soil tests, and other resources sold in Oceana County.

Youth Programming



576 total youth participants



230 4-H youth enrollments



94 total volunteers



30 4-H Clubs



26,040 4-H volunteer hour dollar value



4-H Media Success

Oceana County 4-H has been in the spotlight over the year, with its achievements and activities featured prominently in local media. Between the Oceana Echo and the Oceana Herald, 4-H was highlighted in 11 articles, showcasing the breadth of the program’s impact. The coverage included a mix of events, milestones, and inspiring member achievements, accompanied by vibrant photos that brought the stories to life.



Among the coverage, four articles were authored by new Oceana County 4-H Program Coordinator Jennifer Payne. Topics ranged from an introduction to the new program coordinator to detailed features on the 4-H Horse Camp and Horse Shows, State 4-H Awards, and results from the Oceana County Fair and the 4-H Market Animal Auction. Additional highlights included coverage of the 4-H Awards Ceremony, celebrating the accomplishments of members and volunteers, and the exciting developments within the growing 4-H Ambassadors program. Each article offered a window into the world of Oceana County 4-H, inspiring readers and fostering deeper community connections.



The Oceana Community Foundation also spotlighted the program, featuring an article and photo on the thriving 4-H Dog Club in their publication that was awarded a youth grant for new fencing. This story illustrated the club's positive impact on youth and their canine companions, further boosting the visibility of 4-H in the county.

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Community Health and Nutrition Programming



221 nutrition and physical activity participants hosted in-county.



311 county residents who participated in health and nutrition programs.



Community Connections

Community Nutrition success comes from active partnerships, resulting in the delivery of evidence-based programming to all ages, from toddlers to seniors. In Oceana County these interactions are happening in Farmers Markets, School Systems, the Oceana County Council on Aging, and more. Additionally, the Oceana County Community Nutrition Instructor has worked on supporting change in healthy eating habits by working with various agencies on policy, system and environmental change.



Disease Prevention

MSU Extension Educator Naomi Hyso continues to make Oceana County a priority in her regional programming. As Co-chair of the Oceana Health Bound Healthy Lifestyles subcommittee Naomi, helped coordinate and participated in multiple initiatives. Throughout the summer and fall, coalition members attended various outreach events in Oceana County, sharing health resources with the community.

Hyso expanded her outreach to Spanish-speaking populations by presenting at the Telamon Migrant Head Start parent meeting in New Era., and by providing a vendor table at the Spanish Community Health Fair in Shelby, providing health program flyers and resources in Spanish.



Oceana County residents also benefitted from participation in diabetes prevention programming, Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention, Sleep Education for Everyone Program (SLEEP), Walk with Ease, and more. As a result of MSU Extension’s chronic health and diabetes prevention and management programming, participants learned to manage their chronic health conditions through increasing physical activity, learning how to better communicate with their health care providers and improving their knowledge.



West Central Research Station

Research centers in various regions across the state of Michigan, combined with on-campus research facilities, provide growers, natural resource managers and commodity groups with critical information they need to remain viable and competitive in the global economy. The West Central Research Station in Hart is home to research on tree fruit (apples, peaches, pears, tart cherries and sweet cherries) and asparagus.

2024 was a year of growth for the West Central Research Station. The station had a successful asparagus season, harvesting 41 out of 42 days. Asparagus focused research included work on asparagus emergence forecasting, asparagus beetle management, and calcium and irrigation. The station ventured into vegetable research with the evaluation of a seed treatment for seed corn maggot in zucchini, yielding great results.

In the area of tree fruit, the station participated in a cherry leaf spot trial, conducted PGR testing in peaches, and expanded irrigation and fertigation experiments. The farm's planted acreage changed, adding rows of peaches and sweet cherries, and planting small apple and peach blocks for educational use. New pollinator and beneficial insect habitats were installed.

The research station hosted several events, including Spring Horticulture Day, a regenerative agriculture meeting, a Great Lakes Leadership Academy session, Farming for the Future Field Day, Asparagus Research Day, and Farm Bureau Tractor Treat Halloween.

A highlight was hosting a FarmDroid autonomous weeder/seeder for kale planting and maintenance. Imported from Europe, local vegetable growers watched the droid precisely weed kale it had previously seeded. The response was overwhelmingly positive, with attendees praising the potential for significant reduction in labor costs.



Local Governance



Zoning and Planning

MSU Extension helps Michigan “thrive local” by working with communities using data and tools that support efficient delivery of the critical public services that safeguard the health, safety and welfare of Michigan residents. In Oceana County, the Planning Commission partnered with MSU Extension to provide two trainings in 2024 for municipal audiences, both were held in Hart at the Oceana County Annex Building. Each 2-hour program included lecture, discussion, and scenario-based learning. Participants learned more about the fundamentals of an effective Zoning Board of Appeals, and Defensible Planning and Zoning Decisions (a.k.a 28 Ways to Stay Out of Court).



Community Vitality

The Community Vitality Program at Michigan State University Extension (MSU Extension) helps communities build their economic, civic, and leadership capacity. The program's goal is to create healthy and productive communities. Oceana County residents participated in Zoning Administrator Certificate programming, the Wastewater Conference, the “Sustainability” speaker's series, “Governing Essential” series, the New Commissioner School, and “Fiscally ready Communities” sessions

Product Center – Small Business Support

- 6 clients served
- 5 total employees with \$275,000 in sales
- 106 hours of consulting and research from MSU product Center

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