

Michigan State University Extension in Osceola County: Solving Problems & Increasing Opportunities for Today & Tomorrow

On August 2, 2022, Osceola County residents will be asked to continue investment in MSU Extension programs that helps families, businesses and professionals gain the knowledge they need to be healthy and safe, do their jobs better, build strong communities, protect local environments and help young people gain the confidence and skills needed to be successful. MSU Extension programs in Osceola County help reduce the cost of public investment in health care as well as governmental remediation services and increase the educational resources that help families and local communities thrive.

Empowering & Equipping Youth Success

Fifty-nine percent of Osceola County 4-H seniors graduating between 2012 and 2017 enrolled in college. This is a rate 15% higher than the overall Osceola County high school graduate college enrollment rate of 44%. An investment in Osceola County MSU Extension and 4-H is an investment in the positive development of Osceola County young people.

In 2020-2021, Osceola County MSU Extension 4-H programs engaged 315 Osceola County youth in virtual 4-H clubs during the pandemic led by 53 community-based adult volunteers. 4-H club participation has proven to help prepare young people for work, especially for jobs in science, technology, engineering and math. Since 2019, Osceola County MSU Extension has engaged 1,131 young people in short-term, special interest and 4-H club learning opportunities.

Delivering Education Despite the Pandemic

While stay-at-home orders hindered access to many opportunities during the pandemic, Osceola County residents logged 252 registrations for MSU Extension online educational programs during the 2020 and 2021 program years. County residents accessed 131 online programs designed to improve agricultural production, promote healthy and safe food preservation, and improve adult and youth social and emotional well-being among the many online MSU Extension educational offerings.

- Osceola County physicians and health service providers joined the online Pediatric and Adult Influenza webinars and the 2020 and 2021 Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Fall Immunization conferences hosted by MSU Extension to stay up to date on current public health trends and research to prepare for the immunization seasons.

Educating for Greater Farm Profitability and Sustainability

Osceola County is home to producers managing 19,100 heads of cattle including 7,200 dairy cows and farms planted with 3,900 acres of field crops that produced 214,000 bushels of oats and wheat among other field crops in 2020-2021 (U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service, County Estimates, 2021).

- Access to evidence-based information is critical when business decisions depend on it. MSU Extension is a leader in discovering knowledge and helping farmers apply tested solutions that benefit their farms, their families and their communities. Osceola County MSU Extension educators provide access to articles, webinars and timely social media posts designed to help producers manage the challenges of coronavirus disruptions to agriculture, prepare for tax season and manage the ongoing financial and business planning needed for farming.
- MSU Extension's Farm Stress programs provide behavioral health and financial management as well as planning supports and services to farmers and their families to help manage the emotional and financial ups and downs of farm production. Online access to teletherapy, resiliency tools and assistance resources were expanded to ensure Osceola County families had what they needed especially during the challenges of the pandemic.

"Thank you, I didn't believe in the counseling program when you shared it with me but, this program gave me my life back and might have saved it in the process."

- Jim, program participant

Helping Families Make Healthy Decisions

MSU Extension delivers affordable, relevant, evidence-based education to help adults, young people and families eat well, consume food safely and stay healthy.

- By December 2021, Osceola County had 3,042 residents receiving federal food and nutrition assistance. MSU Extension educators provide nutrition and health education programming to individuals and families proven to improve family diet and physical well-being. This programming includes work in partnership with the Mecosta-Osceola Intermediate School District to support educational programming for students living with cognitive and physical disabilities.

Educating to Fight Foreclosures

Michigan has the 16th highest rate of foreclosures of U.S. states with 958 foreclosure filings in April 2022 (SoFi, *Foreclosure Rates for All 50 States in April 2022*).

- MSU Extension educators help prevent homelessness by providing financial and homeownership education to Osceola County families that helps prevent mortgage and tax foreclosures, improves household budgets and helps families become viable homeowners and stable housing renters.

MSU Extension is eager to continue serving Osceola County residents in strong partnership with the County Board of Commissioners. By working together, MSU Extension can continue to help people improve their lives by bringing the vast knowledge resources of MSU directly to individuals, families, businesses and communities.