



Oscoda County

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

BY THE NUMBERS



\$488,609 total economic impact in Oscoda County



22 Oscoda County Residents participated in SNAP-Ed programming



90 MSU alumni living in Oscoda County



MSU disbursed \$72,855 in financial aid to Oscoda County students



166 youth involved in 4-H and other youth development programs



11 soil test kits processed for residents of Oscoda County



560 Oscoda County residents participated in MSU Extension programs

MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR

As I reflect on 2020, it is difficult not to mention what is evident, that it was a year unlike any in recent memory where ordinary life changed in so many ways which prompted us to adjust in both small and large ways. In mid-March when MSU Extension staff were asked to work remotely, we did not foresee that in many Michigan communities, the impact of this global pandemic would be so great and the losses so devastating. We know that while our staff was busy with remote work, many were laboring to care for those affected, to serve people in need, and to keep our communities safe. We are deeply grateful that our programs are relevant and highly regarded by our community partners across the state.

In April, I was approached by Extension Associate Director Patrick Cudney with what was described to me as “an exciting leadership opportunity” to become the Interim District Director for the counties of MSUE’s District 4 – Alcona, Arenac, Crawford, Iosco, Ogemaw, Oscoda, and Roscommon. Although it has been challenging to begin this new role at a distance, I am deeply gratified by the warm welcome I have received from the staff, county leaders, and communities in this beautiful region of Michigan.

As we resume our face-to-face engagement this summer and fall, our experience developing on-line programs will allow us to meet more people where they are and offer convenience and expand our ability to bring relevant, research-based information that will help communities address critical needs, issues, and opportunities. I look forward to working more closely with all of you in the coming months.

Julia Darnton
Interim District Director

MSU Extension responds to COVID-19 Impacts

Extension has worked to maintain relationships with Michigan communities for over 100 years and most of that has been done through in-person meetings and programs. In the last year, we have expanded our engagement through our website at extension.msu.edu, a website that now averages 1.25 million visitors per month.

Within six days of the first Stay Home, Stay Safe order, MSU Extension launched the [Remote Learning and Resources](#) website, and our teams immediately began to modify programs to continue to reach our audiences and to create programs to engage families, communities, business owners, and leaders to get the best information to keep moving forward under these new conditions.

The website has evolved to a one-stop-shop for educational resources that we offer online. Our educators and program staff were also able to reach farmers through the growing season, elected officials and decision makers, parents, families, and youth by meeting with them on virtual platforms through webinars and meetings, through phone conferences and by kits through the mail or picked up at a convenient location. We have learned that we can connect with friends and neighbors in our communities at the local level through programs designed to reach residents across the state and attract the notice of people across the country and around the world. We have also transitioned many of our programmatic offerings to virtual learning options and on-demand educational courses.

For older youth who are preparing to live independently, a series called **Adulting 101** covers topics like budgeting, understanding credit and student loans, being an informed renter, household tasks, mindfulness, interviewing, resume building, goal setting, conflict resolution, and more. These interactive sessions attracted more than 3,000 participants in 2020 and were promoted by school districts.

Cabin Fever Conversations capitalized on the desire in the spring for people who were cooped up inside to re-engage with gardening. As people spent more time at home, their energies were drawn to cultivating their home gardens, indoor plants and landscapes. Each session attracted audiences of more than 500 people and the program was continued this winter with new topics. Programs have been archived and add to information that MSUE has for those with a desire to flex or grow a green thumb.

Our staff expanded upon the **Rapid Response for Agriculture** resources which created a single place for emerging issues in agricultural production. This information infrastructure, created in 2019 to respond to extreme weather events, helped producers address employee health and safety in farming and processing and to maintain a safe and fresh food supply during the emergency conditions early in the COVID-19 pandemic. The site still maintains resources for farms affected by flooding (and dam failures) in the late spring of 2020 as well. Another key tool for operators and managers is the **COVID-19 Hazard Assessment and Mitigation Program**, or CHAMP Tool was designed to help agriculture operations reduce the risk of worker exposure to COVID-19 and mitigate the potential for disease spread.

Many in-person programs pivoted to create virtual versions, thereby reducing the potential of exposure for the participants. Examples included:

- **From the Field** – a series of virtual field days on a variety of topics ranging from wheat to manure management to precision livestock farming and industrial hemp production. Each of these events allowed producers from across the state to attend without travel time and impacts. Events were also recorded and archived in shorter segments to allow attendees to catch sessions they missed, review past sessions, or share with fellow producers. Our agriculture educators continue to use more methods of communication including podcasts, videos, and more.
- **Preserving Your Harvest** – a free Zoom-based instructional series offered by Food Safety Educators and focused on safe, home food preservation methods like canning, freezing, pickling, fermenting and more. Preserving food safely is important because food borne illness is a serious health hazard and the practice also reduces waste, encourages healthy practices, and can help with food budgeting too!



Program Highlights

Nutrition Education

MSU Extension Supplemental Nutrition Assistant Program Education (SNAP-Ed) instructors deliver evidence-based, hands on nutrition and physical activity learning opportunities that empower limited income youth and adults with information and strategies to make healthy behavior and lifestyle choices.

In 2020, **85 Oscoda County residents participated in health and wellness programs** including Home Food Preservation series, ServSafe, Cottage Food Law, Stress Less with Mindfulness, Tai Chi for Arthritis and Falls Prevention, Powerful Tools for Caregivers, Cooking Matters, and more!

Due to the Michigan executive orders of stay home, stay safe, MSU Extension increased virtual outreach through indirect intervention channels by 45% and reached **428,419** adults and youths statewide through articles, fact sheets, radio podcasts, social media postings, web presence and educational videos.



ADULT Dietary Improvements

21% consumed less soda

41% ate more fruits/day

38% ate more vegetables per day



ADULT Physical Activity Improvements



41% increased moderate physical activity participation



37% increased strength training activities

YOUTH Health & Nutrition Impact		3rd-5th Grade	6th-12th Grade
	increased vegetable consumption	31%	38%
	decreased soda consumption	29%	31%
	increased physical activity	26%	31%
	washed their hands more often	25%	23%
	decreased screen time	27%	28%

Supporting Youth Development

In 2020, MSU Extension 4-H Program Coordinators, Educators, and Program Instructors supported school enrichment programming in Mio AuSable Schools and Fairview Schools. **447 Oscoda County youths were engaged in 4-H and other youth development programming.**

Youths participated in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) programs such as: **Embryology**, where they learned about record keeping, how eggs develop and hatch and what chicks need to survive as well as how to care for them; **4-H Junk Drawer Robotics**, where students learned to use the processes and approaches of science, the planning and conceptual design of engineering, and the application of technology.

Students also participated in health and wellness programming through school enrichment in programs such as **Show Me Nutrition** which teaches youth about MyPlate and the importance of healthy eating and physical activity, and **RELAX: Alternatives to Anger** which helps youth learn, understand, and manage anger and stress, and to develop the communication and problem solving skills needed for healthy relationships.

Oscoda County youth were also engaged in virtual programming including Credit Craze, Michigan 4-H Hippology & Horse Judging Contests, Cue the Monarchs, and 4-H Livestock Learning. As we continue to grow our presence in Oscoda County, we look forward to engaging more youth in the community.



Oscoda County, MSU Extension & Supporting local agriculture & agribusiness



Oscoda County business hosts Artisan Cheese Workshop

Senior Extension Educators Phil Durst and Stan Moore created an opportunity for people to learn new ways to add value to farm products in November 2020. The MSU Extension Artisan Cheese Workshop at the Farmer's Creamery, Mio, was a hands-on workshop to teach the skills and science of cheesemaking and begin the process of developing business plans and a network of cheesemakers. Because of COVID, the program was limited to having only 10 people together inside. Phil and Stan planned for 15 participants with 5 instructors, split into two groups that rotated between aspects of the workshop.

They recruited a retired MSU food scientist and two commercial cheesemakers to teach and lead the participants in cheesemaking. The workshop was initially advertised to farmers who had expressed interest in learning cheesemaking as a potential business. The class registration limit was quickly reached and people from nine farms and three commercial dairy processors attended the training.

Commercial cheesemakers, Sue Kurta of Boss Mouse Cheese, in Kingsley, and Sam Smith of Zingerman's Creamery of Ann Arbor helped participants make cheddar and several soft cheeses. The workshop included classroom instruction alternating with cheesemaking. Participants also learned about food safety and sanitation requirements for commercial dairy business.

A follow up session was held in May 2021 to deliver the final workshop element. In the last session, participants made mozzarella cheese. They also tasted the aged cheddar they had made seven months earlier, comparing that which was stored vacuum packed in a refrigerator to the same cheese stored as a wheel on a shelf in a temperature-controlled cheese cave. Processing and marketing options were presented to participants by the director of the MSU Extension Product Center which is a resource for food processors to turn ideas into business. Opportunities abound for Michigan-made cheese according to a retailer who joined the group via Zoom. MSU Extension helps people turn opportunities into reality.



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