



Otsego County

2020–2021 ANNUAL REPORT

BY THE NUMBERS



Residents of Otsego County attended **226** different programs and classes.



126 Otsego County Youth attended programs during the last year.



4 Extension professionals based in Otsego County



Social media reached **12,745** during the last year, informing residents of class opportunities and sharing data such as crop testing trials and health information.

100

Over **100** years of Extension in Otsego County.



MSU Extension website received **4,117** users from Otsego County.

MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR



This past year will go down in history as one like no other. As an organization who has been embedded in counties for over 100 years, our community education model changed and shifted like at no other time in our rich history. I am especially proud of the way our entire county team pivoted their educational efforts and provided online programming for our valuable stakeholders; which includes growers, families, youth, local businesses, and residents. Our content-rich programming allowed residents from across the state to access it from their homes, regardless of geographic location. This allowed individuals throughout Northern Lower Michigan to access programming being taught from southern Michigan to the tip of the Upper Peninsula. This increased accessibility for all residents to access our outreach and education was an added value for our county partners. It is always my distinct honor to present this summary of our accomplishments and deeply value our partnership with Otsego County.

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MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Extension



Encouraging Youth



In Otsego County 4-H we believe in the power of young people. By providing opportunities to learn and lead, 4-H helps youth ages 5-19 become informed and engaged community members. While experientially exploring new topics and activities, youth build the skills they need for life. In the 20/21 program year, Otsego County had a total of 104 youth enrolled as 4-H members and 21 adult volunteers. Essential skills youth develop while participating in 4-H programs include problem-solving, decision making, leadership, resiliency, sportsmanship, teamwork, and communication.

Home Alone Safely – The award-winning program was presented four times during the pandemic, with the mission to keep youth safe at home while adults were gone at work or out doing essential errands such as grocery shopping. Highlighted topics during online zoom meetings included: budgeting your time; first aid; home safety (fire safety, stranger danger); 911 (when to call, what to expect when you call, and a mock call demonstration); nutrition and food safety; physical activity; managing feelings (mindfulness); at-home science activities; caring for younger siblings. Over 600 youth were reached across Michigan, 19 other states, and Ontario, Canada. At the 2020 Fall Extension Conference Home Alone Safely was selected to receive a 2020 Institute Team Award from Michigan State University Extension. “We want to honor and recognize your outstanding work in quickly turning an in-person “Home Alone 4-H Club” program into an online program,” said Jeff Dwyer, MSU Extension Director. “This rapid response during COVID-19 is commendable.”

Success Stories

“After taking the class, my sister fell off her bike and scraped her arm and leg (which was bleeding). My dad had to leave us to go get the car. I helped my sister based on things I learned in the class such as distracting her by making a Boo Boo Bunny (from a paper towel).” - Participant

“I feel reviewing different situations they may encounter was extremely useful. As parents, we cover the basics but there are some things I didn’t think of discussing. My daughter is now able to assess what she would do and how to handle emergency situations effectively.” - Parent

Moderated Movie Series – Two sessions of this program were held. Participants received a guide that informed them of the storyline and content of each film. A discussion guide was also provided that the moderated discussion would use as a starting point. Films were selected from the Netflix library. Netflix memberships were available to participants who did not have a subscription.

The first Movie Series films present coming of age stories through a diverse range of topics and genres. While these films share the universal themes of growth and self-discovery, they were selected to present the differences and experiences that are faced by teens who live in dissimilar settings with diverse challenges. Moderated discussions viewed the films through the lens of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

The second Movie Series films present a range of films from comedy and drama to action/adventure that shared the theme of Overcoming Adversity. Participants were from the Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative, a program to ensure that young people in foster care have successful outcomes in housing, education, employment, community engagement and health.

Success Story *“I am the stepfather to a 14-year-old daughter who participated in the Summer Movie Series. I had encouraged her to sign up as the theme and topics aligned with her interests in the world. Over the course of the six weeks of the program I have seen her grow more confident in herself and her willingness to speak up about what she feels is right and wrong. After each of the sessions that she has attended, we have had in-depth conversations about racism, equality, civil rights, the LGBTQIA+ community, and more. Through the course of our conversations, she has told both her mother and me that she knows that our home is a safe place and that she values our respect of her.” - Parent*

Comedy Writing Workshop – Have you ever asked yourself: “How can I improve my Communication Skills, Understanding Different Perspectives, and/or Problem-Solving?” I’m guessing probably not because that isn’t how most people talk to themselves. Or, do you typically mutter something under your breath, find it funny, and then laugh out loud resulting in awkward social situations? If you found that either describes you (or not) then here’s the program for you!

Taught in conjunction with a New York-based standup comedian/writer. Participants learned to write and perform stand-up comedy in this seven-week series. The 4-H Comedy Writing Workshop taught youth how to build a joke from concept through punchline, understand the principles of the comedy business, and how to reach an audience as a performer. The final session featured live performances from the participants.

Success Stories

“My son loved the Comedy Writing Workshop! Due to the pandemic, his school went to virtual programming. With that, he lost the social interactions with his friends and classmates. The Workshop was the highlight of his week. He looked forward to each Wednesday with anticipation.” - Parent



“We live near a world-renowned center for the arts and are very familiar with the programming offered there, including the quality and tuition associated. The 4-H Comedy Writing Workshop was the equal to the center’s programming in quality with no costs to our family.” - Parent

Virtual CLUE – Clue is a complex game where teams of youth work together to solve the mystery of “Who done it?” Many of the face-to-face rules of the game have been translated into an online format with a bit of creativity. Multiple sessions have been held, including at the virtual Exploration Days. The game has been presented in two separate formats, a Halloween-themed game at a summer camp and an animal theft version at a zoo. Each format provided the participants with information regarding Michigan 4-H.

Success Story

*“This was so much fun! Can you hold this regularly?”
-Participant*



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Market Livestock Buyer Recruitment Clinic

Youth exhibitors have a unique opportunity to gain many valuable life skills through their market animal projects. In addition to gaining such skills as financial management, responsibility and communication, market animal exhibitors also could receive a premium price for the animals or projects they market. Many of the youth use the money gained from their market animal projects to help pay for future market animal projects and postsecondary education. This three-session clinic worked with youth on the concepts of writing Buyer's Letters, perfecting Elevator Speeches, and composing Thank You Notes.

Success Story

"(I will) Think more about what I say when I hand out my letters to buyers. I will be more professional and have better eye contact. Thank you." - Participant

Clinic: How to Recruit a Buyer for Your Market Livestock Project



Mondays 6:30 - 7:30 PM via Zoom

- June 14 - Session One (Buyers Letters)
- June 21 - Session Two (Elevator Speeches)
- June 28 - Session Three (Thank You Notes)

Register today via email: charleb7@msu.edu
via phone: 231-533-8818

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension



OTSEGO FAIR-TIME FUN CAMP

at the Otsego County Fairgrounds

Join our Fair Fun Summer day camp for youth ages 7-11!

- Scavenger hunts
- Barn tours
- Make a stick pony and learn how to barrel race (on your stick pony!)
- Take a spin on our smoothie bike
- Play fun games
- and MORE!!

Register today: v2.4honline.com, select Otsego Fair-Time Fun
Contact the office if you need assistance: 989-731-0273

**Day Camp is only open to 15 campers and is FREE thanks to the generous support of the Otsego County Leadership Council.*

FAIR FUN 4-H DAY CAMP
THURSDAY, AUG. 19 9AM-NOON



Fair Fun Day Camp A one-day camp for youth ages 7-11 at the Otsego County Fair. Activities included Scavenger Hunts, Barn Tours, Build a Stick Pony, Barrel Racing on Stick Ponies, Powering the Smoothie Bike for Healthy Snacks, and other games.



Skillathon

What started as a suggestion from Otsego County 4-H'ers Caitlynn and Cora Pratt became a state championship event. Originally, the Skillathon was going to be a local event. With no face-to-face programming in effect the only means of presenting the competition was virtually. While Skillathons are not new, they previously have only been held in-person at county-wide levels, sometimes held in conjunction with a local fair. Since the beginning of the pandemic, Michigan 4-H and MSU Extension has sought new methods to provide programming that engages youth across the state. A contest of this size and scope that was open to all of Michigan 4-H had not previously been held.

The 2021 Michigan 4-H Skillathon Championship was a virtual contest testing the knowledge of youth and providing young people a space to demonstrate their ability to identify, judge and evaluate several areas related to the production and management of beef cattle, dairy cattle, goats, sheep, swine, poultry, rabbits, horses, dogs, and general agricultural knowledge. The youth who entered the Skillathon answered questions on species' feeding, care, handling, medication, genetics and breeding, parts of the animal, and/or breed identification.

A total of 185 contestants from 53 counties entered the 2021 virtual competition. The contest began with

regional events that were held on the first three Saturdays of March. Of the 185 contestants across four age divisions, 64 contestants qualified to compete in the State Championship on Saturday, April 10, 2021. Finalists from Otsego County were the Pratt sisters who suggested that the Skillathon be held, Caitlynn and Cora. Caitlynn finished 2nd Overall in the Junior Division. Cora finished 11th overall in the Junior division.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension Skillathon - Juniors

Top 5 Finishers in Junior Division:

- Jaylee Somero (Gogebic)
- Caitlynn Pratt (Otsego)
- Elizabeth Hartmann (Genessee)
- Ashley Pollaski (Lake)
- Zoe Stanger (Monroe)

Michigan 4-H Skillathon Coordinator, Geep Charlebois on the initial Skillathon, "Holding the Skillathon virtually made it truly a statewide event. We were able to reach contestants all over Michigan from Gogebic, the westernmost county in the Upper Peninsula to Monroe County on the shores of Lake Erie. The Skillathon Committee is excited at the success of the 2021 event and are looking forward to next year's contest where a team will be selected to represent Michigan at the National 4-H Livestock Skillathon Contest held in November during the North American International Livestock Exposition in Louisville, Kentucky."

Success Stories

"For the first year, I thought you did a great job and thank you for having this event." - Contestant

"I don't think anything could be improved, it was well organized, and the people were great!" - Contestant

"Good idea to keep kids involved during these times! Nice work!" - Contestant

Junior Master Gardener Club Awarded Grant

In January, Great Lakes Energy granted \$2,700 to the Gaylord area Junior Master Gardener (JMG) 4-H Club through their People Fund to advance the youths' scientific knowledge and passion for plants, the environment, and gardening. Each JMG will receive a complete seed starting kit, and instruction from Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) educators, to raise plants from seeds in their own homes for an educational and fun hands-on gardening experience. Plants started from seed will be transplanted into the JMGs' newly created 3'x5' garden beds. The Home Depot, Family Farm & Home, Walmart, and North Star Gardens also contributed to this project.

S.T.E.M.

MSU Extension and the Michigan 4-H Youth Development program helps to create a community excited about STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). 4-H STEM programming seeks to increase science literacy, introducing youth to the experiential learning process that helps them to build problem-solving, critical-thinking, and decision-making skills. Youth who participate in 4-H STEM are better equipped with critical life skills necessary for future success.

Introduction to Theatre

A co-presentation of 4-H and the Wharton Center for the Arts brought the facets of live performance and expressive arts to youth. This five-part series featured expert instruction in Improvisation, Drama, Voice, Movement, and Design.

Success Story "My kids enjoyed themselves throughout the program. They are planning a performance for the rest of the family." - Parent



4-H Program Coordinator Geep Charlebois

Geep Charlebois completed his first year in the Otsego County 4-H Program Coordinator role. Geep shares these duties with Antrim County. He is looking forward to participating in face-to-face activities. His interests include teaching skiing, writing and illustrating children's books, and sailing. He and his family live in Boyne City.

The most critical time in a person's life is the formative years between the ages of birth and five. Michigan State University Extension supports early childhood development through programs that help prepare Michigan's children from birth to eight years old for school and life success. MSU Extension improves school readiness by teaching parents and early childhood professionals methods to help increase early childhood math, science, reading and literacy knowledge. MSU Extension also provides programs that help set children up for school and life success by providing parents and early childhood professionals tips on how to help children practice mindfulness techniques and grow on a social-emotional level.

Child and Family Development

Parenting and Provider Education

Parenting Hour: Parenting hour is a weekly one-hour virtual training for parents with 30 minutes for questions and discussion. These trainings have a variety of topics including positive discipline, mindfulness, screen time, play, toddler development, literacy and resilience.

Family FAQ's: Family FAQ's is a live one hour program features MSU Extension child and family development experts answering pressing parenting questions. Topics covered in these sessions include Let's Talk: Parent Provider Communication, Screen Time, Preschool U, Surviving Virtual School for Parents and Mindfulness.

Local Early Childhood Education Classes: One-time presentations ranging from 60-90 minutes on a variety of early childhood topics, including, positive discipline, toddler development and social emotional health. These trainings were attended by parents, childcare providers, early childhood professionals, foster care workers and grandparents attended these programs.

The Child and Family Development team facilitated 232 classes, reaching 8,862 community members.

Online Parenting Series: We offered three different online series workshops ranging from **Guiding Principles for Highly Effective Families**, **Building Early Emotional Skills (BEES)** and **Parent Talk**. So far there have been 27 series workshops that have consisted of 119 sessions and have reached 359 people.

Mindful Monday posts on the MI Stronger Family Facebook page provide tips and tricks for parents, child care providers and early childhood professionals on how to help children better understand emotions and how to cope with strong emotions in a healthy way.

The virtual calming room page was created by a group of individuals from the Children and Youth Institute with the purpose of providing a place youth and adults can go (virtually) to take care of themselves, calm, reset, re-center, or just take a break in their day. The virtual calming room has a variety of resources, some of which are exclusive to MSU Extension, and some we have curated from other sites. This page will be refreshed on a quarterly basis, where we will be adding more MSU Extension content, including videos produced by our own 4-H youth! Visit this link to check out the virtual calming room: <https://www.canr.msu.edu/virtual-calming-room/>

Kit work included social emotional health, literacy and STEM activities. These kits were created to provide parents, caregivers and early childhood professionals a set of different activities that they can do with their children at home or in childcare centers to extend a child's development and learning. Some activities from these kits include creating a calming jar, body scan, building encouragement, reading with emotions, feeling mask, emotion cards, clothespin letters, cereal box search, flip-flop rhyming, birds eating worms, glitter gelling, breathe- cotton ball challenge, colorful rain, dancing raisins, let's race: force and friction and magnetic bottle.



Livestock Emergency Response Trailer

MSU Extension, in collaboration with Otsego County Animal Control Director Melissa FitzGerald and Otsego County Administrator Rachel Frisch, worked to launch a Livestock Emergency Response Trailer. This trailer will be used to respond to area livestock traffic accidents, such as the one on I-75 in July, 2020. Otsego County provided a trailer and generator and sent officers to the MSU Extension Livestock Emergency Training class. MSU Extension procured the equipment for the trailer and has assisted in getting the mutual aid agreement signed in neighboring counties.



- Cattle Panels (portable Gates)
 - Hog sorting boards
- Sleds (for injured/non-ambulatory animals)
 - Lariats, harnesses, ropes, fencing
 - Portable ramps, winch and straps
 - Portable lights, reciprocating saw

Health and Nutrition

Michigan State University (MSU) Extension Supplemental Nutrition Assistance 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.

Statewide Virtual Nutrition Programs

Due to the Michigan executive orders of stay home, stay safe, MSU Extension increased their virtual outreach through indirect intervention channels by 45%. This included increased offerings through articles, fact sheets, radio podcasts, social media postings, web presence, and educational videos.

Otsego County MSU Extension promoted weekly nutrition education through Facebook post designed to engage viewers in relevant resources.

- The focus of Tasty Tuesday was to demonstrate the importance of stocking your pantry and recipes included items available at low cost but high in taste and nutrition.
- In September of 2020, we began a series of Fresh Fridays posts with topics such as hydration, portion control, healthy recipes, and staying safe while exercising outside.

Community Engagement

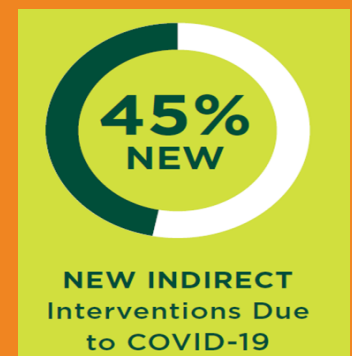
In the winter of 2021, MSU Extension instructors held 6 virtual Healthy Eating Adds Up lessons with the cognitive impaired Cheboygan-Otsego-Presque Isle Educational Service District classroom. Lessons focused on Slow, Whoa and Go foods, Healthy snacks, and included physical activity.

New This Year

We offered a self paced online course titled My Way to Wellness. A participant stated that she had lost weight during the program.

- She also shared “I am tracking my food and beverages and have cut down on my daily calories and especially fat grams in order to reach a healthier weight and BMI. Looking for healthy recipes that are satisfying. Eating more fish.”

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



Supporting Food and Agriculture

MSU Extension facilitates the growth of agriculture, Michigan's second largest industry. Locally, we help our farmers increase their efficiency and productivity through consultation and on-farm research. We also serve the agriculture industry by connecting our producers to MSU faculty and experts across the State to identify solutions to their production challenges. In addition to serving farmers, we also serve the sportsman, home gardeners, and the general population at large by providing consultation, expertise, and education in agriculture related ventures.



Northern Michigan has so much to offer in terms of its natural resources. Our counties are homes to beautiful woods and waters, as well as many acres of productive farmland. In addition to growing the food that feeds many families across our towns, our state, and our nation; our farms are also the livelihood of many families that call our counties home. Agriculture is an essential component of building and maintaining rural economies. As an organization, we work diligently to provide our local farms with up to date, useful information, and research that contributes to their growth, economic security, and environmental sustainability.

Farming in Northern Michigan poses challenges that are unique to our area. Because of these unique challenges and isolation from many agricultural services, MSU Extension works to bridge the gap between our farms, and other areas of agriculture that our farms compete with. One way we help our farms in this respect is through multiple on-farm research projects. These local research projects give our area producers management and crop variety data that is specific to our area. No two farms are alike, therefore providing this data on the local level helps our county's farmers to be more competitive and more profitable.

Supporting MSU Extension also gives our local producers increased access to information and expertise from faculty and specialists within Michigan State University's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. In turn, faculty and specialists also receive insight into issues facing agriculture in our area, which can aid or steer their research, to our local benefit. We also work to inform our area producers and agribusiness professionals of current issues facing agriculture through multiple forms of communication including newsletters, press releases, grower meetings, field days, and web meetings. This helps our producers to be prepared for any production issues that can affect their farms.



Supporting Food and Agriculture



In addition to serving farmers, MSU Extension also serves our local community at large. We field many questions from homeowners, gardeners, landowners, and sportsmen regarding any issues they face in their lawns, gardens, orchards, and wildlife plantings. Paul Gross and Christina Curell, Agriculture and Agribusiness Extension Educators, answered many questions and consulted with growers and landowners throughout the region.

2020-2021FY Highlights:

- On-farm research projects covering Soybean, Corn Silage, Corn and Soil 4 area field days, drawing 94 participants.
- 1 local virtual field day with 30 participants.
- Local growers participated in 4 commodity based Virtual Field Day



MSU Extension works to increase farmers' success while protecting the environment, ensuring food safety, reaching new markets and advancing agriculture through applied research. Agriculture is now one of the fastest growing sectors of the Michigan economy.

Gypsy Moth Monitoring

In response to an Otsego County request to monitor gypsy moths and educate about Gypsy Moths, MSU Extension launched a Gypsy Moth monitoring and educational website for residents of Otsego County: <https://www.canr.msu.edu/otsego/gypsy-moth-reporting>

County residents can report gypsy moth activity and egg masses as well as find data about Gypsy moth mitigation and life cycles. A public informational meeting was held on August 11th, 2021 and the recording is posted on the web page as well.



Gypsy moth larva on leaf with feeding damage. Photo by Bill McNee, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Bugwood.org.

Natural Resources

Michigan Sea Grant Extension promotes research, education, and outreach to enhance responsible and sustainable use of our diverse Great Lakes resources. Through MSU Extension, Michigan Sea Grant works with Michigan citizens, industries, and coastal communities to encourage their use, benefits, and enjoyment of Great Lakes resources that positively influences our state's economy, environment and quality of life. Of highlight:

Lake Huron Regional Fisheries Workshops

Two virtual **Lake Huron Regional Fisheries Workshops** webinars hosted online in April 2021 brought together over 190 anglers, charter captains, and others with fisheries researchers and managers from across Michigan. Participants gained better understanding of Lake Huron fisheries ecosystem changes, and connecting these stakeholders with information, research and management activities relating to Lake Huron and local communities. Workshop recordings are accessible online:

- **Open Water Fisheries Session:** <https://youtu.be/CTXVtHVVUjcE>
- **Nearshore Fisheries Session:** <https://youtu.be/rMp83ZcJEMc>

Great Lakes Fisheries Heritage Trail Network

Capturing and sharing the history and heritage reflected in our Great Lakes fisheries, 2020-2021 Sally Kress Tompkins Maritime Intern Cassandra Sadler has been working in Michigan this summer researching Great Lakes fishing vessels. This project is being undertaken by the National Park Service Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) program working in cooperation with Great Lakes Fisheries Heritage Trail partners and Michigan Sea Grant, with assistance from the Council of American Maritime Museums.

The Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative

(NEMIGLSI) is a place-based education network and partnership that:

- engages youth in Great Lakes and natural resource stewardship projects
- provides support for schools and educators
- facilitates school-community partnerships.

Despite pandemic challenges, nearly 1,300 Northeast Michigan youth were engaged in hands-on, place-based learning through Great Lakes and natural resource stewardship projects in their communities in 2020. MSUE and Michigan Sea Grant supported this work through this NEMIGLSI network and partnership. Read more about how 'Place-based education in a pandemic [was] challenging but possible' in Northeast Michigan:



www.canr.msu.edu/news/place-based-education-in-a-pandemic-challenging-but-possible-msg21-schroeder21



Connecting with our Lake Huron fisheries—past and present—for ecological, economic, and community values



Extension Professionals Serving Otsego County

Staff Located in Otsego County Office:

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Geep Charlebois	4-H Program Coordinator	(989) 731-0273	charleb7@msu.edu
Sandra Westover	Community Nutrition Instructor	989) 731-0265	westov13@msu.edu
Mary Kinney	Office Manager	(989) 731-0272	mary.kinney@ affiliate.msu.edu

Additional MSU Extension Staff Serving Otsego County

Name	Role	Phone	Email
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