



St. Joseph County 2018 ANNUAL REPORT

BY THE NUMBERS

104 years serving St. Joseph County (since 1914)



Over 15 Extension professionals providing programs in St. Joseph



210 programs held in St. Joseph County



750 youth involved in 4-H and other youth enrichment programs; over 300 adult volunteers



4 community leaders graduated from intro to lakes program



1,601 adults and youth empowered to live healthy lives through SNAP-Ed programs



10 farm owners/managers assisted through Pork Quality Assurance site assessments



\$5,215,355 total economic impact in St. Joseph County

MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT COORDINATOR



Over the past year, Michigan State University (MSU) Extension partnered with St. Joseph County to continue strengthening youth, families, businesses and communities. MSU Extension staff are grounded in local relationships and serve by bringing the university's research and resources to provide outreach and education in the areas residents need it most.

A noteworthy demonstration of our partnership in 2018 was a program to help landowners make decisions related to solar energy projects. In response to aggressive solicitation by solar developers to lease or buy land from St. Joseph County land owners, a multi-disciplinary team of MSU Extension educators brought a solar energy educational program to Three Rivers. The state-wide program was developed in response to policy changes made in late 2017 that made utility-scale solar projects more profitable. The program attended by landowners, local leaders and consultants focused on policy, community planning and zoning, legal contract land leasing, tax issues, and the integration of solar with existing agricultural systems using evidenced based practices. In addition to the positive outcomes of knowledge and confidence, the program resulted in new partnerships with agencies and associations involved in the solar industry. Overall, the program provided southwest Michigan residents and leaders with a unique opportunity to better understand the solar industry, its impact on local landscapes, personal finances, and the economy, as well as the role of local policy development in helping shape the state's energy future while balancing competing interests.

MSU Extension is passionate about serving St. Joseph County, and we are proud of the impacts we have made over this last year. Thank you for your continued support and for partnering with us to make a difference.

Julie Pioch, District 13 Coordinator

Program Highlights



On-farm research and demonstrations of weed control strategies in soybeans were conducted in St. Joseph in 2018



Producers listen to Dr. Eric Anderson, field crops educator at a field day in St. Joseph County.



St. Joseph MSU Extension assisted producers and the MDEQ with completing 196 applications to the Michigan's Unreported Large Quantity Water Withdrawal Registration. Assisting producers with the applications was critical to ensuring that they could continue to withdraw water to irrigate their crops and for MDEQ to accurately account for historical and future impacts to local stream flow. An example of supporting documentation is pictured above, a historical aerial photo pinpointing location of the pivot, travelers and the pump.

SUPPORTING THE AG INDUSTRY

Agriculture continues to be a growing economic driver in St Joseph County and the investment by the county and MSU Extension in providing relevant and timely information to the ag community demonstrates our commitment to this vital industry. Some highlights of the work of local staff in 2018 include:

Pest management tends to be a topic where there are so many types of pests and so many variables, access to new information and refreshers are a necessity. Two pre-season sessions on integrated pest management were held and during the growing season, moth traps were placed and monitored for important insect pest species and reported trap counts in weekly newsletters to alert farmers of peak flight periods.

Conducted an on-farm demonstration of weed control strategies in soybean in St. Joseph and Calhoun Counties. The demonstration was funded by a grant from the Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee. A short video highlighting one of the fields was produced to YouTube and two others are in different stages of production. Two field days were held to highlight the results of the study as well as showcase presentations by MSU Extension Specialists Educators on other soybean topics. The meeting in St. Joseph County was co-hosted by the local MAEAP technician. 47 Attendees from around southwest Michigan included those from St. Joseph.

A breakfast meeting series was held in the spring on a wide range of topics affecting row-crop agriculture presently and in the future. Total attendance included 36 participants from five counties including 24 from St. Joseph. Taped Interviews with the guest speakers, newsletter articles about best management practices highlighted during the series were accessed by producers via the web throughout the year.

"Tools for Navigating a Challenging Farm Economy" was a program organized with the help of a stakeholder planning committee. Speakers included an MSU Extension farm finance educator, a local grain marketing agribusiness professional, two farm insurance representatives, and Rep. Aaron Miller. Eleven participants from St. Joseph and from 1 Kalamazoo county attended the workshop.

A regular email newsletter update is mailed weekly during the cropping season, then semi-weekly or monthly to a growing list of local farmers and agribusiness professionals (485 currently) highlighting upcoming MSU programming and other timely information important for crop producers in St. Joseph County and southwest Michigan.



STAFF HOUSED IN ST JOSEPH COUNTY

- Eric Anderson — Field Crops Educator
- Dean Baas — Sustainable Agriculture Educator
- Tonya Barrington — Program Aide/ Parks & Recreation
- Eva Beeker—4-H Program Coordinator
- Lyndon Kelley — Water Management & Irrigation Educator
- Linda Kline — Community Nutrition Instructor
- Ginny Sutton — Program Aide/ Parks & Recreation



Find out more at www.msue.msu.edu/stjoseph

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MICHIGAN 4-H FOUNDATION HAS CLOSE TIES TO ST JOSEPH



Two local residents and 4-H alumni were elected to the Michigan 4-H Foundation Board in 2018. Sally Stuby of Centreville was recently elected as President and Shawn McNamara of Constantine was elected as a trustee. The 4-H Foundation is a statewide nonprofit organization that supports Michigan's 4-H program, the largest youth development organization in the state with over 200,000 youth members.

Sally is a St. Joseph County 4-H alumnus, a 4-H Emerald Clover Society member and a longtime 4-H volunteer including 14 years as leader of the Rolling Clovers 4-H Club, 8 years on the State 4-H International Exchange Committee, 15 years of coleadership in the St. Joseph County 4-H veterinary and animal science program and 10 years as the County Fair 4-H sheep superintendent. She coaches 4-H/FFA livestock evaluation teams for state and national competitions.

Shawn comes from a multigenerational family of 4-H members and volunteer leaders. He has been active locally and statewide. In May 2018, he graduated from Centreville High School, where he had been dual enrolled with Glen Oaks Community College. He has served as a part-time, maintenance assistant at the St. Joseph County Grange Fairgrounds, worked with the Centerville Athletic Boosters concessions stand and volunteered with the Centerville Fire Department.

2018 Highlights for 4-H Youth Development in St. Joseph County

4-H in St. Joseph County continues to flourish as very traditional program with youth development programs that focus on Agriculture, Science, Financial Literacy, and Life Skills. Thirty-three educational programs were held in 2018 for the 750 youth enrolled in clubs, providing youth with skills and tools to be successful. The program is dependent upon highly dedicate adult volunteers who work closely with our youth. To help our volunteers provide leadership and mentor youth, 46 adult trainings were held over the course of 2018. Much of the year long programming youth and adults are involved with culminates at the St. Joseph County Grange Fair in September. The Fair not only provides youth and adults with an opportunity to showcase their projects and compete for trophies, but also builds character and rewards hard work.

In addition to providing guidance, mentoring and training in the traditional fair related activities, St. Joseph County 4-H Program Coordinator Eva Beeker took a leadership role in the 4th Grade Conservation Tour, now in its 51st year. The daylong educational program reached more than 650 4th Grade students from nine public schools, two private schools and one homeschool group. Educational stations highlighting ecology and natural resources protection are highlights for the youth at the event held in April.

"Build Your Future" and "My Financial Future" are financial curriculum series geared for youth middle school to high school youth. With the goal of improving their financial literacy and decision making, Eva worked with staff and 36 youth at St. Joseph County Juvenile Day Treatment Center (JDT) in 2018.



Centreville, Colon, Three Rivers, and White Pigeon High School juniors and seniors participated in 4-H Youth Development's "Interviews for Success" training experience. Eva was assisted by other 4-H educators from southwest Michigan to provide this training to help prepare these young people for career placement and college/university scholarship interviews.



4-H State Award Winners from St. Joseph County are Loren King, Jaycie King, Shawn McNamara, John Collins & Abby McNamara.



Summer 4-H Camp held at Camp Fort Hill is open to all St. Joseph County 4-H members 7-12 years of age. Activities this year included climbing the 30ft wall, swimming, hiking, fishing, canoeing, crafts outdoor games, singing, dancing campfire activities and more! Pictured above are teen camp counselors.

AG AWARENESS PROGRAM CREATE LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Children living in urban settings typically are not aware of where their food comes from. Even when they reside in a largely agricultural county, they do not have personal experience with how crops are grown and livestock are raised. It is important for children to understand this issue not only in the short-term but, as they grow up and influence society in different ways, it is also important for the long-term sustainability of agriculture in an increasingly urbanized world.

Since 1990 MSU Extension has worked with community partners to offer "Ag-Citing" a two hour educational program for 3rd graders to learn about food and animal production. In 2018, 31 classes from 13 schools with a total of 676 students and 89 chaperones attended the program. Forty-seven volunteers contributed 135 hours of time including the St. Joseph Valley Old Engine Association who volunteered their time and use of their antique tractors to pull hay wagons for the program and the St. Joseph County Sherriff's Posse. This year's program repeated five times over three days. Linda Kline, community nutrition instructor and Eric Anderson, field crops educator worked together to manage the program and coordinate volunteers. The emphasis this year was "from farm to table". In addition, the youth listened to the experiences of the Sherriff's Posse who spoke about their mounts and how many officers and horses serve our county.

Feedback for this event from the youth, teachers and volunteers continues to be overwhelmingly positive and is consistent across those who have been involved with the program for many years to those who just joined the program this year. The kids report that they love the hands on activities and getting experience new things. They especially appreciated learning about different animals, seeing baby animals born in the birthing tent, petting animals, and the hayride through the fairgrounds - something many of them had never done before.

It is difficult to measure long-term impact, but one example gives a glimpse of the influence the program has had. One of the volunteers who has helped for the past two years remembers that his grandpa was the tractor driver when he went on the Ag-Citing tour roughly 20 years ago. Although he doesn't farm, that connection to the program is the reason he decided to take time off of work and be a tour guide for every time block this year.

An additional impact of the program was a new partnership with Centreville Public Schools to provide nutrition and physical activity education to 3rd grade classrooms during the school year— further developing MSU Extensions educational impact in the county.

Program Highlights



The annual "Ag-Citing" tour is definitely a "hands on" experience! The Sturgis Public Schools returned to the event this year bringing over 200 students to the event.



Swine presentation during the 28th annual Ag-Citing Experience.



Linda Kline, Community Nutrition Instructor talks about healthy eating and physical activity at Ag-Citing