



Tollgate Farm and Education Center

2016 Annual Report

tollgate.msu.edu



MESSAGE FROM THE EDUCATION DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

Welcome to MSU Tollgate! We have experienced a wonderful 2016 year full of new activities, expanded offerings, and an increased footprint in our local community. I hope as you read through the 2016 annual report, you find something inspiring or unique about the happenings here. Looking back on the last year we have had some remarkable accomplishments which are a direct testament to the support of you, our valued stakeholders.



MSU Tollgate Farm is a special place that brings together a community of passionate and responsible stewards of our agricultural community. Each day we embark on an educational journey exploring the forest, fields, pond and open spaces. Whether it's with a group of young people, teachers, or families, we strive to bring the knowledge from MSU to you in a way that is engaging, exciting and impactful.

Thank you for being a part of the Tollgate community. As we grow our program offerings to foster awareness and understanding of the natural world, from healthy and sustainable food systems to protection of our precious resources, I hope that you will continue to support this important work.

Alan Jaros
Education Director
MSUE Tollgate Farm and Education Center

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2016 ENROLLMENT

Programs & Events	14,378
Conference Center	4,800
Total Impact	19,178

2016 FUNDING

Revenue Generated	\$401,596
MSU Contribution	\$366,117
Americana Contribution	\$160,800
Council of MI Foundations	\$18,000

MISSION STATEMENT

Michigan State University Extension helps people improve their lives through an educational process that applies knowledge to critical issues, needs and opportunities.

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TOLLGATE DIGITAL REACH

In 2016, the Tollgate website (tollgate.msu.edu) received over 86,000 page views. Search engine rankings make tollgate.msu.edu one of the most visited sites in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. The Tollgate Facebook has over 1,260 likes and receives thousands of page views each week.



Innovative Youth Education



Educating for the Future

Youth participants of MSU Extension and 4-H programming learn life skills that prepare them for the workforce – especially for highly sought after jobs in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). The future of Michigan lies, in part, in the hands of its students’ abilities to excel in STEM fields. Science literacy among school-aged youth in Michigan is below the national average, directly impacting college readiness. MSU Extension provides programming aligned with Michigan science education standards to teach confidence, leadership, and responsibility related to STEM, and to prepare youth for the future.

Farm Camp - Fun and Learning on the Farm

The excitement of campers is thick in the air. As the crowd gathers at the end of the camp week, improvised costumes are adjusted and lines are rehearsed. The oldest group approaches singing “Oh ho, rattlin’ bog, way down in the valley low!” Parents and grandparents wave to their kids and snap photos. The stage is set and soon smiles and laughter erupt as campers express their week with lively, funny skits all about time travel, farm animals on the loose, and paddling lessons. MSU Tollgate Summer Camps offer youth the opportunity to beat the summer brain drain through hands on, research-based experiences. Campers spend their time immersed in farm ecology. Daily activities call campers to be citizen scientists, develop grit while using STEM to solve farm problems, and build a sense of camp community by following our positive youth development model.



“The depth of the activities and the integrity of the whole camp are so amazing. They were all having so much fun they didn’t know they were learning anything until it was too late. You all are truly a blessing to these children. Go Green!” – Camp Parent

- 2016 brought more than 500 youth from various cultural backgrounds
- 10 weeks of immersive camp experiences were offered
- Camp themes included, Green Science Adventure, Survival, Animal, Dirt, Water, Food, and Horse Camp
- Summer camp provided kids with real life lessons and farm-based fun



Innovative Youth Education, continued



“Tollgate does a wonderful job being organized and having fun and interesting things for the children to do during their visit.” - Dearborn School Teacher



First Ever Beginner Horse Camp

Summer 2016 saw Tollgate offering its first week long 4-H Beginner Horse Camp! A new outdoor horse arena made it possible for campers to get up close and hands-on. Campers



worked together to learn horsemanship and to build trust with six horses loaned to Tollgate by 4-H members. Educational sessions included history, function, breeds, colors/markings, nutrition, parasites, and grooming. Campers also benefitted from some special guest instructors during the week, including professional trainers, a veterinarian and farrier. Twenty-four campers ages 9-15 along with

seven 4-H teen counselors attended camp. Tollgate staff are planning additional weeks of horse camp for 2017 because of the success of this initial program.

4-H Animal Programming Expanded

With the help of a \$15,000 Michigan 4-H Participation Fee Grant, our animal programs were greatly expanded in 2016. Using this support equipment was purchased to help

house and care for the addition of many new animals. A number of farm animals live at Tollgate, including chickens, ducks, geese, a rabbit, four Holstein calves, and four horses - all available to youth for spring and summer programming. Goats, lambs and calves were also leased by 4-H youth from the



Tollgate 4-H Club. Three livestock workshops were attended by youth ages 9-19 providing hands on experience with farm animals. Ten students learned basic terminology, anatomy, care & nutrition, and fitting & showing tips for the fair. The program increased knowledge of diversified small scale animal management.

Scholarships Making a Difference

MSU Extension places a major emphasis on reaching people of all backgrounds, income levels, and abilities. Through grant funding provided by the Americana Foundation we were better able to support healthy, placed-based programming for all community members at Tollgate in 2016. Scholarships were provided to schools, campers, and stewards-in-training to reduce the cost for participants and at the same time maintain high quality programming.

- Scholarships were awarded to 14 high need schools and 18 camper families
- \$5,303 of aid was provided to schools, camper families, and fall farm sprouts

Innovative Youth Education, continued

Project-Based Learning Field Trips for Schools

What is project-based learning? One example is the Chick Hatching Journey that Tollgate educators led two classes from Novi Schools through. A Tollgate educator visited the classrooms to enlist the students' help in incubating and hatching chicken eggs for the farm. As citizen scientists in the classroom, students researched and set to work, visiting the farm to experience embryology and the chickens in their farm habitat. The project culminated with a classroom celebration for parents and children where



Tollgate was highlighted for their part in the project. Eventually, the newly hatched chicks were returned to the farm to become our layers in the fall. A full cycle collaboration. Project-based learning stresses this full-cycle, real world approach.

Responding to requests from farm visitors, several

new programs were piloted in 2016. One of these was started by the area Lego League Junior and FLL teams. They were researching the plight of the honeybee and animal human interactions. Tollgate provided the opportunity for the clubs to meet with master beekeepers who shared a Bees and Beekeeping program that connected to their clubs projects.

Area schools have high standards for students in STEM education. Tollgate's project-based approach to field trips compliments the school setting by allowing students to learn from experience and it provides a real world context for



learning. Programs such as Maple Sugaring, Baby Animals, Nutrient Trail, or Sheep to Sweater, to name a few, provide an academically rigorous and fun setting for learning. We take pride in meeting the needs of local schools through our field trip opportunities.

In 2016, school programs reached:

- Over 48 schools and school age groups
- More than 2,800 school age children
- Detroit, Dearborn, Southfield, Hazel Park, Farmington, Novi, and Walled Lake



“The farm guides were super knowledgeable, passionate, and interacted beautifully with our students. Thank you for hosting us and being willing to share your knowledge and skills with our children.” -

Maria Montessori Center



Innovative Youth Education, continued



“She was enthusiastic when learning about nature. She particularly talked about being able to touch things (like feathers) and told her pediatrician about the “healthy snacks” she gets there.” – *Farm Sprouts Parent*



Reaching our Communities Youngest Members

Tollgate offers an ideal setting for preschool-age children to engage in experiential learning. By offering programs that involve young children in the farm community, they begin to mature in their self-confidence and sense of independence with the guidance of the educational staff. The farm quickly becomes a place in which our young visitors feel safe and comfortable to ask questions, test new ideas, and take risks in order to grow in their skills and abilities, in addition to developing an appreciation for all our local environment provides us.



Connecting Preschoolers to Local Food Sources

“I want to be a farmer when I grow up!” exclaimed a four-year old preschooler on her way to visit the goats residing in the Community Supported Agriculture (C.S.A.) field in early fall. The aim of the hike was to feed the pigs leftover carrot peelings from the day’s snack. She had participated in the Spring Farm Sprouts Preschool Program and returned in the fall with great enthusiasm. Children in the program immerse themselves in authentic tasks and active learning. The preschool years are a particularly important period in developing lifelong habits and preferences. The opportunity to grow, tend, harvest, taste, and compost produce is a central focus of the Farm Sprouts curriculum and are skills they carry with them as their reach into the community grows.

- 36 children participated in the program one class period per week over the course of seven weeks in the spring and ten weeks in the fall
- Children care for and interact with farm animals
- Highly-qualified early childhood educators guide preschoolers to make discoveries
- Inquiry curriculum supports cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development
- Literacy development in English and Spanish supports diversity and language skills

Innovative Youth Education, continued

Farm Story Hour with Novi Public Library

This summer Tollgate partnered with Novi Public Library to host the first Children's Garden Story Hour series. A Novi librarian engaged with children ages 2-5 years through children's literature and music. Then visitors were guided through hands-on learning activities complimenting the story portion. Program themes such as gardening, farm animals, and food systems provided visitors with the opportunity to participate in a variety of activities, including hands-on experiences with the farm animals, process-based art projects, and science experiments.

- This program reached 84 youth with their accompanying caregivers during a series of four, bi-weekly story hours taking place in June through August



“All of a sudden she will start telling me about what she has learned at Farm Sprouts (what a duck egg looks like, why trees lose their leaves, why a pumpkin has seeds). She is internalizing the information and is able to relate it to her environment.” – Farm Sprouts Parent

Support Construction of a Tollgate Naturescape

A naturescape is a modified outdoor environment where children play and learn by engaging with natural elements, materials, organisms, and habitats, through sensory, fine motor, and gross motor experiences. Tollgate hopes to provide youth and families a place within the community to create connections to each other, the local environment, and our Michigan natural resources. Urban and suburban communities seldom have safe natural areas for children to explore. A few benefits of naturescapes include:

- Connection with nature and the local community
- Hands-on, sensory learning experiences and discovery
- Physical health and well-being
- Self-confidence, creativity, and imagination

We are looking for private and corporate sponsors to fund our Tollgate Naturescape Project. Please visit our website: www.tollgate.msu.edu or call (248) 347-0269 for more information.



Serving our Community



“Excellent presentation – exciting topic!! I express deep gratitude to Dr. Hartig for all he has done!!!” - Evenings in the Garden Attendee

Return of Evenings in the Garden

Starting in June 2016 and continuing to the end of September, the popular Evenings in the Garden series returned to Tollgate. Well-respected speakers from the community shared their knowledge and experience with the public, including Kim Roth of Christensen’s Plant Center, Dr. John Hartig of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, and MSU Extension experts. Their topics covered vegetables, trees, pollinators, native plants, and conservation. A total of 113 attendees engaged in the lecture series and because of this support the series will be returning for 2017. Through this program Tollgate provides an opportunity for community members to be lifelong learners.



A Starry Night on the Farm

Stars twinkled and planets aligned for a magical night on the farm in June 2016. In response to requests for a family overnight, Tollgate piloted A Starry Night on the Farm for families. A colorful array of tents were set up under the black walnut tree, and our bold adventures began with a twilight wagon tour followed by a night hike through the cool dark forest. Families engaged in hands-on summer solstice science activities and enjoyed MSU dairy store ice cream during an interactive astronomy presentation before heading out for night sky viewing through telescopes provided by the Oakland Astronomy Club. The evening was capped off with s’mores around the campfire, but the learning adventure did not stop there. After a farm fresh breakfast the next morning, families strolled the farm to help with morning animal chores. Families came ready for adventure, and left with fond memories of their Starry Night on the Farm.



Serving our Community, continued

2016 MSU Tollgate Farm Pumpkinfest

Pumpkinfest 2016 drew the community together for a festive fall event celebrating the harvest and raising funds for educational programming. Starting in 2014, the event has grown to become an iconic harvest time destination for metro-Detroiters. Tollgate's 2016 Pumpkinfest included educational exhibits and collaboration with community members far and wide, including our primary sponsor, **Vibe Credit Union**. Vibe's involvement



increased in 2016 to include larger support and creative marketing of the event. Support and in-kind donations from Meijer and several community restaurants helped us feed our over 300 volunteers. The Ann Arbor Hands-on Museum provided experiential learning stations, and the MSU Bug House brought exciting entomology exhibits. Face painting, bounce house, target practice booths, archery, and

pumpkin decorating kept young ones squealing with delight. Novi and Walled Lake Public Libraries partnered with local children's authors to provide story time. New this year was a living history component at the pumpkin patch where costumed interpreters reenacted French colonists and Native Americans cooking harvest foods. Plans for 2017 include more learning opportunities and new family experiences. Thank you to our many partners for helping make this event a success yet again!

- 2016 attendance - 5,500 visitors
- Over 300 volunteers for two days
- 1,000 volunteer hours valued at over \$23,000

Tollgate Conference Center: A Destination

As a destination for corporate, MSU, and community organizations to hold gatherings, the Tollgate Conference Center and barn are one of a kind. This year a commitment was made to updating these facilities to keep our patronage coming back. New photography was hung, the rooms were painted, and new carpeting was installed. We welcomed over 4,800 people through the Conference Center doors this year.

The Conference Center is a full-service meeting facility ideal for the business and educational community. Picnics, hayrides, and tours can contribute to the experience. If you are looking for a unique venue, Tollgate is the perfect choice for your special event!



“Pumpkinfest was amazing!! Great activities, staff, prices, wonderful property!!” - Pumpkinfest Participant



Serving our Community, continued



“Highly recommend it. Beautiful setting. Great staff and volunteers!” - Maple Sugaring Participant

Maple Sugaring Brings History and Science to Life

Celebrating the sugaring season at Tollgate’s Maple Tapping and Pancake feast began with a robust pancake breakfast in Tollgate’s 1860s-era barn, featuring a number of tasty pancake varieties such as buttermilk, whole wheat, gluten-free, sausage, and, of course, as much warm maple syrup as one could wish for. Community volunteers prepared and served over 400 guests during the two day event. Many dedicated and hard-working



volunteers helped out in a variety of hospitality roles in the barn and conference center as visitors dined and children explored the educational activities. New this year, visitors experienced an 18th century Colonial sugaring camp. Thanks to Jeff Pavlik of Sunflour Bakehaus and fellow reenactors Ed, Crane, Zach, and Hank, the sugaring camp reenactment highlighted the historical uses of

maple sugar as a part of sustaining cultures through food-scarce seasons. Educational staff taught tree identification and why and how trees make sap. Conditions were just right to see the sap flowing, and participants were even able to try their hand at drilling and tapping a tree! Dedicated and knowledgeable sugar shack volunteers shared the story of the evaporation process and transformed sap into syrup. The hardy crew of sugaring volunteers are the very heart of Tollgate’s maple sugaring program. Because of our volunteers the visitors to Tollgate had an unforgettable experience at the Maple Tapping and Pancake Feast.

Beekeepers Making a Buzz

Many of the crops that Americans enjoy every day rely on honeybees for pollination. It is no secret that recent years have not been kind to bee populations. Mites, diseases, pesticides and other factors have all made the survival of bees more difficult. The Southeast Michigan Beekeeping Association (SEMBA) in partnership with Tollgate is working to help some bees through this difficult time. 2016 was the seventh year that SEMBA conducted its beginning beekeeping class. Over thirty students attended the class which ran from March through September. Students purchased their own hives as part of the class and worked on their hives at each class session. With the help and guidance of SEMBA and Tollgate, hundreds of new beekeepers have been trained and started on their beekeeping careers.



Modeling Sustainable Agriculture



Expansion of Community Sustained Agriculture

The fourth year of Tollgate's Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program was the most bountiful yet. During the season more than ten thousand pounds of produce were



grown and distributed across twenty eight shares, representing more than one hundred individuals. That doesn't include the dozens of floral bouquets and hundreds of ornamental pumpkins that members were given to decorate their homes. During the course of the twenty one week CSA, members received more than forty different crops comprised of over one hundred twenty varieties.

A central focus of the sustainable agriculture program was investing in the future by planting perennials, including thousands of asparagus plants, flowers, herbs, and fruit vines. The trellis system for a new orchard in the five acre sustainable agriculture field was installed by Eagle Scouts and is awaiting trees this spring. The sustainable agriculture fields and educational gardens served as the classroom for summer camps, field trips, a high school senior project, and a graduate school retreat. Visitors and students had the opportunity to learn about farming techniques from the farmers themselves, while engaging with the soil, plants and produce.

Apprenticeships Grow Future Farmers

Tollgate's new apprenticeship program introduced two novice farmers to the sustainable agriculture team for twenty two weeks of the growing season. Involved in daily operations, the apprentices learned how to run a small farm. Apprentices got their hands dirty with weeding, planting and distributing produce. They also learned how to



begin their own operations, including soil science and pest management, plus marketing and finance. One of our apprentices will be returning for the 2017 season as the field manager, helping not only with field work, but to manage educational experiences for future apprentices. By becoming the field manager, this former apprentice will ensure that our sustainable agriculture is truly sustainable.



"With the unending exhausting heat of Summer 2016, the work you all did was extremely impressive! Thank you and congratulations!" - CSA Member



Volunteers Making a Difference



Garden Volunteers – Expanding our Reach

The staff at Tollgate work hard to reach as many members of the Southeast Michigan Community as possible. One big way that MSUE extends its impact is through its use of a dedicated group of volunteers. The volunteers are numerous, inspired, and dedicated to Tollgate. Volunteers are a key component of the maple syrup program, assisting with



school groups, working in the vegetable and horticultural gardens, and buildings and grounds upkeep. The most active volunteer programs focus on the ornamental gardens and maple syrup production. The Garden Volunteers have over 200 members. This group not only tends and improves the gardens on the farm; they also host several special events each year. Their fund-raising activities allow the property's

horticultural plantings to be self-supporting. In 2016, the Garden and maple syrup Volunteers contributed 4,010 hours of time. At the standard volunteer value rate of \$23.56 per hour that's a value to MSU equal to \$94,475. Tollgate would not be the special place that it is without the hard work and dedication of our many volunteers.

Stewards Provide Valuable Service

The Tollgate Camp Teen Stewards (15-19 yrs) and Stewards-in-Training (12-14 yrs) are camp role models for youth interested in gaining experience working with campers in agriculture and natural sciences. Stewards enrich, mentor, and lead campers while gaining valuable leadership and life skills. Over the 2016 camp season, participants grew in leadership skills as they modeled positive behavior, made campers feel welcome, and acted as “stewards” of the farm. Efforts by these volunteers are what make the high quality of Tollgate camps possible!



- Stewards and Stewards-in-Training accounted for more than 65 individuals
- 4,480 hours of service were donated through the program



Garden, maple sugaring, and camp volunteers donated 8,490 hours worth over \$200,000!





Infrastructure and Site Updates

Tollgate's Behind-the-Scenes Staff

Often Tollgate's educational staff is in the spotlight for their programming. However, behind the scenes our Operations and Farm staff make everything possible. Tollgate is renowned for its beautiful gardens, excellent facilities, and its model farm approach. This year our operations staff made several additions that will increase our capacity to serve.

Proud of our Pavilion

The Pavilion is a 30'x50' structure that is just right for keeping users safe from the sun and rain. The structure was completed in July of 2016 and was immediately put into use by Tollgate nature and horse camp attendees. The structure is also ideally suited for Tollgate's Community Supported Agriculture distribution location and as a gathering spot for field trips. The concrete floor makes the facility accessible to all. This will be a great hub for special events such as the Open House and Pumpkinfest! Thank you to the Council of Michigan Foundations!



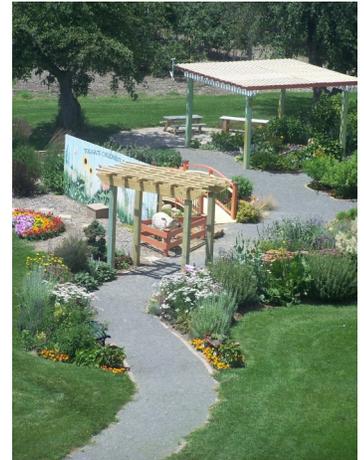
Collaboration for a Corral

Completed in July of 2016 with funds provided by The Americana Foundation, the 140'x80' corral is an asset to animal programming at Tollgate. In its first year, the corral was used by summer camp and horse camp. Horse camp was so successful that additional weeks are planned for future years. The corral will also serve as a practice arena for 4-H and others who wish to hone their animal handling skills for the county or state fair.



Lair for our Layers

Educational programs now have access to a mobile chicken coop. The coop is designed to move, allowing chickens to forage for insects and plant material as a supplement to their daily feed. A high tech solar sensitive door protects the chickens by rising in the morning with the sun and closing at night. The coop is spacious and has an abundance of perches and nesting boxes, everything a chicken could want! This new device will be an important teaching tool for both youth and adult education programs.



- Tollgate Features:**
- 160 acres of fields, pastures, pond, and woods
 - 20 different ornamental gardens
 - Horses, goats, chickens, calves, and rabbits housed on site
 - Historic barns built in the 1800's





Extension Staff Serving Tollgate and District 11

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<http://tollgate.msu.edu>

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by the generous support of volunteers and financial sponsors.**

Your donation to Michigan State University is tax-deductible.