



Tuscola County 2018 ANNUAL REPORT

BY THE NUMBERS

100⁺ Over 100 years of serving
Tuscola County



MSU Extension website
received 16,939 visits from
Tuscola County; 74.4% first-
time visitors



\$85,499 spending with
local businesses



3,536 youth in Tuscola
County 4-H programs



110 Tuscola County students
enrolled at MSU



MSU disbursed \$1,888,170
in financial aid to Tuscola
County students



567 MSU alumni in Tuscola
County



\$5,372,560 total economic
impact in Tuscola County

MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR

Michigan State University (MSU) Extension is the delivery system that brings cutting edge knowledge directly to the citizens of our state. Over the past year, MSU Extension partnered with Tuscola County to continue strengthening youth, families, businesses and communities. Your MSU Extension staff members, grounded in local relationships, serve by bringing the university's research and resources to provide outreach and education in the areas Tuscola County residents need it most.



From agriculture to 4-H to personal finance programs and from youth to senior audiences, MSU Extension provides education to help Tuscola County residents improve their lives. This report highlights just some of the work done last year.

We're passionate about serving Tuscola County and understand that equipping residents with knowledge helps them at home, at work and in their communities. Thank you for supporting MSUE and for partnering with us to make a difference.

Jerry Johnson, District Director

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index](http://canr.msu.edu/tuscola/index)



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@MSUEExtension

Developing Youth and Communities



MSU EXTENSION 4-H STAFF

KATIE COOPER
4-H Coordinator

Committee Leaders:

Jackie Garner
4-H Council President

Genevieve Hecht
4-H Large Livestock
President

Jennifer Beardslee
4-H Small Livestock
President

Amy Kotsch
4-H Horse Leaders
President

4-H is America's largest youth development organization, providing educational opportunities to over 6 million youth. The 4-H program offers a vast selection of project area topics—science, healthy living, arts, and civic engagement to name a few, all with hands-on experiential learning for youth. 4-H programs are available for all youth ages 5-19, and are made possible by the service of our dedicated volunteers. We always welcome new members and new volunteers; if you are interested in joining 4-H, please contact the Tuscola County MSU Extension office at 989-672-3870. We would be happy to help you enroll today!

Our Volunteers

4-H programs are made possible by the service of our dedicated volunteers. An Effective 4-H Council is essential to planning, conducting and evaluating 4-H work. To be successful, 4-H programs must meet the needs and interests of local participants. Determining these needs and interest and then developing and implementing programs that fulfill those needs require the organized involvement of local volunteers and community stakeholders. Tuscola County's 4-H program has several committee boards that are made up of 24 dedicated volunteers. They are vital to the local 4-H program as these volunteer groups fulfill their mission thru the following functions:

- Assist in developing a total 4-H program based on the needs of youth and the county and then actively carrying out the plan.
- Introducing new 4-H projects, programs and activities that are designed to attract new youth to the 4-H program
- Planning for and assisting with the recruitment, education and recognition of 4-H members and 4-H volunteers.
- Raising and managing funds to underwrite the planned 4-H curriculum, program and activities.
- Recommending policy and procedures for the county when not determined by state or national regulations.
- Providing for the representation of the 4-H program at other meetings and events.
- Evaluating the overall 4-H program on a continuing basis.
- Promoting the work of the 4-H council, its committees and the entire 4-H program throughout the county.





Developing Youth and Communities, continued

Tuscola County 4-H provided local members and volunteers opportunities to connect to learning experiences beyond the county as well. These included:

4-H Exploration Days



A pre-college awareness program for youth ages 11-19 held on the campus of Michigan State University. Youth and chaperones spent 3 days at MSU, lived in a dorm, ate in the cafeteria and attended Exploration Days classes they chose. Class sessions ranged from learning how to play a sport, weave a basket, learn a new language, show a chicken, open a checking account, or meet with a college admissions office. In June 2018, we had 22 youth from Tuscola County participate in Exploration Days.

Michigan 4-H State Awards Program



Hunter Vennevay

In 2018, Hunter Vennevay, a 4-H'er in Tuscola County won a state award in the 4-H Mark of Excellence essay contest. Every year, counties across Michigan offer 4-H youth ages 11 and 12 the opportunity to participate in Michigan State Awards' 4-H Mark of Excellence essay contest. The essay theme was "Because of 4-H I can...." and the youth referred to their 4-H experiences as ones that have allowed them to make new friends, try new projects, explore new places and help their dreams come true

Progressive Agriculture Safety Day



The agricultural safety day provide youth with educational information about farm, ranch and rural safety. These fun filled, hands-on learning experiences provide youth with information to live safer and healthier lives.

Michigan State Shows

These shows are an opportunity for 4-H youth to represent their county at a State level. Youth are able to take their project animal (horse, dog, poultry, goat, and rabbit) and attend a 4-H State Show at Michigan State University where they compete against other 4-H'ers in the state.



Developing Youth and Communities, continued

Camp Activities included:

- Outdoor skills
- Olympic training
- Cabin Games
- Skits
- Shooting sports
- Nature walk
- Mud hike
- Kayaking
- Swimming in Lake Huron
- STEM
- Team building events
- Minute-to-win-it games
- Outdoor cooking

2018 Thumb Area 4-H Camp

Sixty-three (63) youth and twenty-two (22) teen counselors and eleven (11) adult chaperons from Huron, St. Clair, Sanilac and Tuscola Counties attended Thumb Area 4-H Camp held at Camp Cavell in Lexington on July 6-8, 2018. The main purpose was to get youth (4-H and non-4-H), ages 9 to 14 of age, involved in an outdoor-living experience.

Our awesome team of 4-H teen camp counselors and four (4) MSUE staff are responsible for planning, implementation and evaluation of the Thumb Area 4-H camp program. Throughout the year, committee members are involved in numerous workshop and training in preparation for Thumb Area 4-H Camp.

Thumb Area 4-H Camp offers a golden opportunity to youth to make new friends and share experiences in camping, all while building and developing life skills.



Project RED (Rural Education Day)

Project Red day is a day when Tuscola County 3rd grade students venture through local educational and hands-on stations outlining the role agriculture plays in their lives. Tuscola County 4-H and the Tuscola County Farm Bureau have built meaningful relationships and programs at our county level to foster strong agricultural communities among our youth.

The Tuscola County Fair

The County Fair is an opportunity for 4-H youth to showcase all their hard work to the community. Over 200 4-H youth participated in the Tuscola County Fair. Showing projects at the fair has many educational benefits such as teaching youth about the value of hard work, healthy competition, and many life skills.



Ensuring Safe and Secure Food



MSU Extension efforts in ensuring safe and secure food lead to a healthy population, which in turn helps keep health care costs in check and our communities viable.

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Food Safety is a global issue from farm to table. Its impact on our health and well-being is significant across the life span. Food-borne illness outbreaks occur on an ongoing basis crossing all socioeconomic lines from production, consumption and preservation of foods. Overall health is impacted by the safety of the food supply and foodborne illness.

To educate consumers about keeping their food safe, MSU Extension provides programming in the areas of Food Preservation, Cooking for Crowds, Safe Food=Healthy Kids and ServSafe manager training for adults. Food safety educational presentations for youth or adults groups are held upon request and online education is also an option for some programs.

Results of programming in Tuscola County include:

ServSafe Certification Program

ServSafe manager certification and education was provided for 51 foodservice employees. This course provides education for the ServSafe Food Protection Manager course and proctoring of the Certification exam. Through ServSafe, participants learn how to help prevent foodborne illness throughout the flow of food and set up food safety management systems.

Fight BAC Food Safety Education and Presentations.

43 Youth engaged in a Fight Bac series of lessons to learn about food safety and staying healthy by keeping germ free. Presentations and food safety displays were also offered for 112 adults. Adults learned about various best practices related to keeping their food safe and avoiding foodborne illness.

Food Preservation

In partnership with the Caro District Library, a food preservation class was offered to fourteen (14) Caro residents focusing on safe Canning and Freezing preservation processes.

Cooking for Crowds

Class was held for four (4) volunteers. Cooking for Crowds is designed for non-profit groups that run food fundraisers and events such as meals, bake sales, sub sales and dinners. There are a range of food safety risks that develop when cooking large volumes of food and participants learn to reduce those risks and help prevent the conditions that may lead to a foodborne illness.

Ensuring Safe and Secure Food, continued



Cass City Preschoolers created their own “BAC” (bacteria) puppet and learn how to Fight BAC and stay healthy.

Michigan FRESH

Fact sheets educating on the safe use, storage and preservation of Michigan grown fruits and vegetables were distributed through three local farm markets as well as our office and food safety programs. They can also be found online at:

http://www.canr.msu.edu/mi_fresh/

Safe Food = Healthy Kids

A new pilot program funded through a Michigan Health Endowment Fund grant which focuses on providing food safety education for childcare providers. The goal of the program is to reduce the incidence of foodborne illness in young children. In Tuscola County, 30 childcare providers attended this new, innovative training which incorporates hands-on learning with a technology piece, an educational texting campaign to enhance learning after attending the program.

Childcare providers shared after attending the class that:

- ◆ I learned I need to calibrate my thermometer and I liked getting the chart with cooking temperatures.
- ◆ It helped with proper glove use.
- ◆ Class taught me about foodborne pathogens and the right cooking temperatures to use for safe food.
- ◆ It showed me ways to cook food safely and helped me learn if you don't have and use proper sanitizer, people can get sick.
- ◆ I will be more diligent about temping meats with a thermometer.



MSU Extension had a Food Safety display focusing on handwashing at a Childcare Provider Conference in Caro reaching 110 providers.



Ensuring Strong Communities

MSU Extension understands that building civic engagement and healthy economic structures leads to greater opportunities and stronger communities.

Serving the State of Michigan

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- Sustainable Tourism Development
- First Impressions: Tourism Assessments
- Planning for Tourism
- Community Vitality
- Leadership and Facilitation



Four Michigan Thumb Communities organize and take action after receiving results from tourists' first - impressions

Michigan State University Extension tourism educator conducts following-up evaluations to determine what actions and impacts come from First Impressions Tourism (FIT) assessments.

Educators partnered with Prosperity Region 6 - a seven county partnership comprised of Huron, Tuscola, Sanilac, St. Clair, Lapeer, Genesee and Shiawassee counties - to offer First Impressions: Tourism Assessments (FIT) to four separate communities during 2017. The communities were selected after reviewing their applications to participate in FIT during 2017 and included the Village of Elkton and the Village of Sebewaing (Huron County), Imlay City (Lapeer County) and the City of Marlette (Sanilac County). The partnership led to each community being awarded \$2,000 from Prosperity Region 6 to implement improvements of their choice based on the results from FIT.

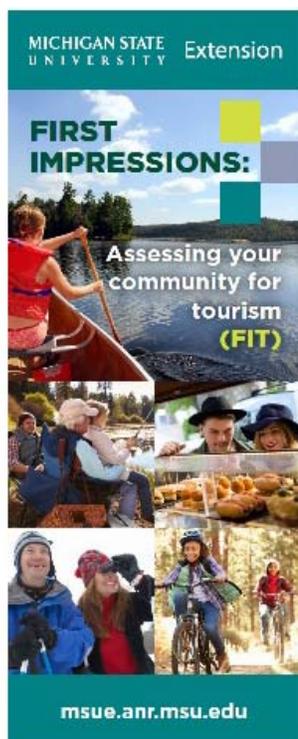
All four communities completed the FIT program successfully by adhering to the program expectations and their roles and responsibilities outlined in advance. Accomplishments include: establishing a cohesive and committed Community Leadership Team (CLT), attending the required Zoom kick-off meeting with MSU Extension FIT tourism leaders, organizing and sponsoring a community report forum (CRF) open to all where results are shared in a location identified by the community, and being available for follow-up evaluation meetings six to nine months after program completion. In addition, Prosperity Region 6 had expectations that implementation dollars would be spend before July 2018, which all four communities have executed. As of mid-2018, FIT has proven to be an effective program for communities interested in improving tourism, place making and overall quality of life.

Each community identified either one large or several small projects to move forward with. A brief list of impacts as a result of FIT for each community is below:

Elkton - Promotional social media videos, mural paintings in downtown designed to attract visitors, as well as student-to-business/entrepreneurial relationships established.

Imlay City - Historical walking tour and website consolidations, as well as beautification programs for community members and private/public partnerships between the city and Vlassic.

Ensuring Strong Communities, continued



Serving the State of Michigan

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- Fiscal Sustainability for Michigan Municipalities - Statewide
- New County Commissioner Training - Statewide
- Non-Profit Community Grocery Store Model - St. Clair County
- Plant Science laboratory - Yale Public Schools

Marlette - Development and implementation of their first farmer's market being driven by a re-engaged Downtown Development Authority comprised of nine new members.

Sebewaing - Successful completion of MSU Urban and Regional Planning program resulting in a new recreation plan and updates to master plans as a result of FIT, as well as the launching of a new farmer's market. Sebewaing has also developed their first Historical River District as a result of participating in FIT.

FIT 2017 communities continue to work diligently towards meeting goals identified during the FIT program. A majority of communities have used the \$2,000 implementation money to receive additional grant dollars for funding more projects. This successful model has influenced Prosperity Region 1 in adopting a similar funding model across the Western U.P. As a result of these four FIT programs in 2017 the program has received statewide attention from Michigan Economic Development Corporation and individual Michigan communities interested in funding their own FIT community assessment.

This successful community partnership endeavor has led to another round of FIT programs across Prosperity Region 6. Marine City in St. Clair County and Cass City in Tuscola County were both selected for FIT2018 in District 10. Both communities have begun the FIT process as of mid-August and will work directly with Andy Northrop, Tourism and Community Vitality Educator, throughout 2018 and 2019.

Food Policy Council in Michigan's Thumb Area

The five District 10 counties, which including St. Clair, Lapeer, Tuscola, Sanilac, and Huron counties, will be represented by a food policy council beginning the fall of 2018. The purpose of the council initially will be to develop a thorough understanding of what the food system looks like in the greater Thumb area both from a consumer and producer perspective. The food system is a large dynamic web of networks represented by both private and public sector circles. It further represents a large portion of economic activity within the district geographic area and internationally.

Additionally, the council will evaluate what best strategies will assist in the promotion of a food system that provides for the food needs of those who are secure and insecure. To this end, the council will develop and sponsor projects, programs and other initiatives that provide education to the greater public and promote changes in practices with stakeholders and policies with elected officials that undergird the larger food system.

The council received a \$3000 grant from the Michigan Local Food Policy Council Network in June of 2018. Each county will have designated representatives to serve on the council beginning in September 2018. If you or someone you know would like to be involved in this council please contact Extension Educator Joe Bixler at bixlerj@anr.msu.edu or call 810.989.6309.

Keeping People Healthy

Encouraging healthy behaviors helps reduce food and health care costs by helping prevent chronic health conditions and providing safe environments throughout a person's life span.

Health and Nutrition Staff serving Tuscola County

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Youth doing a MyPlate activity to put foods into the correct MyPlate food group.

When you support MSU Extension, you help participants learn safe food handling practices, increase their physical activity and improve the quality of their diets. Extension programming also helps decrease incidents of violence and bullying. Encouraging these healthy behaviors helps reduce food and health care costs by helping prevent chronic health conditions and providing safe environments throughout a person's life span.

Show Me Nutrition and Grow It, Try It, Like It

Nutrition programming for youth occurred and 60 youth engaged in a 6 week series of classes about healthy eating, MyPlate, and being more physically active.

Healthier Childcare Environments

The Healthier Childcare Environment initiative helps childcare providers identify areas for improvement related to nutrition and physical activity policies and environmental practices. A trained nutrition education coach from MSU Extension helps childcare providers through the process and connects them with resources to work towards best practices. Areas of focus include: Active/ inactive play time, fruits and vegetables, Screen time use, Menus and variety, Physical activity policy, and Nutrition policy. After 4-6 months of planning and implementing new nutrition and physical activity best practices, the result is a Healthier Childcare Environment for the childcare providers and the children they care for! In Tuscola County two childcare sites participated in this program impacting over 41 children and their families.

Success stories from program participants:

"I will serve different kinds of vegetables more often and only 100% whole wheat bread. Parents have shared that they like that their children are eating healthier and trying new foods."

"As a staff we are more focused on nutrition and promoting new food experiences and large motor movement. The children are encouraged to take two bites of all foods. We also ask all children to show and tell what they have in their lunches and what MyPlate food group they belong to. Children are automatically arranging food at lunch to be ready to answer what food groups they have and what they are missing. The kids also are proud when they have taken two bites of new foods. Parents are thrilled that most of the children have shared the "two-bite club" at home and they are taking those two bites at home as well."



Enjoying more fruits and vegetables for at snack time .



Using new MyPlates, children enjoy lunch on the colorful plates which help enforce education about the food groups and eating healthy foods.



**Health and Nutrition
Staff serving
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Cooking Matters for Adults

MSU Extension partnered with Hills and Dales General Hospital to offer two Cooking Matters for Adults class series. Practitioners referred potential participants and their chef provided healthy culinary instruction at each class. In both series combined, a total of 27 adults went through the program to learn about nutrition and healthy cooking on a budget.



Karly also provided hands-on nutrition and healthy cooking classes through Cooking Matters for Adults at Thumb Behavioral Health Systems. A total of 16 participants learned how to eat and cook better while staying on a budget.

Karly also partnered with the Caro Alternative Ed Program. The Teen Cuisine class series provide 13 students with healthy, hands-on cooking skills.

Senior Project Fresh

200 Senior Project FRESH coupon booklets, worth a total of \$4,000, were distributed to low-income senior citizens to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at farmer's markets and roadside stands.

District 10 Nutrition Staff at the Thumb Octagon Barn Agricultural Museum event

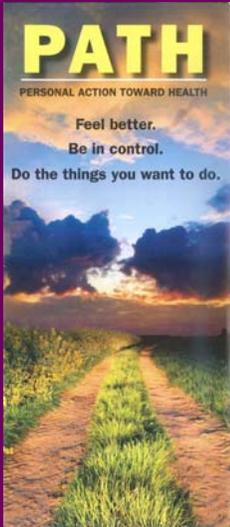
The Thumb Octagon Barn Agricultural Museum, located in Tuscola County, is an agricultural museum and educational center open to individuals, families and student groups to educate and stimulate awareness of our agricultural heritage. The Thumb Octagon Barn School Tours, held May 9 - 11, offered school field trips with students coming from Huron, Tuscola, Sanilac, Bay, Saginaw, St. Clair, Lapeer and Genesee Counties. District 10 MSU Extension staff reached 1,403 people (students and chaperones) over the course of the three days. The theme of this year's event was "The Thumb: Naturally Sweet", so our display was "Fruit: Nature's Candy" and our education discussed recommended servings, forms of fruit, and included a fruit-themed physical activity game.



Spoonfuls of Plenty

The Tuscola County MSU Extension office helped sponsor and served a Spoonfuls of Plenty meal in May, where over 325 community members received a free, hot meal.





Tuscola County
Health and
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Available
programs:

- * Stress Less with Mindfulness
- * RELAX: Alternatives to Anger
- * PATH for Diabetes
- * PATH for Chronic Pain
- * Dining with Diabetes

PATH Workshops (Personal Action toward Health)

Kris Swartzendruber, Extension Educator for Disease Prevention and Management in District #10, conducted a Diabetes PATH series at the Tuscola MSU Extension office August 30 – October 4, 2017 for 10 adult participants. Bonnie Johnson, a Registered Dietician served as co-leader for this series.

Diabetes PATH is a self-management workshop aimed at empowering people to take an active role in managing diabetes. Over the course of 6 weeks, participants learn strategies to help them deal with difficult emotions, how to develop a healthy eating and exercise plan, goal setting and problem solving, and a variety of other tools to manage diabetes.

Adults of all ages interested in diabetes may attend, including adults with prediabetes, type 1 or type 2 diabetes, family members and caregivers.

Dining with Diabetes

In January of 2018, 10 participants completed a 4 week Dining with Diabetes series held at the MSU Extension Office in Caro.

Dining with Diabetes is a fun and interactive course series targeting individuals with prediabetes, type 1 or type 2 diabetes, members of their support system and/or anyone interested in learning more.

Participants learn to make healthy food choices and incorporate balanced menus into the family dining experience. Classes include research-based education, cooking demonstrations and healthy recipe tasting.

The following are testimonials and comments from the participants:

- ◆ I was recently diagnosed with Diabetes 2. My healthcare provider set me up with classes in Grand Blanc MI. When I heard about the classes being offered here at Caro free of charge, I was so relieved. There was so much information to learn about. I've learned a lot from these weekly classes. I hope you continue to offer these classes to the community, so others can learn about their Diabetes and the disease as I have. I plan to make changes to improve my overall health. Again, thank-you so much. I greatly appreciated all the information and assistance you have provided me."
- ◆ "Until I signed up for this class, I knew nothing about diabetes. Even though a few months earlier my doctor gave me a prescription for Metformin and told me I was pre-diabetic. I asked what does that mean and was told "just watch your sugars and carbs" and with that statement the doctor was out the door. This class has been so very beneficial to me! It has given me an understanding of what diabetes is and how to live with it. I have learned not only what to eat, but how often, along with portion size and control. I also gained knowledge about being more active and taking control of my feelings.
- ◆ I really enjoyed this class. I learned a lot, like how stress and sickness can raise my blood sugar levels. I also enjoyed the size of the class. It was very conducive to learning with a lot of good materials presented at a good pace.

- * The human mind has 70,000 thoughts each day. That's 70,000 opportunities.
- * The typical brain is about 2 percent of your body weight but uses 20 percent of your energy.
- * 80 percent of repetitive thought are negative. But they don't have to be.
- * A brisk 10- minute walk reduces the amount of cortisol (stress hormone) in the brain by 50 to 70 percent.

Stress Less with Mindfulness

Mindfulness means paying attention to the present moment without judgement. Research has shown that practicing mindfulness is effective in reducing stress-related symptoms such as worry, depression and physical tension, and may be helpful on managing chronic conditions such as cardiac disease and diabetes.

By offering adults and seniors alternative ways of relating to everyday life experiences, including thoughts, emotions, physical sensations and events, Stress Less with Mindfulness teaches and encourages the use of mindfulness self-care skills to help one feel better and enjoy life more.

Kris Swartzendruber, Extension Educator for Social and Emotional Health, partnered with the Thumb Behavioral Health Systems to facilitate a five week **Stress Less with Mindfulness** series in Caro during the month of May. She had 16 participants complete the series.

Farm Stress Program

In collaboration with the Ag and Agri-Business Extension Educators in Districts 9 and 10, Kris Swartzendruber, Extension Educator for Social and Emotional Health, conducted the following **Farm Stress: How to Cultivate a Productive Mindset** programs for area farmers:

- 4 Thumb Ag Review Meetings reached a total of 72 adult participants
- The Thumb Area Vegetable Growers Meeting reached 27 adult participants
- The Thumb Cattleman Association Meeting reached 20 adult participants

Farmers know how to care of their animals and crops, taking careful steps to ensure that they are healthy and safe. Unfortunately, farmers don't always take the same care in monitoring and managing their own mental and physical stress and fatigue. At present, commodity prices are low, making stress especially palpable for the farmers in the thumb area.

MSU Extension puts a high emphasis on making sure farmers care for their own health and wellness in this high-stress profession. Whether these stresses come from a financial issue or the stresses of everyday life, the *Farm Stress* program is designed to provide information and resources to not only help the farmers identify and manage stress for themselves, but also for their family members, friends and/or neighbors.

As a result of these programs, the majority of the participants reported a significant increase in their knowledge about:

- Understanding rural stress issues and the warning signs of stress
- The impact stress has on our bodies
- Assessing stress issues and taking steps in managing stress
- Recognizing available resources



Supporting Food and Agriculture



According to the Michigan Food & Agricultural Systems the total market value of crops, livestock and other income for 2017 raised in Tuscola County was \$274,446,000

MSU Extension Agriculture educators serving Tuscola County:

Bob Battel - Field Crops

Marianne Buza - Dairy

Corey Clark - Farm Business Management

Phil Kaatz - Forages & Field Crops

Martin Nagelkirk - Wheat

Ben Phillips—Vegetables

Jeannine Schwehofer - Animal quality assurance & food safety

Kable Thurlow - Beef

Bob Tritten - Fruit

Thumb Ag Review provides results of research on local field crops

The Thumb Ag Reviews are a series of post-harvest meetings intended to provide farmers, agronomist and agribusiness an opportunity to learn about the results from the research and demonstration field trials conducted by the MSU Extension Field Crops Educators located in the Thumb of Michigan

Phil Kaatz, Bob Battel and Martin Nagelkirk were the MSU Extension Educators who presented the findings at five locations in the Thumb. These locations included the Saginaw Valley Research & Extension Center in Frankenmuth, Thumb Ag Day in Ubly, Lapeer Education & Technology Center in Attica, Westpark Inn in Sandusky and at Gracies Restaurant in New Lothrop.

The topics discussed included:

- ◆ Corn hybrid trials
- ◆ Soybean variety trials
- ◆ Glyphosate resistant varieties
- ◆ Conventional non-herbicide resistant varieties
- ◆ RR 2 Xtend varieties
- ◆ Liberty Link varieties
- ◆ Biological additive trials
- ◆ Corn population trials
- ◆ Yard compost in a corn /soybean rotation
- ◆ Corn nitrogen rate trial
- ◆ Soybean cyst nematode resistance variety trial
- ◆ Alfalfa sulfur source trial
- ◆ Wheat fungicide efficacy trial on stripe rust susceptible varieties
- ◆ Intensive management of wheat inputs

In all, there were 160 participants, 77% of the participants completed a post – evaluation survey. Those completing the evaluation represented 107,420 acres of crops. 83% of the participants said, “ They would make changes in management practices based on the information they received and estimated a potential in increased revenue or in cost savings of \$242.85 from implementing the changes.”



When you support MSU Extension, you help participants learn profitable and efficient business and production practices.

Thumb Ag Day

MSU Extension hosted the annual Thumb Ag Day on Wednesday, December 13 at the Ugly Heights Country Club. Two-hundred visitors from ten different counties met with eighty-two vendors at the event.

Participants also had the chance to see educational sessions, including:

- Making production costs fit today's markets, presented by Dennis Stein, MSU Extension Farm Management Educator, Emeritus
- Commodity market update, presented by Dr. Jim Hilker, Professor, Department of Ag, Food and Resource Economics, MSU
- Ways to combat nutrient transport from agricultural fields to downstream water bodies presented by Dr. Ehsan Ghane, Assistant Professor, Department of Biosystems Engineering, MSU.
- In the afternoon, MSU Extension Field Crops Educators Martin Nagelkirk, Phil Kaatz, and Bob Battel presented an agricultural review, including results of 2017 field trials, including an update on RoundUp resistant marestail.

The 2018 Thumb Ag Day will be held on Wednesday, December 12, at the Ugly Heights Country Club.

Pesticide Licensing Exam Review

State law requires licensed pesticide applicators to complete an examination and continued education to maintain their credentials. This process helps ensure that pesticides are applied in a manner that protects people and the environment. Each winter we offer certification training and updates for pesticide applicators. The review session is for those wishing to receive final training before the exam or for those needing pesticide re-certification credits. Bob Battel holds review sessions during the winter months in Tuscola and Huron Counties.

2018 SMaRT Soybean On-Farm Research Meetings

The results from the 2017 SMaRT (Soybean Management and Research Technologies) on-farm research projects were presented at the Brentwood Restaurant in Caro in late January 2018. The program began at 8:45 a.m. and ended with a complimentary lunch.

Participants learned how various management practices and products impacted soybean yields and income in the 2017 SMaRT on-farm research trials. Mark Seamon, research coordinator for the Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee, provided an overview of the research projects funded by the Michigan soybean checkoff. Participants also had an opportunity to meet Dr. Marisol Quintanilla, the new MSU nematologist and learn about her plans for helping Michigan soybean producers manage soybean cyst nematodes

Supporting Food and Agriculture, continued

Thumb Dairy Odyssey

Thumb Dairy Odyssey Days just completed its 7th event. The first event took place in the summer of 2016. This continues to be a unique event that is pulling youth from all over the state to learn about dairy. This program was invented by 4-H member, Addy Battel. It was created because, even though the Thumb area of Michigan is the number one milk producing area in Michigan, it lacks any youth events for dairy. This event takes place on Saturdays in the summer. In 2017 and 2018 each summer had 2 separate Saturday events where youth were able to go to different local dairy farms and learn about animal science, agriculture and most importantly some of the career possibilities they present. Many farms across the state of Michigan struggle to find those who want to work on farms or work in agribusiness.

These youth were also encouraged to try showing animals at fair or attending events like dairy days at MSU. In 2017 and 2018, Thumb Dairy Odyssey Days had 87 youth participated and there were 54 parents and volunteers that attended. Of the 87 youth, 6 were from Tuscola County.



A 4-H youth learns how to clip a cow for show



Marianne Buza teaching youth low stress animal handling techniques



Hoof Trimmer Gary Buchholz show youth how a cow walks after being trimmed

On Farm Research Influence Winter Education Programs

Since the summer of 2016, the MSU Extension dairy team has been doing a summer research project on farms across the state. These research projects are to help answer questions dairy producers have. The research projects provide valuable information to the farms and create a picture of the issue state wide. The first project the team did involved the immunity of dairy bull calves verse dairy heifer calves. The 2017 winter education program was about how to improve your calf raising program based on results from the project. The program was held at 6 locations, including Bad Axe. In the summer of 2017, the dairy team's research involved evaluating parlor performance by measure milk let down and milk flow. The topic for the 2018 winter education program was ways to increase profits by making changes to your parlor. Meetings were held in 5 locations. For the 2018 summer project, the level of heat stress on dairy farms is being assessed. The 2019 winter education program will be influenced by the results of the project. Of the 3 research projects 21 Thumb area farms have participated. Of those farms 2 were from Tuscola County.



Parlor Inspection tour

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