

Michigan State University Extension in Tuscola County: Solving Problems & Increasing Opportunities for Today & Tomorrow

On August 2, 2022, Tuscola County residents will be asked to continue investment in Michigan State University (MSU) Extension programs that helps families, businesses and professionals gain the knowledge they need to be healthy and safe, do their jobs better, build strong communities, protect local environments and help young people gain the confidence and skills needed to be successful. MSU Extension programs in Tuscola County help reduce the cost of public investment in health care as well as governmental remediation services and increase the educational resources that help families and local communities thrive.

Tuscola County residents receive \$5 in return value for every \$1 the county invests in MSU Extension programs.

Delivering Education Despite the Pandemic

While stay-at-home orders hindered access to many opportunities during the pandemic, Tuscola County residents logged 844 registrations for MSU Extension online educational programs during the 2020 and 2021 program years. County residents accessed 275 online programs designed to improve farm productivity and profitability, promote food safety and support youth educational enrichment among the many online MSU Extension educational offerings.

- In 2020 and 2021, 90 agriculture producers registered to attend virtual learning sessions focused on pest and crop management; farm bill and crop insurance; and field crop, bean and sugarbeet updates and field days. These educational programs are all designed to help farmers improve productivity and profitability while using sustainable methods.

Empowering and Equipping Youth Success

Fifty-three percent of Tuscola County 4-H seniors graduating between 2012 and 2017 enrolled in college. This is a rate 6% higher than the overall Tuscola County graduate college enrollment rate of 47%. An investment in Tuscola County MSU Extension and 4-H is an investment in the positive development of Tuscola County young people.

- In 2020-2021, Tuscola County MSU Extension 4-H programs engaged 1,963 Tuscola County youth aged 5 to 19 in 4-H special interest, short-term and community club learning opportunities. There were 317 Tuscola County youth engaged in 4-H clubs during the pandemic led by 53 community-based adult volunteers. 4-H club participation has proven to help prepare young people for work, especially for jobs in science, technology, engineering and math.

Educating for Greater Farm Profitability

Tuscola County producers managed 21,500 heads of cattle including 7,300 dairy cows and farms planted 184,200 acres of field crops that produced 21.7 million bushels of corn, wheat and soybeans in 2021 (U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service, County Estimates, 2021).

- Access to evidenced-based information is critical when business decisions depend on it. MSU Extension is a leader in discovering knowledge and helping farmers apply tested solutions that benefit their farms, their families and their communities. Tuscola County MSU Extension educators provided access to articles, webinars and timely social media posts designed to help producers manage the challenges of coronavirus disruptions to agriculture, prepare for tax season and manage the ongoing financial and business planning needed for farming.
- Annually, Michigan's 900 sugarbeet growers, plant and harvest nearly 160,000 acres of sugarbeets, harvesting 4.5 million tons.* MSU Extension provides evidence-based educational support for local sugarbeet farmers through the MSU Extension Sugarbeet Advancement program. This team works to improve sugarbeet production through on-farm research trials and educational programs and demonstrations. In-person events attracted 980 attendees and virtual events attracted nearly 1,200 views.

*Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. (2019). *Michigan agricultural facts and figures*, p. 33.

Helping Families Make Healthy Decisions

MSU Extension delivers affordable, relevant, evidence-based education to help adults, young people and families eat well, consume food safely and manage chronic disease to stay healthy.

- By December 2021, Tuscola County had 7,014 residents receiving federal food and nutrition assistance. MSU Extension educators provided nutrition and health education programming to individuals and families using both in-person and virtual learning sessions to provide tools and best practices proven to improve family diet and physical well-being on a limited budget.
- In partnership with local farmers and MSU Extension Community Food Systems, Tuscola County community nutrition instructors and community volunteers in Tuscola, Genesee and Saginaw counties were able to collect and donate 33,241 pounds of fresh produce to food banks, food pantries and soup kitchens.
- An estimated 15.9% of Tuscola's population is living with diabetes.† MSU Extension educators offer disease prevention and management programming to help individuals and families better manage and live with diabetes with such self-management programs as the six-session Diabetes Personal Action Toward Health (PATH) and the National Diabetes Prevention Program, which is a year-long program supported by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to help people make modest behavior changes to better manage their diabetes.

†Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. (2021). Health indicators and risk estimates by community health assessment regions and local health departments, state of Michigan. p. 63.

MSU Extension is eager to continue serving Tuscola County residents in strong partnership with the County Board of Commissioners. By working together, MSU Extension can continue to help people improve their lives by bringing the vast knowledge resources of Michigan State University directly to individuals, families, businesses and communities.