MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT COORDINATOR

MSU Extension has been partnering with counties across the state of Michigan for over 100 years. Last year our organization enjoyed celebrating this milestone with our county stakeholders and other key partners commemorating the centennial anniversary of the signing of the Smith Lever Act. Looking back over the past 100 years, our commitment to residents and counties continues to remain the same. We will continue to work within Benzie County addressing critical needs each and every day with individuals, families and communities.

This annual report features the programs offered to Benzie County residents. It highlights our foundational programs like agriculture and 4H as well as expanding programs like fostering strong communities and health and nutrition education. I think you will be very pleased with the excellent programs provided to residents of Benzie County.

Please let me know if you need additional information on any of the topics covered in this brief overview of our work in 2014. As always, thank you for your continued support of the partnership between MSU Extension and Benzie County.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Berkey, Interim District 3 Coordinator

MEASURING IMPACT

CONNECTING WITH RESIDENTS

4-H: Developing Youth & Communities ........................................... 575
Keeping People Healthy & Ensuring Safe Food ............................... 976
Supporting Food & Agriculture ...................................................... 168
Fostering Strong Communities & Businesses while Enhancing Our Natural Assets ........................................... 78

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS IN BENZIE COUNTY .......................... 1,797

CONTACT US

448 Court Place
Beulah, MI 49617
Phone: 231-882-0025
Hours: Tues/Thurs. 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
Email: msue.benzie@county.msu.edu
msue.anr.msu.edu/county/info/benzie

STAFF HOUSED IN BENZIE COUNTY

Kurt Schindler
Land Use Educator
schind9@msu.edu
Debra Laws
4-H Program Coordinator
laws@msu.edu
Connie Hemingway
Nutrition Program Instructor
heming22@msu.edu
Roberta LaValley
Secretary
rlavall@msu.edu

MISSION:

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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MSU Extension’s Expanded Digital Reach

- 2 million visitors viewed more than 4 million pages
- 560,000 topic newsletters distributed to more than 8,500 email addresses
- Nearly 2,000 Facebook and more than 1,700 Twitter followers

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When you support MSU Extension 4-H programs, youth participants learn life skills that prepare them for the workforce – especially for highly sought after jobs in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Extension programs help children develop early literacy skills that support school readiness. They learn leadership and decision-making skills in 4-H that increase their likelihood of becoming civically active. 4-H'ers also demonstrate reduced high-risk behaviors such as drug use, and learn to complete tasks, solve problems and seek any help they might need from peers and adults. 4-H involvement also helps participants avoid or reduce involvement with the court system. This helps ensure more young people succeed in school, attend college and contribute to their communities. More successful young people in communities results in greater tax revenues and consumer spending and increases the likelihood that young people will stay in, or return to, their communities.

The Benzie 4-H Leaders Association Council

This board functions as the main oversight of the local 4-H program and also acts to support the mission, spirit and key priorities for the 4-H clubs and other activities and events. This board had been non-existent for 9 years when, in 2012, 4-H Program Coordinator Laws sought out several seasoned and dedicated Benzie volunteers to form a new group. The current board consists of 8 members, representing Benzonia Township, Beulah, Homestead Township, Honor, and Joyfield Township.

A new addition to this council is a sub-committee called the “4-H Expansion and Review Committee.” The charge of this group will be to examine the current membership and volunteer numbers in the program and explore and implement practices to increase those totals, particularly where underserved audiences are concerned. With the reduction of 4-H staff in Benzie, this work will be more important than ever to aid in strengthening the program.

The Benzie Leaders Association Council also works with 4-H staff to support a 4-H Ambassador program, county plat book, annual youth trip to Michigan State University, and a volunteer recognition program. This group provided financial support to MSUE and Benzie county in 2014 to ensure a secretary position in the Benzie MSUE office, enabling that office to be open on a part-time basis.

The Benzie County 4-H Ambassador Program

A maximum of two youths are selected annually through an application and interview process. Youth selected serve as representatives of the program at public 4-H events and
Developing Youth and Communities, continued

council meetings. Ambassadors indicate that this distinction is a highly favorable asset when mentioned in portfolios and resumes, scholarship and college admission applications, and employment interviews. This year, Benzie County 4-H is proud to announce 2 ambassadors: Rebekah Daugherty, a homeschooled student in the 10th grade, and Kaitlyn Long, a Benzie Central High School junior.

The Benzie County Land Atlas and Plat Book

A new and very improved book was launched in early 2014. 4-H staff embarked on several research projects in order to include a government directory page, soils and landforms maps, and other local statistics in the book. In any community, this book is valuable in promoting local tourism, as indicated by increased sales activity around holidays, hunting seasons, spring mushroom harvest and seasonal festivals. The Benzie MSU Extension office monitors sales activity and there is a clear indication that people from around the state, as well as out of state, have an interest in Benzie county.

Proceeds from all sales go directly to the Benzie 4-H Leaders Association Council. Numerous 4-H activities, special events, and funding for travel to statewide educational events and 4-H Exploration Days are made possible in part due to the financial support received annually through plat book sales. In addition, those sales proceeds are helping to support MSUE and Benzie county in their efforts to maintain part time Benzie MSUE office hours and secretary coverage.

The book is sold at the county treasurer’s office and the Extension office, as well as at several local businesses, including Lake Ann Grocery, Nugent Ace Hardware, Stapleton’s Market, and Victoria’s Floral Design & Gifts. These businesses have all indicated that plat book sales have increased foot traffic and other purchases in their stores!

“What is most important to us is that we provide an accessible outlet in the north corner of our county for the public to be able to purchase a book without traveling a great distance. We can’t say enough about the value of this book, for the information it provides and for the support it gives to the Benzie Leaders Association Council and the b4-H program. Speaking as a merchant, it is also an excellent place to advertise your business.”

- John Nuske, owner of Lake Ann Grocery

4-H Exploration Days at MSU

This 3 day event, held annually in late June at the Michigan State University campus, simulates college life for over 2200 4-H youth from all over the state. The Benzie 4-H Leaders Association Council pays all enrollment fees for adult chaperones and 50% of the cost for youth attendees, plus additional expenses such as group insurance and a portion
Developing Youth and Communities, continued

of travel reimbursement. The youth and their chaperones live on campus, experience
dorm life, and attend a variety of classes and other educational events in subject areas that
include human and animal sciences, international culture and languages, career
exploration in dozens of fields, music, human services, life skills, hobbies and sports, and
personal and business finance. For most of these Benzie County youth, this will be their
first exposure to a college campus and it will influence most of them towards a college
education and a greater career goal than they had originally planned. Female chaperone
Stephanie Johnston has felt an impact that goes even deeper than simply attending
sessions, as she expressed recently:

'I have attended Exploration Days as a chaperone for three years, and each year, I gain
more from it. I love watching the rural kids interacting with the city kids, especially at
the dance and during free-time. I love watching the kids in our contingent become
closer and closer each year. I love the excitement on the ride home about plans for the
next year. I have enjoyed serving as a session host which has allowed me to bring
various crafts projects back to our 4-H group. For two years I hosted the sessions on
Polish culture and was able to share my love of all things Red and White with others. I
was even able to help teach the polka! The vacation time spent is well worth it as it is a
fantastic program that not only benefits the kids, but the adults as well.'

- Stephanie Johnston, Exploration Days Chaperone

Benzie County 4-H Program Structure Enhancements

All 4-H programs utilize some form of electronic database program to keep member and
volunteer records and statistics intact and to send mass communications by e-mail and
text messaging. An ongoing effort this year involved the launch of the “4-H Online”
enrollment program. This is a new “self-enroll” program that was introduced in Michigan
in late January of 2015. Once the “4-H Online” program is fully functional, it will be faster
and more convenient for youth and adults to enroll in the program, thus making it easier
for Extension staff to communicate with program members to better meet their needs.

4-H staff in Benzie County created an innovative and colorful instruction document to
help families adjust to the new program. Even those with limited computer skills have
delighted in being able to complete the necessary steps. One family indicated that the
process helped teach them how to use their first home computer!

In early 2015, as an answer to the local 4-H public’s request for a centralized information
source, Benzie 4-H staff built a new local website. Work will progress as time permits,
but it is hoped that the site will be fully functional by late June. The new site is at
www.manisteebenzie4h.com.

"Exploration Days is a time to make
stronger bonds with
old friends, and it
gives me the
opportunity to make
new ones. I have
been able to take
classes to learn
more about my
hobbies, as well as
investigate possible
careers."

~ Allison Johnston,
8-year 4-H member
active in the Betsie
River Barnyarders
4-H club

4-H has celebrated more than 110 years in community service, and these members of
the Benzie Cowabungas 4-H Club are a shining example. Shown here are, left to
right: Emily White, Shayna Brooks, Cody Pelkey, Zachary Taghon, and Myah Clous.
The club made and donated dog treats to the Benzie County Animal Control shelter.
The Benzie Youth Soccer Program

In 1997, the need arose for Benzie county youth to participate in and reap the benefits of a well-organized youth soccer program. In most communities, soccer programs typically fall under the authority of a community recreation association. As this wasn’t a possibility in Benzie County, event organizers looked to Benzie MSU Extension to provide that leadership. They knew that MSU Extension would operate with a well-organized and transparent financial system, handle registration issues with accuracy and fairness, ensure safe volunteer coaches by utilizing a careful volunteer selection process, and serve as a “command central” for the needs of players, parents and coaches alike.

For the past 18 years, every autumn, MSUE Benzie serves the community in all those aspects in delivering the Benzie Youth Soccer Program. In turn, Benzie MSUE is thankful to local volunteer Dr. Dennis Pace for the countless hours he spends on and off the playing field in support of this essential youth development program. For the 2014 playing season, a total of 173 Benzie County youth participated in the program.

For youth, the benefits of all team sports, including soccer, are widespread. But probably most important, they encourage the formation of social skills and a sense of belonging. For those kids who feel disconnected or directionless, these advantages can often make the difference in whether they will choose the right paths – or the wrong ones – to follow in life.

Benzie Volunteers Are An Essential Part of Two County Fairs

Although the Manistee County Fair is not “officially” known as a district fair, its successes would not be possible if not for the added contributions that Benzie county residents make. Of the 15 member Manistee County 4-H Livestock Council, more than one third are Benzie County residents. Approximately the same figures and proportions are true of the Manistee County Fair Board. In fact, the presidents of both groups are Benzie county residents! There are also a number of Benzie county residents who are actively involved in the Northwestern Michigan District Fair and in other 4-H councils and committees that support both fairs.

A premier fair event, carried out by the Livestock Council, is the annual 4-H Livestock Auction at the Manistee County Fair. In August of 2014, the auction celebrated its 34th year with a sale featuring 109 animals and 50 donated items. With 105 buyers participating, the event raised over $117,000. Honor State Bank, which is also a 31 year consecutive buyer, has served as auction cashier since 2005. A total of 5% of auction proceeds go back to the Livestock Council for ongoing support of its programs and a smaller portion goes to other 4-H councils that were designated as recipients of income from certain donated items that were sold. However, the majority of the auction money...
Developing Youth and Communities, continued

raised goes back to the Benzie and Manistee 4-H members and is used for essentials such as back-to-school needs and college funds. At the 2014 auction, figures indicate that 19 of the registered buyers represented Benzie County businesses. These local businesses report to us that the exposure and publicity they get by being involved in this event makes a difference by increasing their business foot traffic and volume. People want to support businesses that support 4-H.

The fair and auction season culminates with the annual auction buyer appreciation banquet held in October at the Fairgrounds Pavilion in Onekama. Unlike many counties who have downsized the scope of this 4-H event traditionally held to recognize businesses and individuals that support 4-H members involved in market livestock projects, the Benzie-Manistee event still has a seated dinner with a formal program.

“You are one of the few 4-H auctions that still find it necessary and important to have a real sit-down dinner banquet as an appreciation for your buyers. It means so much for us buyers to connect with the kids at that event. Otherwise, we could easily become ‘disassociated’ with the kids and the accomplishments they have made.”

- Dan Swick, owner of Swick Custom Butchering, 16-year auction buyer and meat processor used by Benzie buyers

Grandma Elaine Putney is mighty proud of her grandchildren and their 4-H steer projects. Pictured left to right are: Karl Putney, Claira Putney, Lauren Nordbeck, Katelyn Nordbeck, and Elizabeth Putney, at the Manistee County Fair. The Putney family has had multiple generations involved in Benzie County 4-H, including these leaders of tomorrow!

“Because of 4-H I get to ride horses which I love!”

~ Alexis Klockziem, 4-H Cloverbud, Age 8
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.

**Teaching valuable healthy-eating skills**

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Education (SNAP-Ed) provides nutrition education to income-eligible adults and children. This program focuses on improving dietary quality, increasing physical activity while stretching food dollars. The ultimate goal of these programs is to promote healthy weight maintenance and obesity prevention. During the past year in Benzie County, 319 adults and 608 youth were reached through nutrition education classes at various venues in the county.

One of the many classes MSU Extension staff teach each year is through a partnership called Project FRESH. In collaboration with the Benzie County Health Department, MSU Extension nutrition staff provide nutrition education to families involved in the Women, Infants and Children program (WIC) on the benefits of including more fruits and vegetables in their diet. Coupons were provided to these participants to purchase locally grown fresh fruit and vegetables from Benzie County farmer’s markets through Project FRESH. These coupons were redeemed at the farm market for over $1,400 in funds for produce grown by local farmers.

Nutrition education classes make a difference in lives of adults and youth in Benzie County! Here are a few impacts achieved through the MSU Extension nutrition education classes:

**Impacts with Adults:**

- 83% showed improvement in one or more nutrition practice like planning meals, making healthy food choices or reading food labels.
- 74% showed improvement in one or more food resource management practice like planning meals, comparing prices or using grocery lists.
- 95% of participants in Project FRESH will eat more fresh fruits & vegetables per day.
- 92% of participants in Project FRESH learned new ways to incorporate more fruit and vegetables into their meals and snacks.

Coupons were redeemed at Benzie County farm markets for over $1,400 in funds for produce grown by local farmers.
Impacts with Youth:

» 94% of the teachers reported that the children increased in their awareness of the importance of good nutrition.
» 69% reported that the children were making healthier meal and snack choices.
» 84% reported that the children were willing to try new foods.
» 73% reported that the children were eating more fruits.
» 67% reported that the children were eating more vegetables.

“As I was setting up in a Kindergarten classroom whose students were at PE, a Mom came in to pick up her child for an appointment. As the child was gathering his belongings, he introduced me to his mother. She said he always talks at home about nutrition class and the things they are learning and tasting.”

- Connie Hemingway, MSUE Nutrition Program Instructor

Teaching residents about food safety

Supporting MSU Extension food safety education programs helps prevent food borne illnesses and ensures a safer food supply for consumers – whether that is at food retailers, restaurants, farmers’ markets or community meals served by organizations. MSU Extension food safety education programs train participants to prevent incidents of foodborne illness associated with unsafe food handling practices, which results in fewer medical expenses, fewer food recalls, and less temporary or permanent closures of food businesses by local health departments. Costs of illness, recalls, and food business closures are more expensive from a public health perspective than taking an inexpensive class to learn how to prepare food safely and preserve food correctly.

Residents in Benzie County participated in a variety of food safety classes. Benzie County residents indicated that as a result of attending food presentation workshops:

» 96% will follow research based/tested recipes when canning food at home.
» 97% will properly use processing techniques to safely can low and high acid foods.
» 98% will use correct processing times to safely can low and high acid foods.

As a result of MSU Extension food safety programs, individuals now use safer food handling, preparation, storage and preservation techniques.
Working to improve social and emotional health

MSU Extension addresses violence and bullying prevention through its focus on social and emotional health, with the overarching goal of helping young people and adults learn to foster safe, affirming and inclusive relationships and settings that are free from violence, abuse, bullying and harassment. By helping people learn safer and healthier ways to interact with others, MSU Extension benefits communities through decreased mental, emotional, social and economic costs associated with violence in communities. During 2014, MSU Extension’s social and emotional health educational programs reached a total of 3,756 participants statewide.

MSU Extension played a vital role, in conjunction with the Anti-Bullying Taskforce, planning, recruiting/promoting, and collecting registration for the 3rd Annual Antibullying Conference held October 17, 2014 at the Hagerty Center in Traverse City. Over 200 adults and 200 students from 20 schools across the Traverse Bay Area ISD and Manistee ISD regions participated in the conference. This year’s featured presenters came from the Not in Our Town/Not in Our School movement. Partners in the Anti-Bullying Taskforce include Michigan Department of Civil Rights, Northwestern Michigan College, Disability Network of Northern Michigan, TBA ISD, Michigan State Police Troopers Association, Women's Resource Center, Third Level and TCAPS.

Every day across our communities, many young people are faced with feeling unsafe, disconnected, unsupported and harmed because of bullying, harassment and other forms of violence. Be SAFE: Safe, Affirming and Fair Environments is an MSU Extension initiative designed to help communities learn about and address these issues. Be SAFE offers a variety of educational resources to help communities reduce and prevent bullying behaviors while promoting healthy social and emotional learning and development. The initiative focuses on helping adults consider ways to do this within all of the settings where young people live, learn, grow and develop – including out-of-school time settings. Be SAFE resources include the Be SAFE: Safe, Affirming and Fair Environments curriculum and face-to-face and online workshops for adults.

The Be SAFE: Safe, Affirming and Fair Environments curriculum is designed for adults to use with adolescents ages 11 to 14 in a variety of out-of-school settings, such as 4-H, afterschool programs, Boys and Girls Clubs, Scouts and faith-based programs. The comprehensive curriculum, which can also be used within middle school settings, includes more than 30 engaging and experiential activities designed for group learning. MSU Extension provides workshops about how to use the curriculum, as well as evaluation support or groups interested in identifying the impacts of using the curriculum within their settings.
Keeping People Healthy, continued

Three settings involving 92 participants used the Be SAFE curriculum, and 39 youth completed the Be SAFE Survey, a tool designed to measure changes in their knowledge, attitudes and behaviors. Participants showed positive changes (30% and higher) in the following areas:

» Participants were more likely to agree that both adults and young people are responsible for making sure settings are safe for kids, and that they should work together to create environments that are free from bullying and other hurtful behaviors.

» Participants had a greater understanding about ways in which stereotypes about other people can affect how we treat them.

» Participants had a greater understanding of things they to do in situations where they don’t feel safe.

In addition, many participants indicated that they had developed new ways to take care of themselves as a result of what they had learned, as well as new ways to provide support for those who are being bullied. Several also indicated that they had seen positive changes in their group as a result of their involvement with Be SAFE. Selected responses include:

» I have found more ways to self-regulate.

» When I see people getting bullied I make sure to tell an adult and help the situation.

» I’ve seen people starting to socialize with other classmates they don’t always talk to.

» I’ve learned not to post certain things on the internet. Also that some things you say may hurt someone in a way that you didn’t think would hurt them.

“I feel that the Be SAFE curriculum has opened the lines of communications. Students now know more than ever that the adults are here for them! They feel more comfortable. Be SAFE has affected bullying issues in our group by bringing more awareness to the issue. It has opened our students’ mind to different ways they can help. They have also had great discussions about the different forms of bullying. Overall, we are very pleased with the Be SAFE curriculum and look forward to seeing what next year’s club does with it!”

- Adult working with one of the Be SAFE groups
Keeping People Healthy, continued

Preventing and managing chronic disease

Chronic diseases are among the most prevalent, costly, and preventable of all health issues. Compared to the national average, Michigan adults suffer from more risk factors (obesity, hypertension, and high cholesterol) that contribute to chronic disease. MSU Extension Disease Prevention and Management programs work to promote health and wellness by reducing and managing the incidence and impacts of chronic diseases among Michigan residents and communities. These community-based sessions provide participants with proven strategies for improved dietary quality, management of chronic health conditions and prevention of chronic diseases, such as type 2 diabetes. In 2014, these programs reached more than 6,000 adults throughout Michigan.

According to the most recent Community Health Needs Assessment, obesity and diabetes management/prevention were identified as a top priority among stakeholders in the five-county Northwestern Michigan region. The County Health Rankings, a measure used to better understand the factors that influence health, Benzie County ranks 29 in health outcomes and 16 in health factors. The rankings provide a snapshot of a community’s health and a starting point for investigating and focusing ways to promote health.

A new Extension Educator was hired to provide programming specific to chronic disease prevention and management (DPM). Sarah Eichberger MPH, RD is based in Grand Traverse County and will serve a six county northwestern Michigan region. Her efforts to date have been spent initiating conversations with current and potential future stakeholders, representing MSUE Health & Nutrition and supporting capacity within the DPM team to expand prevention focused programming. DPM core programmatic offerings will include the self-management program, Personal Action Towards Health (PATH) in partnership with the Area Agency on Aging, Dining with Diabetes, an interactive series designed to support healthy eating management for type 2 diabetes prevention/management, and one-time presentations specific to chronic disease prevention.

Food, Farms, and Health Conference October 10, 2014 – Food, Farms and Health, convened by local partner, Michigan Land Use Institute and organized in partnership with MSUE Disease Prevention and Management, and Munson Healthcare. Over 120 food, farm and health leaders from the NW MI region and state converged to learn, connect and take action on integrating regional food with health care and wellness.
Michigan agriculture continues to be a growing segment of the state’s economy. When you support MSU Extension, you help participants learn profitable and efficient business and production practices. Participants also learn how to optimize and reduce the use of pesticides and fertilizers, and how to conserve and protect water resources. This education leads to better use of time, money and human capital, and helps retain and create agricultural jobs. These measures strengthen Michigan’s economy while connecting farmers to local food opportunities and global markets. In this way you help MSU Extension encourage growth in a sustainable and prosperous Michigan food and agriculture system.

**Farm Transition program:** Farm business owners in Benzie County attended three half-day workshops that took them through the steps to plan transitioning the farm business to a family successor, a non-family successor, or selling and retiring. Presenters included MSUE farm business management specialists and an attorney specializing in business succession. They were available at no charge each afternoon to meet one-on-one with families to answer additional questions.

**Agriculture Labor Management**

MSU Extension partners with Farm Bureau, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Migrant Legal Services, Workforce Development Agency, Migrant Resource Councils, other agencies involved in agricultural labor, and grower representatives to coordinate agricultural labor management meetings across the state. Programs were held in Traverse City, Lawrence, West Olive and Hart. The programs are designed to address areas of concern identified by producers.

The **Effective Management of Farm Employees** program was delivered in various places across the state by MSU Extension educators Stan Moore and Phil Durst. This program focused on improving employee management on farms. Attendees received researched based information on how to improve their labor management skills in four specific areas of labor management: Attracting good applicants, Building better teamwork, Capitalizing on your employees’ desire to learn, and Achieving high quality performance. For the past two years, Stan Moore has provided leadership for the Labor section at the Fruit and Vegetable EXPO in Grand Rapids. 130 growers attended this breakout session which featured a program on Effective Management of Farm Employees. Moore and Durst also developed and delivered a DaireXNET Webinar on Effective Management of Farm Employees, and presented a session at the Midwest Women in Ag Conference, hosted by Purdue University in Merrillville Indiana.
An Employee Management program was recorded for use in the Institute of Agricultural Technology program led by Brian Matchett of MSU. This program provides an associates degree in agricultural technology in cooperation with Northwestern Michigan College in Traverse City.

**Dairy Production**

Michigan State University Extension offered 11 meetings across the state in September 2014 to help dairy producers evaluate the impact of the new Dairy Margin Protection Program (part of the new 2014 Farm Bill) on their farm businesses. An additional three meetings were held in November 2014, including one live webcast. Dairy producers learned what the Dairy Margin Protection Program is and how it will work, saw a demonstration of the online Dairy Decision Tool Software, and learned about the potential impacts on farm profitability. Dr. Christopher Wolf, MSU Dairy Economist, along with MSU Extension Dairy Educators and Farm Management Educators taught these 2-hour workshops. USDA Farm Services Agency personnel were also present at the meetings to help answer questions. Meetings were held in West Branch, Cadillac, Rudyard, Hillsdale, Sandusky, Bad Axe, Allegan, West Olive, Fremont, St. Johns, Menominee, Alpena, East Lansing, and Grand Rapids. The program was also video taped and uploaded with a link on the MSU Dairy Team website dairyteam.msu.edu. 437 farmers attended one of the sessions.

Dairy producers, dairy farm employees, and industry professionals received timely updates about topics important to managing today’s dairy farms at the Focus on Dairy Production meetings offered across the state by the Michigan State University Extension Dairy Team. Local veterinarians discussed the importance of colostrum management and calf health and their ultimate impact on the profit potential of the milking herd. Participants also gained knowledge about the prevalence of the bovine leukemia virus and how to minimize the disease in their dairy herds. During the afternoon portion of the meeting, dairy producers learned about keys to maximizing milk yield when using increased levels of corn silage in dairy cow diets. Animal handling tips for employee training programs also were shared with the audience. The final topics of the program were best management practices for manure handling during the winter and key components of an emergency response to manure spills.

A total of 97 dairy producers, dairy farm employees, veterinarians and agribusiness professionals participated in these 5 meetings. Approximately 60% of the people who completed the post-meeting survey planned to make from 1 to 3 management changes on their farms. They estimated the value of those changes would be over $365,000.
The Artisan Hands-On Basic Cheese Making Workshop is a three day workshop for those who have never made cheese before and those who want to improve their skills in order to enter the cheese business. Participants learned about milk quality, ingredients, processes for making a variety of cheeses, techniques and requirements for aging cheese and planning to establish a farmstead or artisan cheese business. Speakers included Dr. John Partridge, Bill Robb, and Barb Jenness and Stan Moore. The workshop takes place at MSU’s Dairy Plant and utilizes their equipment and employees to make the project "real world". 20 people participated in this year’s class. One individual reported starting a new business and three other class members indicated interest in starting a business.

Fruit Production

The Northwest Michigan Horticultural Research Center cooperated with the Benzie Manistee Horticultural Society and the Michigan Cider Association (MCA) to bring an international perspective to Michigan’s fruit industry with the organization of a program entitled Cider: From Apple to Bottle, an Overview of this Emerging Industry. This event attracted more than 60 participants from across Michigan. The meeting kicked-off with a morning tour of Northern Naturals Cider House and tours of apple and cherry grower farms in the Benzie-Manistee area. There was an educational session in the afternoon, followed by a cider tasting led by MCA members: Siestema’s Orchards, Uncle John’s Cider, VanderMill Ciders, and Tandem Ciders.

During the morning tour, Neil Macdonald – an orchardist who manages 300 acres of cider orchards in Somerset, United Kingdom – provided his insights on the global cider industry and strategies that English cider producers have used to optimize cider apple production in his home country. Macdonald’s excitement for the potential growth of cider in Michigan and the U.S. caught the attention of the current and future cider and cider apple producers who attended the educational session. In a nutshell, Macdonald’s advice for Michigan bittersweet apple producers was to keep input costs low by choosing disease resistant varieties and to maintain a low-input pest management program. He also advised growers to evaluate which orchard system will optimize production, and careful selection of rootstocks and tree spacing is necessary for the many different business models coming online in Michigan. Macdonald believes that Michigan cider apple producers need to change their mindset on how to produce these apples and begin thinking of cider apples as a commodity crop – those produced intensively resulting in high yields and lower returns per unit sold. He also believes that mechanization of harvest, including harvesting culls from the ground and our current capacity for juice extraction are potential limiting factors of the expansion of Michigan’s cider industry.
Northwest Michigan Horticultural Research Center staff and the MSU fruit team hosted the Great Lakes Fruit Workers conference in Traverse City. The meeting’s location rotates among cities in Michigan, New York and Ontario, allowing host states to highlight their fruit growing regions, and to provide the GLFW with first-hand experiences on regional challenges in fruit production. Comprised of researchers, Extension educators and consultants, the GLFW is tasked with the following: identify crop management priorities for fruit producers, foster collaborations between Great Lakes researchers, Extension educators, and growers, develop innovative crop management techniques, and share new integrated pest management technologies, management guides, pest alert systems and outreach efforts that result from these collaborations.

Northwest Michigan Orchard & Vineyard Show: The 2015 show was very well attended with over 320 registrations. Sessions covered a broad range of topics pertinent to tree fruit, grape and saskatoon berry production. The wine grape educational session was very well attended as was the saskatoon session.

Great Lakes Fruit & Vegetable Expo: MSUE educators from northwest Michigan are involved in the planning and facilitation of this annual December event held in Grand Rapids. Many northwest Michigan growers attend to obtain information and make contacts that benefit their farming operations.

Extension’s response to cold injury in area vineyards: Following the severe cold injury to grapevines in the Grand Traverse region due to the 2014 “polar vortex” weather events, numerous reports, articles, radio and television interviews and other form of communication were used to educate growers about vine recovery strategies and keep the public informed about the health of the local wine industry.

Weathering the Climate: Cultivation and Technology in Grape Production Conference: This program came out of a new collaborative effort between MSU Extension, MSU’s Institute of Applied Technology and Northwestern Michigan College. It featured experts in agricultural technology, geography, horticulture, and unmanned aerial systems. Over 90 participants attended the full-day program that included lectures, grower panel discussions and vineyard demonstrations.

Supporting Food and Agriculture, continued

Duke Elsner’s MSUE News Articles

Weathering the Climate Conference attendees explored potential uses for drones in grape production.
Collecting pollinators for identification.

Precision Orchard Management Workshop – At this interactive workshop, MSU tree fruit experts demonstrated pruning techniques for high-density sweet cherries at grower farms and the Northwest Michigan Horticultural Research Center (NWMHRC) and demonstrated precision orchard management techniques in high-density apples. Precision management includes several management practices, such as pruning, thinning, fertilizing, irrigating and harvest timing, as all of these decisions will affect fruit size and crop value.

The 2014 Tree Fruit IPM (Integrated Pest Management) kick-off event in April hosted tree fruit growers from NW MI and started off the season’s IPM educational seminar series. Weekly Tree Fruit IPM Update meetings provided assistance and services from MSU Extension to tree fruit growers over the course of the 2014 season.

Horticultural Research Efforts

The Northwest Michigan Horticultural Research Center (NWMHRC) was awarded approximately $250,000 from granting agencies that supported on-farm tree fruit horticulture and pest management related research. Several of these projects were conducted in collaboration with local tree fruit grower cooperators and the NWMHRC, MSU Extension, and MSU AgBioResearch; research included on-farm monitoring/trapping programs of pest species to facilitate early detection and effective management programs, and pest and disease management trials. Projects also include pollination in tree fruits, apple and cherry diseases, pruning and training, systems management, irrigation, and various other trials.

A summit was held by MSUE at the NWMHRC to solicit industry input on research and outreach needed to successfully manage Spotted wing Drosophila (SWD), an invasive insect pest that poses serious threats to Michigan’s fruit production. SWD populations have increased dramatically in many fruit crops across the state, including cherries, and a sustainable and effective management plan is the top priority of the Michigan Cherry Committee. Six grant proposals were developed based on priorities set by this summit.

Research staff manage the SWD colony for efficacy bioassay trials. Working together to eliminate invasive species will be essential to lessen the loss of the Michigan tree fruit crops in the future.

NWMHRC:
agbioresearch.msu.edu/centers/nwmihort
Cultivating entrepreneurs

For the past 15 years, growers, food enthusiasts, community members and organizational partners have been braving what is typically a long and snowy drive in late January to attend the Northern Michigan Small Farm Conference. What the original MSU Extension organizers likely didn’t foresee at the time was how incredibly popular this annual event would become. With over 1,000 attendees annually, it has become the preeminent small farm conference in Michigan providing education and resources for small and mid-scale growers in the post-20th century world of Agriculture.

From Joel Salatin, the Conference’s first keynote speaker and self-proclaimed ‘environmentalist, capitalist and lunatic farmer’…to Jeff Moyer, Elliot Coleman, Percy Schmeiser, Fred Kirschenmann, and Winona LaDuke, the Conference has featured the Country’s leading growers, researchers and engaged citizen/eaters that have questioned the long-term sustainability of the industrial food system and are providing promising alternatives. The Conference planning team, which is now comprised of a collaboration of growers, University, and Community partners, continues its pursuit of cutting edge practices and practitioners. By focusing on the ecological, economic and social aspects of more community based food-systems, scores of viable, triple-bottom line businesses have been started and thousands more report the changes that they have or will make as a result of something learned at the Conference. The Institute for Sustainable Living, Art and Natural Design, (ISLAND) will convene and sponsor the 2016 Northern Michigan Small Farm Conference.

The MSU Product Center Food-Ag-Bio assists county residents in developing products and businesses in the areas of food, agriculture, natural resources and the bio economy. Extension educators are specially trained as innovation counselors to deliver these services to local residents. Business counseling is conducted on a one-on-one basis and may take place at the MSUE office or the client’s home or business location. The assistance provided is tailored to meet the needs of the client and may include things like developing a business plan, navigating the regulatory maze, accessing the supply chain or seeking funding options. The innovation counselor also assists clients in accessing specialized services they may need that are offered through Michigan State University like feasibility studies, nutritional labeling, food science, and packaging assistance. Twenty-five counseling sessions took place to assist six businesses in Benzie County, leading to $400,000 in increased investment.
Strengthening municipalities

Northern Michigan Counties Association brings county commissioners together from 33 counties in northern lower Michigan to learn about issues important to county government, and to share information and learn from the experiences of others. Recent topics include: cooperative efforts between counties, townships, road commissions, agencies and private owners; tribal sovereignty and cooperative efforts with counties; county committee structures; Medicaid PIHP and regional entities; personal property tax and transportation and the impacts of these issues on county government services. Monthly meetings also include a legislative update from the Michigan Association of Counties.

New County Commissioner Workshops: Since 1968, MSU Extension, in partnership with the Michigan Association of Counties, has conducted the New County Commissioner Workshops following the biennial election of commissioners. The program offers information and learning opportunities on county structure and process, budgeting and finance, county administration, courts, and more. Benzie County participated in the program in 2014.

Zoning Administrator Certification: A zoning administrator is often the first or only contact a developer or new business has with local government. That makes the zoning administrator important to a community’s development and its public image. This series of eight 3-hour classes cover the technical, legal, pragmatic and organizational aspects of zoning administration. The program includes a final exam and graduates receive a certificate of completion. Tom Kucera of Crystal Lake Township participated in this rigorous program and passed, making him a Certified Zoning Administrator in 2015.

MSU Extension educators also held the following Government & Public Policy trainings in and around Benzie County this year:

» Streamlining Zoning – training on ways to make zoning ordinances easier to understand and follow.
» Open Meeting Act Workshop: How to Comply with the Michigan OMA
» Freedom of Information Act training program.
» Accumulated Junk and community cleanup.
» Placemaking training and strategic planning.
» Webinar training on a wide variety of topics including right to farm act, wireless communications, urban design.
Engaging communities through facilitative leadership

MSU Extension educators worked with the University of Michigan to facilitate local community discussions as part of a study, “Deliberative Engagement of Communities in Decisions about Research Spending.” The discussions they facilitated took place throughout Northern Michigan, including one at the Manistee ISD, where the CHAT program was delivered. CHAT (Choosing Health All Together) is a serious game designed to be inclusive, informative and engaging. The goal is to promote deliberation and dialog about complex and value-laden health research spending decisions. CHAT was designed so community members could provide input for funding decisions, usually related to health, health care or health research. CHAT depicts spending options as layered wedges on a pie chart. Higher levels of health care research cost more. Participants have 50 markers to spend on various options; there are not enough markers to fund all research levels. Thus, participants must set priorities for the use of limited resources. Participants do this individually, selecting options for themselves and their family as well as in a group, where they make choices for their community.

Honoring our Children Initiative - MSU Extension continued efforts this year in engaging Tribal Leaders and Tribal Citizens in creating a plan to improve factors important to the well-being of Tribal Children, ages 0-8. This includes quality education, safe communities, and good health. This initiative is in partnership with the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan and is financially supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. MSU Extension workshop sessions offer participants an opportunity to practice new skills in leading a group discussion, reaching consensus, encouraging creativity, setting outcome-based goals for meetings, keeping a group focused, and creating action plans.

A Comprehensive Grass Roots Approach to Community Development six day training was offered to Michigan residents and Tribal Nations to teach participants skills to launch and sustain projects, ensure effective grass roots participation, map assets and relationships of a whole community, empower and motivate community partners and groups to action, develop creative strategies and do-able projects, balance implementation with celebration, and organize participatory evaluation.

Other Michigan Tribal Governance efforts included:

» Training Michigan’s Healthcare Professionals at Tribal Health Clinics
» 4-H Tribal Youth Leadership
» Building Strong Sovereign Nations (BSSN: Anishinaabek Leadership for Seven Generations)
» Good Governance Trainings
MAKING THE MOST OF OUR NATURAL ASSETS

When you support MSU Extension’s natural resources education programs, participants learn about income-generating opportunities, ecological principles, natural resource issues and the role of natural resource professionals. They also explore public policy issues related to environmental stewardship. Our programs can lead to increased income for families that retain their natural resource assets, help landowners become better stewards of their land, and protect land management opportunities for future generations. Better land stewardship benefits communities by protecting and enhancing Michigan’s natural resource assets.

Wildfire Prevention

Elaine Bush, Extension educator, and Jed Jaworski, Firewise field assistant, provided wildfire prevention education in Benzie County as well as several neighboring counties. Programming during 2014 included:

Firewise on the Farm (FOTF) exhibits and handouts were presented at agricultural safety workshops held in Cadillac, Ludington, Manistee, the Northwest Michigan Horticulture Research Center, and at the annual statewide Farm Bureau meeting in Grand Rapids. FOTF educational displays, handouts, and presentations were also provided for growers at the northern Michigan Small Farm Conference, a North Central Michigan College community education session, and at the Northern Michigan Orchard & Vineyard Show.

Firewise zoning workshops were offered during 2014. Twenty local officials received three Master Citizen Planner credits for attending a 3-hour session co-taught by Elaine Bush and Extension colleague Kurt Schindler. One hour sessions were conducted by Bush and Extension colleague Brad Neumann at the Michigan Township Association (MTA) annual conference at the Grand Traverse Resort and the National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals (NACDEP) annual conference in Grand Rapids. Jaworski provided wildfire response training to 125 Community Emergency Response team (CERT) members from all over Michigan meeting in Grayling.

General Firewise information was displayed and distributed at various community events during 2014: Manistee County Fair, Manistee County Annual Summit, Lake County Disaster Preparedness Day, and Onekama Arbor Day. Jaworski and MDNR wildfire specialist Dan Laux provided an exhibit and educational handouts at the Northern Michigan Fire Chief Association conference in Petoskey and Michigan
Emergency Management Association conference in Traverse City. Bush made Firewise presentations and provided educational displays and handouts for Frankfort Rotary Club members and Oceana County local officials/ emergency personnel working on their county’s CWPP. The newest MSU Extension Firewise bulletin, E3203 Protect Your Great Lakes Shoreline Home from Wildfires was distributed to property owners in Manistee, Benzie, Oceana, and Ottawa counties during 2014.

Grant funding for the MSU Firewise program ended December 2014 but Jaworski will be able to access the existing materials for use in completing the second phase of the Manistee CWPP and Bush will be available as her schedule permits to provide wildfire prevention outreach locally.

Enhancing & protecting our Great Lakes coastal resources

Through research, education and outreach, Michigan Sea Grant is dedicated to the protection and sustainable use of the Great Lakes and coastal resources. Sea Grant staff engage partners on projects designed to foster science-based decisions that promote vibrant, livable communities that offer opportunities for economic growth while preserving our natural resources.

Michigan Sea Grant hosted the annual Regional Sportfishing Workshop attended by many Benzie County fishers, charter captains, and tribal members. The changing Lake Michigan fishery was a key discussion topic as was the issue of lake level changes in Lake Michigan over time.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Amrhein</td>
<td>Government &amp; Public Policy</td>
<td>231-922-4627</td>
<td><a href="mailto:amrhein@msu.edu">amrhein@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denise Aungst</td>
<td>Health and Nutrition</td>
<td>231-533-8818</td>
<td><a href="mailto:aungstd@msu.edu">aungstd@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer Berkey</td>
<td>Food Safety</td>
<td>231-922-4821</td>
<td><a href="mailto:berkejy@msu.edu">berkejy@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Breederland</td>
<td>Coastal Communities Development</td>
<td>231-922-4628</td>
<td><a href="mailto:breederl@msu.edu">breederl@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaine Bush</td>
<td>Firewise/Tourism</td>
<td>231-889-4277</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bushe@msu.edu">bushe@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann Chastain</td>
<td>Leadership and Community Engagement</td>
<td>231-439-8972</td>
<td><a href="mailto:chastain@msu.edu">chastain@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie Crick</td>
<td>Forestry &amp; Natural Resources</td>
<td>989-275-7179</td>
<td><a href="mailto:crickjul@msu.edu">crickjul@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christina Curell</td>
<td>Environmental/Water Quality</td>
<td>231-745-2732</td>
<td><a href="mailto:curellc@msu.edu">curellc@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Dudek</td>
<td>Greenhouse/Nursery</td>
<td>616-994-4542</td>
<td><a href="mailto:dudek@msu.edu">dudek@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phillip Durst</td>
<td>Beef</td>
<td>989-345-0692</td>
<td><a href="mailto:durstp@msu.edu">durstp@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara Duvall</td>
<td>Career Exploration/Workforce Prep</td>
<td>231-256-9888</td>
<td><a href="mailto:duvall@msu.edu">duvall@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Eichberger</td>
<td>Disease Prevention and Management</td>
<td>231-922-4836</td>
<td><a href="mailto:eichber2@msu.edu">eichber2@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erwin Elsner</td>
<td>Small Fruit</td>
<td>231-922-4822</td>
<td><a href="mailto:elsner@msu.edu">elsner@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Ferry</td>
<td>Swine</td>
<td>269-445-4438</td>
<td><a href="mailto:franzeli@msu.edu">franzeli@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merrill Gould</td>
<td>Livestock/Bioenergy</td>
<td>616-994-4547</td>
<td><a href="mailto:gouldm@msu.edu">gouldm@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Guthrie</td>
<td>Pork/Equine</td>
<td>517-788-4292</td>
<td><a href="mailto:guthri19@msu.edu">guthri19@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andy Hayes</td>
<td>Community Prosperity</td>
<td>231-582-6482</td>
<td><a href="mailto:andy@northernlakes.net">andy@northernlakes.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philip Kaatz</td>
<td>Forage/Commercial Agriculture</td>
<td>810-667-0341</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kaatz@msu.edu">kaatz@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerald Lindquist</td>
<td>Grazing Management</td>
<td>231-832-6139</td>
<td><a href="mailto:lindquis@msu.edu">lindquis@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erin Lizotte</td>
<td>Integrated Pest Management</td>
<td>231-944-6504</td>
<td><a href="mailto:taylo548@msu.edu">taylo548@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerald May</td>
<td>Environmental/Air Quality</td>
<td>989-875-5233</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mayg@msu.edu">mayg@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Metzger</td>
<td>Goats &amp; Sheep</td>
<td>517-788-4292</td>
<td><a href="mailto:metzgerm@msu.edu">metzgerm@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dee Miller</td>
<td>Children &amp; Youth Institute Supervision</td>
<td>231-258-3320</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mille454@msu.edu">mille454@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stan Moore</td>
<td>Dairy/Agricultural Human Resources</td>
<td>231-533-8818</td>
<td><a href="mailto:moorest@msu.edu">moorest@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill O'Donnell</td>
<td>Christmas Tees/Ornamental/Landscapes</td>
<td>231-779-9480</td>
<td><a href="mailto:odonne10@msu.edu">odonne10@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dennis Pennington</td>
<td>Biomass</td>
<td>269-838-8265</td>
<td><a href="mailto:pennin34@msu.edu">pennin34@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily Pochubay</td>
<td>Fruit Production</td>
<td>231-946-1510</td>
<td><a href="mailto:pochubay@msu.edu">pochubay@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily Proctor</td>
<td>Tribal Governance</td>
<td>231-439-8927</td>
<td><a href="mailto:proctor8@msu.edu">proctor8@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethany Prykucki</td>
<td>Leadership and Community Engagement</td>
<td>231-258-3320</td>
<td><a href="mailto:prykucki@msu.edu">prykucki@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikki Rothwell</td>
<td>Commercial Fruit</td>
<td>231-946-1510</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rothwel3@msu.edu">rothwel3@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeannine Schweihofer</td>
<td>Meat Quality</td>
<td>810-989-6935</td>
<td><a href="mailto:grobbelj@msu.edu">grobbelj@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J Robert Sirrine</td>
<td>Community Food Systems/ Hops</td>
<td>231-256-9888</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sirrine@msu.edu">sirrine@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean Solomon</td>
<td>Natural Resources</td>
<td>231-582-6232</td>
<td><a href="mailto:solomon@msu.edu">solomon@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Staton</td>
<td>Soybeans</td>
<td>269-673-0370</td>
<td><a href="mailto:staton@msu.edu">staton@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtis Talley, Jr.</td>
<td>Farm Business Management</td>
<td>231-873-2129</td>
<td><a href="mailto:talleycu@msu.edu">talleycu@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marilyn Thelen</td>
<td>Agriculture Systems</td>
<td>989-227-6454</td>
<td><a href="mailto:thelen22@msu.edu">thelen22@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine Venema</td>
<td>Family Financial Literacy</td>
<td>810-667-0341</td>
<td><a href="mailto:venema@msu.edu">venema@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy Wieland</td>
<td>Product Center Innovation Counseling</td>
<td>231-348-1770</td>
<td>wieland@<a href="mailto:5@msu.edu">5@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Wilson</td>
<td>Master Gardener</td>
<td>248-347-0269</td>
<td><a href="mailto:wilsonm1@msu.edu">wilsonm1@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>