

## MSUE Kent County

# ANNUAL REPORT

### Message from the District Coordinator

In this report, I have the challenge of conveying the scope and importance of the work of a large group of people in diverse program areas into a concise report. This year's report includes the following information:

- ◆ USDA Census of Agriculture report; the new Farm Bill—pages 2 & 3
- ◆ Agriculture and Agribusiness Institute highlights—pages 4-8:
- ◆ Farmland Preservation—page 9
- ◆ Children and Youth Institute—4-H update—pages 10 & 11
- ◆ Greening Michigan Institute—pages 12 - 15
- ◆ MSU Product Center-Food/Ag/Bio—page 16
- ◆ Health and Nutrition Institute—pages 17 & 18
- ◆ Spartan Impact summary for District 7—page 19
- ◆ District 7 Extension Council —page 20
- ◆ Staff listing—pages 21-22

I've included links to give more information on the value of Michigan State University Extension programs in your community. Please let me know if you need additional information on any of the topics covered in this brief overview of our work in 2014. I think you will be very pleased with the excellent programs provided to residents of Kent County. As always, thank you for your continued support.

*Betty Blase*

District 7 Coordinator

### Mission

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

Contact Us

**775 Ball Avenue NE**  
**Grand Rapids, MI**  
**49503**

(616) 632-7865

[www.msue.msu.edu/  
kent](http://www.msue.msu.edu/kent)

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## 2012 Census of Agriculture Report

The 2012 USDA Census of Agriculture report showed a 7% decline in the amount of land in farms in Kent County, from 170,117 acres in 2007 to 157,493 acres in 2012. During this time period, however, the market value of Kent's agricultural products sold grew by 19% from \$194,729,000 to \$231,861,000.



Kent County ranked #12 in the state in total value of agricultural products sold, #10 in value of crops sold, and #15 in value of livestock and livestock products sold. They remain the top Michigan county in apple production, and rank as the #3 county in number of colonies of bees. [2012 USDA Census of Ag Kent Summary](#)

MSU Extension agriculture and agribusiness programs focus on:

- ◆ Increasing productivity and financial solvency on Michigan farms to increase local, statewide, national and international ripple effects:
  - ◆ Farm revenue translates into more dollars spent in local communities, thereby increasing the tax base.
  - ◆ Maintaining the vitality of rural communities creates jobs in areas of the state where agriculture is the primary employer.
- ◆ Production of high quality, safe and affordable food for Michigan residents and for global exports. Non-food crops supply high-quality and high-value products both in and out of state.
- ◆ Protecting natural resources through programming that targets more efficient use of energy, water, fertilizers, pesticides and nutrients. Increased use of managed energy sources help to ensure clean, abundant water, soil, air and energy resources for future generation.

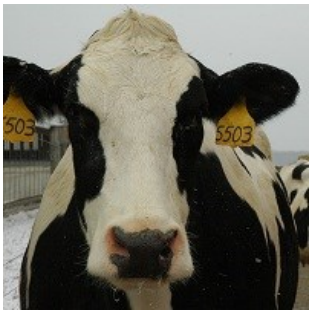


## 2014 Farm Bill Overview and Updates



The 2014 Farm Bill was signed into law by President Obama on February 7 on the campus of Michigan State University. Educational programs were held throughout the state to give an overview of new provisions in the Farm Bill and updates important to agricultural producers. In September, programs focused on dairy producers.

Farm Bill programs were a joint effort between MSU Extension, USDA Farm Service Agency, and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Participants learned about major components of the Farm Bill and decisions they would need to make during the summer of 2014. USDA-NRCS staff spoke about conservation components.



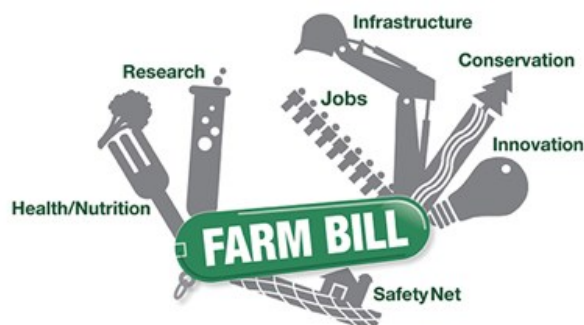
The Farm Bill also ushered in a new 5-year program for dairy producers. Dairy farmers that understand implications of the new **Dairy Margin Protection Program (DMPP)** in the 2014 Farm Bill are likely to make better decisions on risk management, including their participation in the DMPP program. Price risk management has been shown by market history to be a critically important part of dairy farm business management.

Michigan State University Extension offered 12 meetings across the state in September and November including one in Allegan, one in West Olive and one in Kent to help dairy producers evaluate the impact of the new Dairy Margin Protection Program on their farm businesses. 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, MSU Extension Dairy Educators and Farm Management Educators taught these 2-hour workshops. USDA Farm Service Agency personnel were also present at the meetings to help answer questions.



**“It’s like a Swiss Army knife.”**

*- President Obama 2/7/14*

## Livestock Producers and Meat Products

Livestock producers in Michigan raise meat products including beef, pork, poultry and lamb. Production practices such as management, nutrition, and animal well-being have implications for meat quality and safety. Additionally, livestock producers that direct market meat need to understand regulations that are in place for such businesses.

Michigan has meat processors that are USDA inspected, custom exempt, and/or retail exempt and regulated by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. Because processing practices can impact product quality and safety, meat needs to be processed in a safe manner to provide wholesome meat to consumers.

Dr. Jeannine Schwehofer, MSU Meat Quality Extension Educator, facilitated an educational presentation for **Byron Center Meats' Producer Appreciation Day**, held at MSU on 3-22-14. This event was hosted by Steve and Jim Sytsma from Byron Center Meats for producers that have livestock processed at their location.

Dr. Schwehofer presented meat science information and information on cuts of the pork carcass to the livestock producers. Many of these producers direct market meat to customers. The event included tours of the MSU Meat Lab and MSU Beef Farms.

Of the 87 producers participating in the education and tours, 27 were from Kent County, 24 from Allegan, and 26 from Ottawa.

## Specialized Meat Processing Variance Training

Hundreds of food establishments that process meat products in Michigan will need to obtain a special variance by March 1, 2015 under Food and Drug Administration guidelines. MSU Extension has created a special self-directed online training that educates processors on the variance requirements and application process. <http://msue.anr.msu.edu/program/info/smprv>

Under the 2009 FDA Food Code, many meat processors will be required to obtain a Specialized Meat Processing at Retail Food Establishments Variance (SMPRV) by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. The most commonly affected food establishments include those that are:

- Curing food
- Packing food using reduced-oxygen packaging
- Smoking food as a method of food preservation
- Using food additives as a method of food preservation or to render food nonhazardous.

## Value of livestock in Kent County:

- **Market value of livestock, poultry and their products: \$51,472,000. (#15 in Michigan)**
- **Poultry and eggs: #10 in Michigan**
- **#5 in production of turkeys**
- **#17 producer of cattle and calves with sales value of \$10,561,000**
- **#13 producer of milk from cows with sales value of \$31,609,000**
- **#3 in colonies of bees—5,371 colonies**

USDA Census of Agriculture, 2012

[Dr. Schwehofer's MSUE News articles](#)

Dr. Jeannine Schwehofer,  
MSU Extension  
[grobbej@msu.edu](mailto:grobbej@msu.edu)



Link to the plant tour website:  
<http://planttour.hrt.msu.edu/>



## Michigan Garden Plant Tour 2014

The eleventh annual Michigan Garden Plant Tour was held July 28 to August 8. The objective was to educate growers and industry professionals about new and existing plant selections and how they perform in different settings.

The tour is a joint effort between the Michigan State University Department of Horticulture and six plant propagation facilities in Michigan. This statewide event highlights new plants available for greenhouse retailers, garden centers and landscape professionals. The goal is to help increase the sales of Michigan grown plants by our industry that produces young plants. Over the twelve-day tour, 2,407 visits were made to the eight locations. Participants came from more than six states, including Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Maryland.

Five of the eight tour sites were in West Michigan and included:

- \* The Grand Ideas Garden located next to the Kent MSU Extension office
- \* Mast Young Plants just northwest of Grand Rapids
- \* Pell Greenhouses in Hudsonville
- \* Spring Meadow Nursery in Grand Haven, and
- \* Walters Gardens, Inc. in Zeeland

Highlights of data from post-tour surveys of participants of the 2013 tour:

- The displays and plant trials met or exceeded expectations for 97% of attendees
- 98% said there were sufficient staff to answer questions and provide guidance
- As a result of participating, 88% planned to offer new varieties next year
- 97% believed they increased their knowledge of new plants somewhat, considerably, or tremendously
- 85% of the tour attendees in 2013 planned to attend again in 2014.

For the Grand Ideas Garden, this tour brought broad-reaching, multistate participation for the first time. An estimated 250 green industry professionals visited the garden throughout the two week tour. Signage was created to aid them in locating newly-released plant materials showcasing introductions from leading West Michigan growers. This site was an important stop because these newly-released plants are planted here in a consumer-friendly setting. In a recent survey of Garden visitors, 96% said they had purchased annual or perennial flowers as a result of their visit, while 56% said they had purchased a tree or shrub. These purchases are often made at local businesses.



## Improving production of Michigan tree fruit

Michigan agricultural businesses compete for market share and profits domestically and in a world economy. **Kent County is the top producer of apples in Michigan, and the seventh largest apple producing county in the United States** due in part to research and education provided by Michigan State University. MSU Extension educators Amy Irish-Brown and Philip Schwallier work with local commercial apple growers to successfully manage production risks and promote economic planning for apple production.

### MANAGING PRODUCTION RISK—

Weekly face-to-face meetings in the Sparta and Belding areas (24 meetings in total), an annual spring spray meeting held in mid-April in the Sparta area, and the Winter Ag Labor update help growers to deal with production issues including:

- ◆ Nutrition, water relations, cost of production, plant growth regulators, thinning, cropload, and hedging.
- ◆ Apple scab & fire blight development, insect development (codling moth, oblique-banded Leafroller, Oriental fruitmoth, invasives, etc.), degree day tables and apple growth stages.
- ◆ Winter Ag Labor Update: Audience: Producers using labor - tree fruits, small fruits, vegetables, greenhouse, dairy; agency personnel who work with or provide service for migrants or producers; migrant resource council members.

Irish-Brown keeps growers aware of important pest management or weather-related issues that emerge daily or weekly throughout the growing season. She works with other MSUE educators and pest scouts to look at trap data and develop strategies for minimizing losses due to invasive insect pests in tree and small fruits. Also, code-a-phone updates (40 to 50 per growing season) and corresponding e-mails are sent to growers. These updates use data from [EnviroWeather](#), a collaborative project between MSU and the Michigan Climatology Resources Program. This system of weather stations throughout the state provides local, real time data to help users make pest, production management, and natural resource management decisions. EnviroWeather stations that provide this information for Kent growers include Standale/Walker, Sparta, Kent City, and Belding.

Apple harvest models are developed by MSU Extension educators to assist growers in the area of improved apple quality and improved production efficiency. At least six weekly Apple Maturity reports were created in 2014 by Irish-Brown and Schwallier for West Central Michigan growers, with audio also provided on the code-a-phone. The cost of production information for apples was reassessed and updated to prevent economic risk and promote economic planning for apple production.

Resources of growing importance for growers are the up-to-date, user-friendly websites: [www.apples.msu.edu](http://www.apples.msu.edu) and [www.cherries.msu.edu](http://www.cherries.msu.edu) that assist tree fruit growers in production decisions.

**The value of fruits, tree nuts and berries grown in Kent County is \$27,747,000**

USDA Census of Agriculture, 2012



[Irish-Brown's MSUE News articles](#)

## Improving production of Michigan tree fruit

In 2014, Phil Schwallier's focus was improved production techniques through cropload management, and tree fruit systems for high-density orchards. Schwallier is known world-wide as an expert in both areas. A brief summary of his work:

“Precision targeted cropload management”, a state-wide program for commercial apple growers, has a greater impact on grower profit than any other single practice, with potential to improve crop value by \$10 per bushel with early, proper precision thinning. Schwallier serves as point person in Michigan for this program. As president of the International Fruit Tree Association he was instrumental in planning the 2014 international conference entitled “Precision Orchard Management”.

With approximately 35,000 bearing acres in Michigan, this cutting-edge approach to cropload management can have a \$10,000,000 impact on the state apple value. Five workshops were held in 2014 (three in Grand Rapids) with 200 growers in attendance to provide information on implementing this system.

Growers annually treat nearly 100% of their bearing acreage with chemical thinners. A review of farms shows 10% of blocks were over-thinned, 30% thinned at the target cropload, and 60% under thinned slightly. This project strengthened grower ability to recognize fruitset earlier and gain confidence in their approach to a very stressful orchard practice.

### Tree Fruit Systems

Michigan growers are moving toward planting high density apple orchards because they have been shown to maximize profitability through early yield and improved fruit quality. Schwallier conducted many research/demonstration projects on apple training systems. Tall Spindle and Multi Leader apple training systems were at the forefront of systems worldwide in 2014 as they are 10 to 20% more efficient. High density plantings have been done in Michigan, particularly West-Central Michigan. This is directly due to MSUE efforts to introduce these systems to the industry and to train growers in implementing them. Currently, 70% of new plantings in West-Central Michigan are high density systems.

Hedging is a part of this high-density training system program. Summer hedging on apple trees is a cutting edge technique growers are considering. A three year project continued in 2014 with field day demonstrations at Steve Thome's farm near Comstock Park and at Clarksville Ag-Bio-Research station. A commercial prototype hedger was supplied by Phil Brown Welding and demonstrated by Mitch Thome. 75 growers attended.



MSU Extension educators who worked on the precision targeted cropload management project:

Phil Schwallier,  
Amy Irish-Brown,  
Bob Tritten,  
Nikki Rothwell,  
Emily Pouchebay.

[Schwallier's MSUE News articles:](#)







### The Integrated Pest Management webinar series:

The MSU Integrated Pest Management Program promotes the use of integrated pest management (IPM) and related plant health practices to safeguard farm and environmental health through research-based education, outreach, demonstration and applied research.

Michigan State University Extension educators Amy Irish-Brown, Mark Longstroth, Duke Elsner, Carlos Garcia Salazar and Erin Lizotte launched a new prerecorded webinar series on IPM in the fall of 2013. The series sought to build grower knowledge of integrated pest management practices and resources. This work was supported by funding from North Central SARE (Sustainable Agriculture, Research and Education).



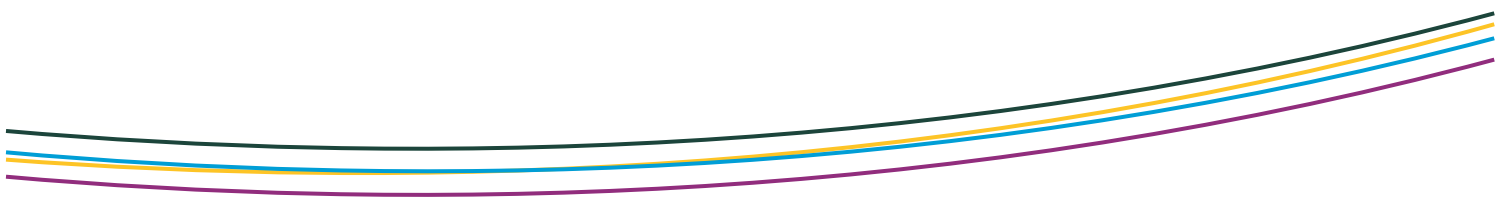
**A new search engine tool for identifying diseases, insect and mite pests and beneficials of tree fruit is now available.** Users can quickly search for diseases, pest and beneficial insects and mites that are found in apples, cherries, peaches, pears and plums. The search can be accessed at [www.ipm.msu.edu/search](http://www.ipm.msu.edu/search).

You can view this series at: [http://www.ipm.msu.edu/agriculture/integrated\\_pest\\_management\\_academy](http://www.ipm.msu.edu/agriculture/integrated_pest_management_academy)

Initial impact data from this effort is exciting to see. Here are some of the highlights:

- ◆ Between 10/14/13 and 8/22/14, there were 1,663 webinar sessions viewed.
- ◆ Viewers reported an acreage impact of 1,207,931 acres and represented at least 439 unique visitors.
- ◆ Approximately 30% identified as growers, .4% policy makers, 13% crop consultants, 20% landscapers, 10% agriculture educators, 5% pesticide distributors, 3% students, 19% recreational gardeners and 8% general public.
- ◆ Fifty-five viewers applied for Michigan pesticide recertification credits (140 commercial applicator credits and 63 private applicator credits).

There were 104 attendees from District 7—eighty-seven from Kent, thirteen from Ottawa and four from Allegan, .



## Farmland Preservation Kent County Purchase of Development Rights Program

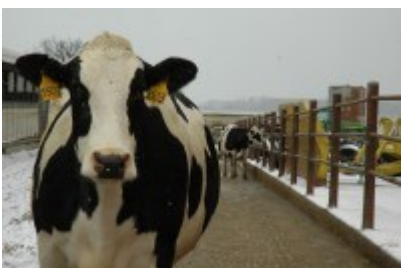
The goal of the Kent County Farmland Preservation program is to create a long-term environment for agricultural production. The Purchase of Development Rights program is an economic development tool to retain agricultural businesses. This voluntary program compensates owners of agricultural property for accepting a permanent deed restriction on their land limiting future development of the land for non-agricultural purposes.

Kent County is home to some of the most prime, unique fruit growing lands in the nation. Agricultural producers in Kent County supply some of the state's leading food processing facilities including the Gerber Products Co., Zeeland Farm Services, Country Fresh, Kellogg's, King Milling, Michigan Turkey Producers, and Yoplait.

One farm in Kent was permanently preserved in 2014. Total cost for preserving the 76-acre apple orchard in Grattan Township was \$205,000. The Federal Farm and Ranchland Protection Program contributed 38% of the total cost, private funds were raised to cover 59% ,and the landowner donated 3% .

The Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board is working to preserve three farms in 2015: the Van Oeffelen Farm(2013), the Poulias Farm (2014) and the Hall Farm (2014). Once these farms are preserved, the total acreage of prime and unique farmland preserved through the Kent County Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program will be just over 3,000 acres since 2003 when the program was created.

The Kent County Agriculture Preservation Board will submit a grant application to the USDA NRCS Farm and Ranchland Protection Program to seek 39% of matching funds toward the total cost of preserving one additional farm in 2015. The Agriculture Preservation Board has submitted a proposal to the Wege Foundation to assist with funding a portion of this 2015 project.



## Kent 4-H Youth Development Highlights for 2014

Every year, Americans come together on or near the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to serve others. On January 18, 2014, Michigan State University Extension Kent County 4-H partnered with Bethany Christian Services in a Martin Luther King (MLK) Day of Service event in Grand Rapids.

The two organizations hosted more than 125 volunteers who made 75 fleece blankets during the “Live in Laughter & Warm the Heart” community service project. The blankets were donated to [Project Linus](#), a nonprofit organization. Project Linus’ mission is to provide love and a sense of security, warmth and comfort to children who are seriously ill, traumatized or otherwise in need, through gifts of blankets created by volunteers. The volunteers also created joke booklets – some in Spanish – to accompany the blankets.

The materials were purchased through a mini-grant that was awarded by the Michigan Community Service Commission and through 4-H participation fees. Bethany Christian Services provided lunch for the volunteers.

Local AmeriCorps members and sororities came to support the event. Mentor-mentee matches from Bethany Christian Services and some Kent County 4-H members also participated. Kristi (Bowers) Ayers, MSU Extension Kent County 4-H program coordinator, worked with Janine Thomas of Bethany Christian Services to organize the event.

“This is the second event that we have collaborated on. I’ve had lots of fun working with Bethany Christian Services staff. I love their positive energy!” Ayers said.

### 4-H club activity in Kent for 2013-14:

- 1,125 youth enrolled in clubs
- 453 adult volunteers for clubs and activities
- 5,812 youth were involved in 4-H youth development and nutrition activities in Kent

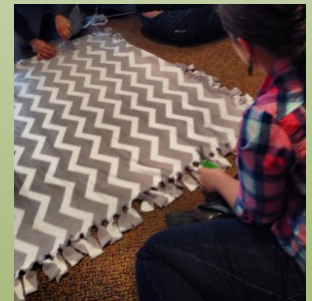


Photo Credit: Kristi Bowers Ayers



## Commodity Carnival

The National 4-H Council and CME Group (an American Futures company) partnered in 2014 to present the Commodity Carnival learning activity, reaching over 51,000 youth in eleven states. The partnership addressed 4-H's goal of increasing agricultural literacy and CME Group goals of increasing brand awareness while educating the general public about risks associated with commodity markets. Locally, the Commodity Carnival was conducted at the Kent County Youth Fair in Lowell on August 9, 2014. MSU Extension educator Glenda Kilpatrick and Kent 4-H teen members conducted the program.

Participants experienced managing business risks associated with producing and bringing livestock to market. Youth were led through a simulation of raising a steer and the costs involved, including feed, energy, and veterinary health charges. Participants learned what price per pound they needed to receive to break even. Participants then used a plinko board to randomly receive a price per pound. If they broke even or made money they received a small prize. This education and carnival game proved very popular to both youth and their parents—231 youth and 12 adults went through the simulation in a 4.5 hour time slot (270 minutes.)



Participants in the Commodity Carnival

Photo credit: Glenda Kilpatrick

## Global Leadership: China Art project

The Michigan 4-H China Project, conducted in cooperation with the People's Republic of China, is a global education program that uses the arts for in-school and after-school learning experiences. More than 300,000 Michigan youth have participated in this project since it began in 1991. Michigan K-to-6th-graders can:

- ◆ Learn of the many similarities between their lives and the lives of their counterparts halfway around the world
- ◆ Gain a sense of being part of one world, whether they live in Michigan or in Shandong Province
- ◆ Have a significant learning experience that includes language, social studies, natural science and the arts

In 2014, 350 Kent County youth participated in the China Art Exchange program. Participating counties sent over 400 pieces of artwork to campus for judging by a volunteer selection committee. Selected pieces were sent as our exchange to China. Of the 108 pieces sent to China, 2 were from Kent County.

You can see the Kent selections on this page. Click [here](#) to see all 108 pieces listed by county.



Emelia, age 11—Kent County  
"Nature"



Hermione, age 8—Kent County  
"All About Michigan"



## Michigan Sea Grant

Michigan Sea Grant is an important program in Michigan, with 40 of our 83 counties touching at least one Great Lake. But why is the work of Michigan Sea Grant educators like Dr. Dan O’Keefe important in a non-coastal county like Kent?

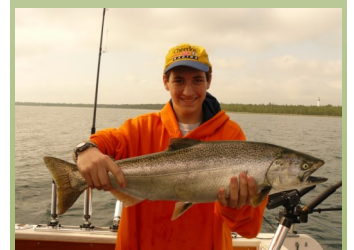
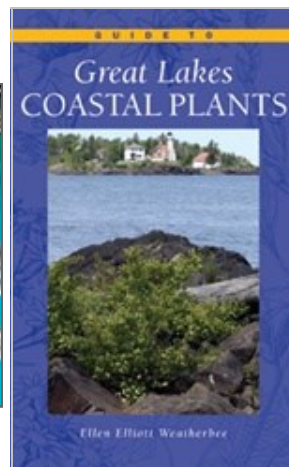
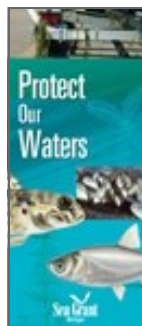
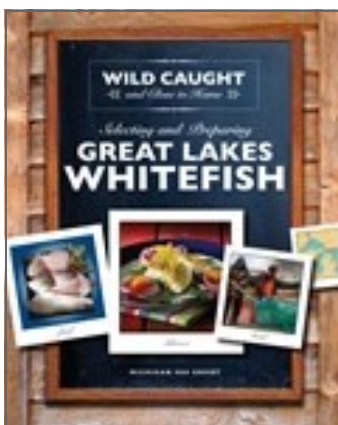
“All life depends on water, but clean water is about more than just survival-- exceptional lakes and streams are part of what makes Michigan special. No point in Michigan is more than six miles from an inland lake or stream, or more than 85 miles from one of the Great Lakes. Michigan’s abundant freshwater supports a vibrant recreation and tourism industry, supplies clean water for agriculture and manufacturing, and enhances the quality of life for all residents. . . .The Michigan Watersheds Map illustrates that nearly all creeks and rivers in Michigan eventually flow into the Great Lakes.” (An Introduction to Michigan Watersheds for Teachers, Students and Residents, Michigan Sea Grant, rev. 2012) [Teaching guide](#)

Michigan’s coasts and the Great Lakes are a dynamic ecosystem with fluctuating water levels, many species of fish, birds, plants and other wildlife, and a wide variety of habitat types. A large boating community, commercial and recreational fisheries, and rapid development along Michigan’s coasts all present challenges for the ecosystem. Michigan Sea Grant addresses these issues through research, education and outreach, in partnership with a variety of organizations.

The fall salmon run is a powerful reminder that backyard creeks and streams are connected to the Great Lakes. Salmon, walleye, lake sturgeon, suckers, and many other types of fish swim up rivers during annual migrations. Click on these links to see the spring spawning run of suckers on Grand River at Grand Rapids as well as a selection of videos taken below the surface of the Grand River :

[Spring spawning run on Grand River in Grand Rapids](#)

[Underwater videos below surface of Grand River in Grand Rapids](#)



The Chinook salmon is a favorite among charter anglers.

Dan O’Keefe; Michigan Sea Grant;  
[okeefed@msu.edu](mailto:okeefed@msu.edu)

[Dr. O’Keefe’s MSUE News articles](#)

To order educational resources from Sea Grant Michigan:  
<http://www.miseagrant.com/default.asp>

## Money Smart Week

Michigan State University Extension’s Financial Education program strengthens consumers’ decision-making skills. Well-informed consumer spending contributes to sustainable economic growth and activity. Unbiased financial education programs empower families to

- ◆ manage spending,
- ◆ avoid predatory lenders
- ◆ increase savings, providing capital for our economy
- ◆ reduce fraud.

The MSU Extension Financial and Home Ownership work group won first place in the 2014 National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences competition for their **Money Smart Week** marketing package.

Money Smart Week is a national campaign that educates consumers about the importance of financial literacy, informs them of where they can get help managing their finances, and provides free educational seminars and activities. MSU Extension has been a key partner in Money Smart Week since 2005, securing more than 25 major media placements for Money Smart Week and numerous mentions in smaller online, print, radio and television media outlets.

In 2014, Jinnifer Ortquist, MSUE Educator for Financial and Homeownership Education, provided Money Management classes for participants at many agencies throughout Kent County. These included Kent County Michigan Works!, North Kent Community Services, Booth Family Services-Kindred Transitional Program, Senior Neighbors, Area on Aging-Reinventing Michigan Retirement Program, and Family Network of Wyoming.



Jinnifer Ortquist  
MSU Extension educator  
[ortquijsj@anr.msu.edu](mailto:ortquijsj@anr.msu.edu)

[Ortquist’s MSUE News articles](#)



## Building a sustainable, locally supported food system in West Michigan

MSU Extension educators Kendra Wills and Garrett Ziegler work to connect local food producers to local markets. Their goal is to increase the amount of Michigan grown and processed foods consumed by Michigan residents.

One effort, led by Ziegler, was to increase community supported agriculture sales for small farms. He encouraged collaboration between Local First of West Michigan and the West Michigan Growers group and assisted them with writing a grant application to the USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program. Local First was awarded this two-year \$94,148 grant, to be used in cooperation with the West Michigan Growers Group and Michigan State University Extension.

The West Michigan Growers Group is a network of more than 50 small local organic farms. Rachele Bostwick, Director of West Michigan Growers Group and owner of Earthkeeper Farm said of Ziegler:

*“(He) has been critical to the acquisition of the USDA grant funding through the Farmers Market Promotion Program. . . Because of his willingness to connect with farmers and an authentic desire to improve the food system, Garrett was invited to attend farmer-to-farmer discussions regarding collective action to improve CSA sales. Following the meeting, he sought out and found this grant, which fits farmers needs perfectly. From there, he helped solidify the farmers’ vision, wrote portions of the grant, and assisted with technical aspects of the application.*

*Garrett was also crucial in establishing a collaboration with our grant partner, Local First. There were times during the initial discussions when it seemed like the organizations might not be able to find common ground. Some of us were ready to abandon the project. But Garrett was able to see our shared goals and build consensus between community members.*

*Garrett has proven himself a trusted and respected part of the food and farming community. He brings key advice and important resources to the table at critical moments. There is no doubt in my mind that this grant would not have been possible without him.”*



[Ziegler’s MSUE News articles:](#)



## Building a sustainable, locally supported food system in West Michigan

The 2010 [Michigan Good Food Charter](#) set a goal of creating a food system in Michigan rooted in local communities and centered on healthy, affordable, fair, and sustainable food. This charter serves as the research-based strategy for most of the work of the Michigan State University Extension Community Food Systems Workgroup, staffed by Kendra Wills, Garrett Ziegler and other MSUE educators.

One Charter goal is that by 2020, 20% of the food purchased and consumed in Michigan will come from Michigan growers, producers and processors. MSU Extension’s Michigan Fresh campaign and Wills’ local efforts to connect local growers and customers focus on increasing consumption of Michigan grown fruit and vegetables. Wills has worked in support of organizations as they seek funding for local efforts toward ending food insecurity and hunger while providing access to affordable, healthy local foods.

In early 2014, Wills was a project partner with the YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids on a grant request to the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development titled: “Building Capacity in Grand Rapids’ Local Food System through Increased Production, Distribution and Employment”. She provided data for the proposal, secured letters of support, provided technical assistance and training. She also facilitated project team meetings and managed communications. The secured grant for nearly \$75,000 facilitated use of the YMCA Veggie Van in areas of Kent County with little access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Partners included New City Neighbors Urban Farm and Hope Farms, an urban farm incubator in the City of Kentwood. This farm provides work and supplemental income for 4-6 refugee families from Nepal and Bhutan.

Building on this success, the group applied for funding from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Community Food Project. This grant of \$292,658 was awarded in September; the YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids serves as lead agency and fiduciary. Project focus is to increase access to healthy locally grown foods through corner stores in three target areas in Grand Rapids. MSU Extension will help build capacity among farmers associated with this grant.

## Michigan Fresh

helps people explore the state’s bounty of fresh, locally grown fruits, vegetables, flowers and ornamentals. Every week throughout the summer you’ll find information on recommended varieties, storage, food safety and preserving techniques for fruits and vegetables or for planting and maintaining your lawn and garden. Click here to see the [MSUE Michigan Fresh](#) website.

[Wills’ MSUE News articles](#)





**MSU Product Center  
counselors serving Kent:**

Diane Smith  
[dismith@anr.msu.edu](mailto:dismith@anr.msu.edu)

Joanne Davidhizar  
[davidhiz@anr.msu.edu](mailto:davidhiz@anr.msu.edu)

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.

Our innovation counselors have special training to deliver these services effectively. Business counseling is conducted on a one-on-one basis. Assistance is tailored to meet the needs of the client and may include developing a business plan, navigating the regulatory maze, accessing the supply chain or seeking funding options. We also assist clients in accessing specialized services offered through Michigan State University like feasibility studies, nutritional labeling and packaging assistance.

*A summary of our work in Kent County in 2014:*

- Six hundred thirty-six counseling sessions took place in Kent County to assist seventy-two local entrepreneurs in starting new businesses or expanding existing businesses.
- Six businesses completed business plans, a critical step in business development.
- Two new businesses began selling their products in 2014.
- Love's Ice Cream (Grandville) was recognized with the MSU Product Center's 2014 Start-up to Watch Award. This award is presented to an emerging company that has made tremendous progress but has even greater potential to expand the business. Chris McKellar launched his business at the Downtown Market and has a growing customer base for his specialty ice cream.

McKellar sees his niche as the only business in the entire state producing ice cream with virtually all organic ingredients. He continues to hunt for local produce that is certified. "The closer to home I can source, the better, and I will continue striving to support Michigan agriculture as much as I am able" he said.

He is continually developing new flavors and working on expanding ice cream and vegan gelato. He's seen incredible amounts of interest in his non-dairy products due to allergen issues as well as his product flavor and texture. He plans to continue to innovate non-dairy flavors that tantalize the taste buds of his customers.

His business hit profitability after about 8 months and sales increased by 73% between the first six months and the last six months. He attributes this increase to his patience and perseverance, tireless event appearances and outside catering, an increase in wholesale accounts, and taking time to slowly develop a customer base.

This profitability has enabled Chris to increase his staff and begin investing back into the business for growth. He is focusing on plans to establish a new production facility in the next 6 months that will increase his capacity to provide his products to both specialty retailers and grocers around the state.



Chris McKellar, owner of Love's Ice Cream



**PRODUCT CENTER FOOD•AG•BIO**

Accelerating Innovation for Business, Industry and Entrepreneurs

**Number of low-income adults in Kent in 2014 reached through:**

- **A series of nutrition lessons: 622**
- **One-time presentations: 1,615**

**Number of low-income youth in Kent in 2014 reached through a series of nutrition lessons:**

- **802 youth ages 5-17**

## Improving health and nutrition for Michigan residents

Michigan State University Extension nutrition education programs work with participants to improve their knowledge, skills, attitudes and behavior related to nutrition. Through promotion, planning and delivery, our staff works with diverse audiences at the local level to help implement everyday changes to individual and family diets which will result in increased nutritional well-being.

Kent MSU Extension works with many partners in the community to deliver quality programming to Kent County residents. With grant funding from the United States Department of Agriculture, our focus is on reaching individuals and families who are receiving food assistance and are interested in learning ways to stretch their food budget and provide a healthier diet for their families.

In 2014, Kent MSU Extension program staff reached more than 700 seniors through partnership with Senior Meals Inc., delivering nutrition education to Market FRESH recipients. Market FRESH provides coupon vouchers to low-income seniors to purchase fresh, local produce at farmer's markets. Kent MSU Extension staff also reached more than 700 WIC parents through partnership with the Kent County Health Department, delivering nutrition education to Project FRESH recipients. Project FRESH provides coupon vouchers to WIC recipients to purchase fresh, local produce at farmer's markets.

New partnerships were made in 2014 to expand our outreach throughout the county. They included: Kent County MI Works, Campfire Afterschool Programs, Kent County Head Start, Comprenew, Southeast Area Farmer's Market, Wellhouse, Grandville Transition Program, Caledonia Transition Program, and the "Double Up Food Bucks at the Store" pilot.

Ongoing partnerships that continue to grow include: Kent County Juvenile Detention, Kent County Health Department-WIC program, Job Corps, D.A. Blodgett St John's Home, Health Net of West MI, Sparta Migrant Head Start, Grand Rapids Public Schools, Senior Meals, ACCESS Now pantries, Youth Builders and many more!



## Education to improve social emotional health in Kent County



MSUE Kent County Extension Educator Holly Tiret provides a variety of programs to help people improve their social emotional health. Programs are offered at the Kent/MSUE office and also in other community locations, including Kent County Juvenile Detention Center, Hope Community, Michigan Works, Senior Neighbors, Kentwood, East Alpine and City Middle Schools, North Kent Community Services, Grand Rapids Public Libraries and Kent District Libraries.



In 2014, there were 579 participants in Kent County, including 100 youth ages 11 and up. The classes that were offered included:

- ◆ Nine series of RELAX: Alternatives to Anger. Three of these series were offered to adults and four were in the Kent County Juvenile Detention Center Summer School Program.
- ◆ Eight series of Nurturing Parenting were facilitated, with most of the 69 participants being court-mandated parents.
- ◆ One series of Building Strong Adolescents was offered
- ◆ Two series of Stress Less with Mindfulness were provided.
- ◆ In addition there were nineteen one-time workshops, pulled from a variety of the series mentioned above as well as lessons from the Be SAFE bullying prevention for parents and caregivers.

We have added a Program Instructor to our staff, Georgina Perry, BSW, who is bilingual and bicultural. Georgina is able to offer many of these programs in Spanish as well as in English. In addition we are mentoring an MSW student intern from Spring Arbor (Grand Rapids Campus), Veronica Quintino Aranda, who is doing research on the intentional translation on RELAX: Alternatives to Anger from English to Spanish.

Holly Tiret  
MSU Extension educator  
[tiret@anr.msu.edu](mailto:tiret@anr.msu.edu)

[Tiret's MSUE News articles](http://msue.anr.msu.edu/)  
<http://msue.anr.msu.edu/>

Coming in 2015: We have coordinated with Kent County Professional Development Coordinators Darius Quinn and MaryBeth Beighley to facilitate two lunch and learn series on Stress Less with Mindfulness for Kent County staff. These classes will be offered at the County Building at 300 Monroe Avenue.



# MI SPARTAN IMPACT

## REGION 7



**ENROLLED MICHIGAN STUDENTS**  
**3,001**



**VETERINARY MEDICINE STUDENTS**  
**15**



**ENROLLED MEDICAL STUDENTS**  
**221**



**ALUMNI RESIDING IN REGION**  
**23,076**



**SPENDING WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES**  
**\$54,338,092**



**TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT**  
**\$336,331,813\***



**STAFF/FACULTY RESIDING IN REGION**  
**284**



**FINANCIAL AID DISBURSED**  
**\$43,535,695**



**4H YOUTH PARTICIPANTS**  
**17,421**



**PROPERTY OWNED BY MSU (ACRES)**  
**174**



**MEDICAL INTERNS/RESIDENTS/  
FELLOWS**  
**283**

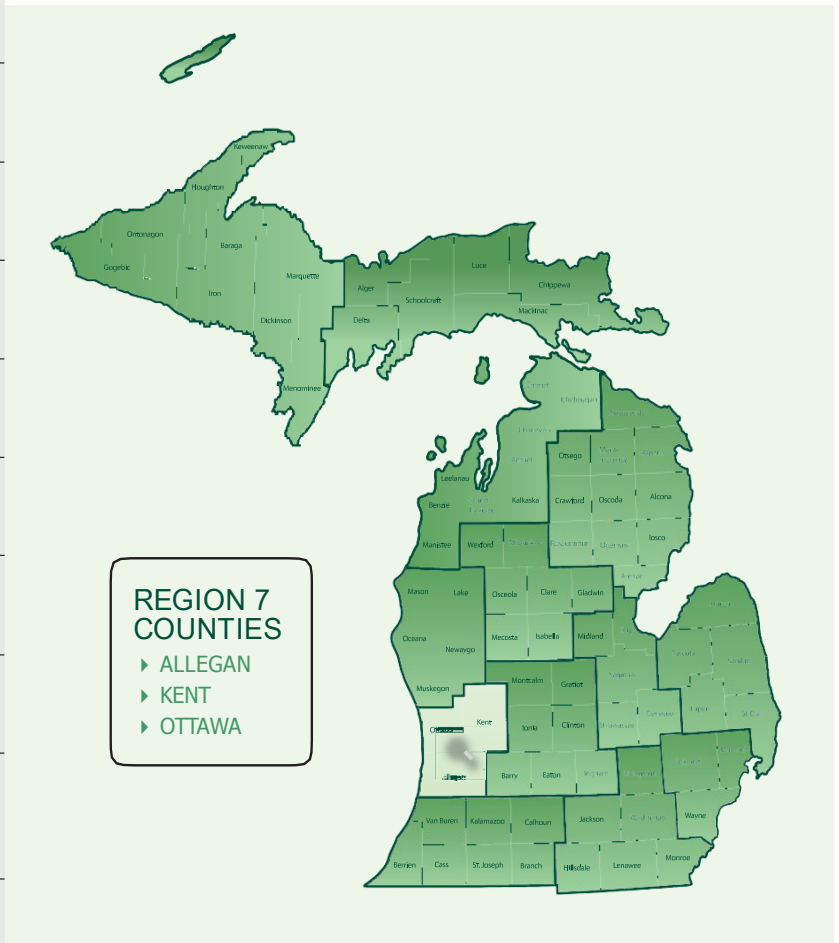


**MSU PARTNER HOSPITALS**  
**3**

## Michigan State University is making a difference—everywhere—in Michigan.

Every day, Michigan State University—the nation's pioneer land-grant university—works to advance prosperity for the people of Michigan. MSU makes a positive impact on the state's economy in the areas of technology, agriculture, manufacturing, health care, education, energy, environment, and the arts.

MSU's talent and expertise help position Michigan as an uncompromising competitor in a global market. A vital contributor to the state's economy, the university attracted more than \$528 million in external funding in fiscal year 2014 and plays a key role in the state's annual \$91.4 billion agribusiness industry through partnerships, research, and educational programs in all 83 counties.



\*Data from an independent study by the Anderson Economic Group



Each district of MSU Extension has an advisory council to assist the District Coordinator in a variety of ways. These councils consist of key stakeholders who are leaders in their communities, industries or organizations. There is a balanced membership representation from each of the three counties in District 7.

The Council's composition is a balance among various sectors that Extension educational programming serves. Members were nominated and selected due to their experience with Extension and proven leadership. Members are able to network with others who share similar interests and concerns, help shape Extension programming efforts important to citizens in the district, gather support for establishing or extending educational efforts around issues of concern in the district, and participate in leadership and issue focused educational events.

Members of the District 7 Council include:

- Nora Balgoyen-Williams (Allegan)
- Max Thiele (Allegan)
- Hosie Woods (Kent/Allegan)
- Dick Bethel (Kent)
- Gary Lemke (Kent)
- Harold Mast (Kent)
- Carrie Jo Roy (Kent)
- Jim Steketee (Kent)
- Mary Jane Belter (Ottawa)
- Mike Bronkema (Ottawa)
- Greg DeJong (Ottawa)
- Matt Fenske (Ottawa)
- Yumiko Jakobcic (Ottawa)

## STAFF DIRECTORY

### **Administration:**

**Betty Blase**-District Coordinator, Phone 616-304-7191

blase@anr.msu.edu

**Helen Gutierrez**-Administrator

helen.gutierrez@kentcountymi.gov

### **Educators:**

**Rebecca Finneran**-Consumer Horticulture, Landscape & Turf

finneran@anr.msu.edu

**Amy Irish-Brown**-District Fruit

irisha@anr.msu.edu

**Christi Demitz**-Nutrition/Disease Prevention & Management

demitzch@anr.msu.edu

**Dr. Cheryl Eschbach**-Evaluation Specialist

cpeters@anr.msu.edu

**Glenda Kilpatrick**-4-H Youth Development

kilpatri@anr.msu.edu

**Stephanie Marino**-Nutrition and Physical Activity

marinos1@anr.msu.edu

**Jennifer Ortquist**-Resource Management

ortquisj@anr.msu.edu

**Alan Pilkenton**-Educational Media Coordinator-4-H Youth Development

pilkento@anr.msu.edu

**Holly Tiret**-Health & Nutrition, Academic Success

tiret@anr.msu.edu

**Kendra Wills**-Community & Economic Development

willsk@anr.msu.edu

**Garret Zeigler**-Community-Based Food Systems

zeiglerg@anr.msu.edu

### **Program Associates:**

**Jane Higley**-Nutrition Assistant

higleyj@anr.msu.edu

**Gloria Martin**-Program Instructor

marti878@anr.msu.edu

**Georgina Perry**-Program Instructor

perrygeo@anr.msu.edu

**Deb Shattuck**-Nutrition Assistant

shattu19@anr.msu.edu

**Latoyia Thomas**-Nutrition Assistant

thoma634@anr.msu.edu

**Yesi Velasco**-Nutrition Assistant

velasco@anr.msu.edu

### **Program Coordinators:**

**Kristi Ayers**-4-H

bowerskr@anr.msu.edu

**Nicole Grabowski**-4-H

grabow36@anr.msu.edu

### **On-Call:**

**Diane Brady**-Master Gardener Facilitator

bradydi1@anr.msu.edu

**Marcia Lucas**-Master Gardener Hotline Team Leader

lucasma5@anr.msu.edu

**Veronica Quintino-Aranda**-Family & Parenting Intern

vquintin@anr.msu.edu

**Ginny Wanty**-Master Naturalist Coordinator

wanty@anr.msu.edu

### **Support Staff:**

**Debbie Green**

debbie.green@kentcountymi.gov

**Jennifer Labun**-MSU Events Management

sibsonje@anr.msu.edu

**Sandy Radunzel**

sandy.radunzel@kentcountymi.gov

**Jessica Eberhard**, District 7 & 8 support

eberha47@anr.msu.edu

**Other Extension Educators Serving Kent County:**

<b>Tina Conklin</b> -MSU Product Center	conkli74@anr.msu.edu
<b>Joanne Davidhizar</b> -Product Center Innovation Counselor	davidhiz@anr.msu.edu
<b>Thomas Dudek</b> -Senior District Extension Horticulture & Marketing	dudek@anr.msu.edu
<b>Ron Goldy</b> -Upland Vegetables	goldy@anr.msu.edu
<b>Kevin Gould</b> -Beef/Livestock	gouldk@anr.msu.edu
<b>Tom Guthrie</b> -Equine	guthri19@anr.msu.edu
<b>Adam Kantrovich</b> -Farm Management/Financial	akantrov@anr.msu.edu
<b>Katherine Lee</b> -Dairy	leeka@anr.msu.edu
<b>Jerry May</b> -Swine	mayg@anr.msu.edu
<b>Mike Metzger</b> -Goats/Sheep	metzgerm@anr.msu.edu
<b>Jill O'Donnell</b> -Christmas Trees	odonne10@anr.msu.edu
<b>Dennis Pennington</b> -Biomass, Bioproducts and Bioenergy	pennin34@anr.msu.edu
<b>Brenda Reau</b> MSU Product Center	reau@anr.msu.edu
<b>Carlos Garcia Salazar</b> -Small Fruit	garcias4@anr.msu.edu
<b>Diane Smith</b> -Product Center Innovation Counselor	dismith@anr.msu.edu
<b>Marilyn Thelen</b> -Field Crops	thelen22@anr.msu.edu

