

**Message from the District Director**



Embedded in communities across the state, Michigan State University (MSU) Extension brings the science, programs and resources of Michigan's land grant university to organization, communities and individuals throughout the state. Over the past year, MSU Extension has continued to provide exceptional programming in Kent County. MSU Extension works to meet community needs by partnering with local organizations to bring programming that directly impacts county residents' lives. We're excited to present the 2022 Annual Report that gives an overview of MSU Extension's accomplishments and ongoing work. We're passionate about serving Barry County and we look forward to a new year. Thank you for your continued support of MSU Extension and for partnering with us to make a difference.

**Contact Information**

775 Ball Street NE  
Grand Rapids MI 49503  
616-632-7887  
kent.msue.msu@msu.edu  
www.msue.msu.edu  
<https://www.facebook.com/District7MSUE>

★ **1,003** ★

EXTENSION PROGRAMS  
INCLUDING KENT  
RESIDENTS

★ **10,794** ★

KENT RESIDENTS  
ATTENDED EXTENSION  
PROGRAMS

**117**

Extension programs held in the county

**2,200**

People attended programs held in the  
county



**Food Safety**

The team reached 7,189 people in nearly 400 programs including 96 programs that included 261 residents from Kent County.

**REPORTING**

**407**

"Ask Extension" questions answered in the county

**7,470**

questions answered across the state

**305**

Residential Soil Tests

**42**

Commercial Soil Test

**305**

Lawn and Garden Hotline calls from Kent residents.

**208**

Product Center Consultations to Kent Residents

**635**

Youth enrolled in county 4-H

**135**

Adult Volunteers





# Supporting Agriculture and Agribusiness



## 2022 Ridgefest

In 2022, MSU Extension hosted Ridgefest at the Clarksville Research Center. 70 of the 95 attendees were Kent County growers who were provided a way to stay in touch by demonstrating new technologies, cultivating community among our close-knit industry, and passing knowledge from grower to grower and generation to generation. The event provided networking opportunities, an educational tour of the Research Center, and a social and new technology showcase.



## Apple Education



## Pre-Bloom Thinning

40 Kent County Growers attended the Pre-Bloom Thinning meeting in 2022 at Schwallier's Country Basket. This meeting provided instructions on pruning high density apples in need of rejuvenation. Orchards can fall out of optimal condition in terms of tree vigor, fruit production, and quality due to missed dormant pruning, inadequate fertility, uneven crop load management and many other factors. At the meeting growers received guidance on some pruning techniques and management strategies to bring these types of blocks back into excellent condition.

## Pruning Workshops

In January 2022, 39 Kent County growers attended 2 pruning high-density apples workshops. The speaker, Todd Einhorn, discussed pruning physiology, click pruning, renewal stub length pruning, and multileader systems. Growers were also provided with a recap of 2021 highlights from MSU Extension Educators and provided feedback that will help guide research and extension programming.

## Heros to Hives

Heros to Hives provides Veterans with beekeeping education and training from MSU Extension and its partners. The program serves Veterans, Reservists, Active Duty or National Guard members of the U.S. Armed Forces and their adult children, spouses, partners and caregivers. 31 Veterans in Kent County participated in this program; learning about hive handling, colony inspections, and pest and pathogen management.



## GR Breakfast Meetings

MSU Extension apple production specialist, Dr. Anna Wallis, with local Integrated Pest Management Educator, Amy Irish Brown, conducted weekly breakfast meetings to deliver seasonal tree fruit crop and pest updates to industry members in the Grand Rapids area. Dr. Wallis covered horticulture and weather updates, while Amy provided pest updates and reviewed pesticide spray day information. Over the course of the summer, there were over 1,000 participants that took advantage of the education.



## Smart Gardening Outreach

In 2022, our Consumer Horticulture team reached over 3,800 people through outreach at the Fulton Street Market, Home and Garden Show, and Windmill Island Gardens events. The West Michigan Home and Garden Show held at DeVos Place serves as a huge platform for MSU Extension's Consumer Horticulture team to present smart ideas for gardeners. MSU Extension's presence at the show is strongly represented by the seminars given, printed publications and media exposure. During the four-day effort, 60 volunteers logged 277 hours assisting the gardening public with Smart Gardening education and answering their questions. New in 2022, our volunteers engaged the public by giving out over 2,000 free seed packets (2 per child) which delighted parents and children alike. Records indicate the volunteer team had conversations about Smart Gardening with 1,960 individuals (from 35 counties!) at two MSUE exhibit spaces.



### Plant Quest

The consistent development of improved plants as well as the numerous tried-and-true species means there is always something new to learn in the world of horticulture. The goal of Plant Quest was to introduce participants to plants appropriate for every kind of site and taste. Topics included perennials worth the hunt, game changing annuals, pollinator plants for large scale to small scale spaces, deer resistant plants and amazing tree species. Overall, Plant Quest was a successful program that reached participants across the nation and internationally. 60 of the 354 attendees were Kent County Residents.



### Dig In! EMGs

In 2022, MSU Extension Master Gardeners (EMGs) across Michigan were provided an opportunity each month to tap into MSU Experts where they learned new and exciting science topics. Each online session featured interactive Smart Gardening topics taught primarily by the MSUE Consumer Horticulture team and faculty, to help them stay connected while enriching their knowledge. 108 of the 1,074 participants were from Kent County. Each session was recorded in case someone was unable to attend, and these recordings were viewed 2,367 times!



### Pruning Workshops

Pruning is an important cultural practice used to maintain health, safety, vigor and appearance of woody plants. It involves both art and science. In 2022, Sr. Horticulture Educator, Rebecca Finneran lead the on-line workshops that were designed to help participants learn best practices for pruning and the proper equipment to use. 278 people attended these workshops.

### Bare Root Plant Event

Michigan gardeners patiently await local frost-free dates in anticipation of planting colorful perennials in their gardens. In 2022, MSU Extension offered a free online class to help get a jump on spring planting by learning the many attributes of bare-root plants. This was combined with a plant sale! 256 people participated in this event, 128 of them were Kent County residents.



### Smart Gardening Apprenticeship

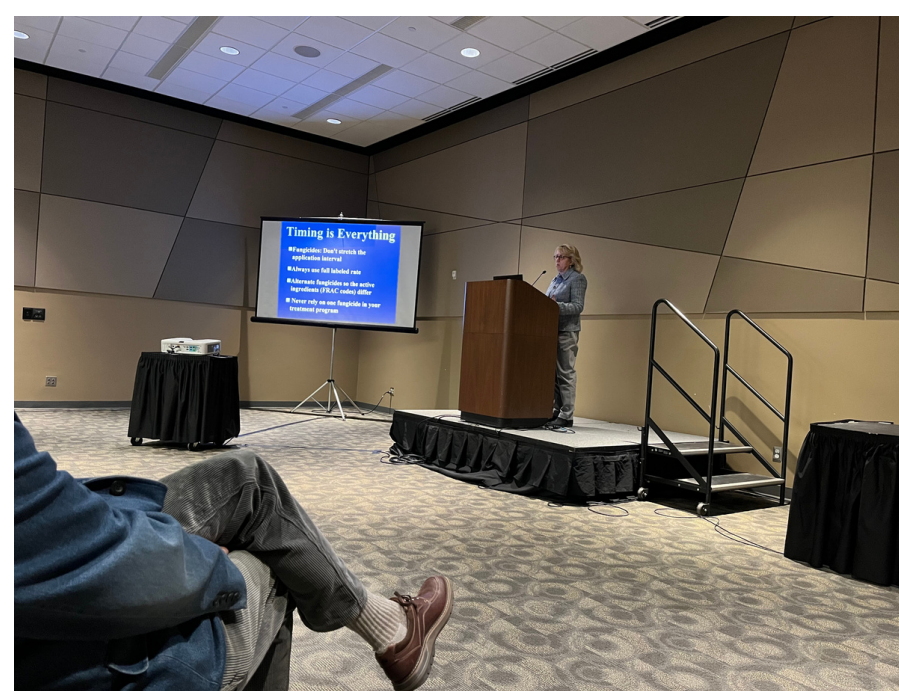
The Smart Gardening Apprenticeship program is comprised of class-room education coupled with hands-on implementation for lessons learned. In West Michigan, apprentice participants attend a rigorous 8-week session that is scheduled throughout the summer. Subjects include pruning, soils composting, mulching, annuals and perennial flowers, native plants, pollinators, plant propagation and invasive plants. One of the underlying goals of doing this program is to train new volunteers with enhanced education to be able to volunteer in the MSU Extension Grand Ideas Garden (GIG). This year, six new members joined the GIG team and quite a few others signed up for the Wednesday volunteer work sessions. 27 Kent county residents took part in this program.



## GLEXP0 2023

Our team of vegetable, fruit, greenhouse, and community food system educators and specialists organized 65 out of 92 recorded educational activities offered at the 2022 Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable, and Farm Market Expo & Michigan Greenhouse Growers Expo (“GLEXP0”), Dec 5-8. Attendance included 3,002 people, which is up by 347 from last year’s first post-pandemic return to an in-person GLEXP0 and approaches pre-pandemic numbers. There were 392 exhibitors with booths in the Main Trade Show and the Farm Market Trade Show. This year’s show offered 46 Michigan Restricted Use Pesticide (RUP) credits, 30 Ohio RUP credits, and 69 Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) continuing education credits.

The Trade Show Stage was in its second year and sponsored by Valent. This was originally devised by the GLEXP0 Board to draw and enhance foot traffic all the way to the back of the trade show. It had classroom-style seating with A/V setup, and was largely used for company talks, panel discussions, social hours, and awards ceremonies.



The Agritourism Mini-Roundtables were introduced this year by MATA as attendee-led focus groups. It was set up inside ropes in the center of the Farm Market Trade Show with a circular seating arrangement. A microphone and PA speakers were added to the arrangement after the first session. When asked, the Michigan Agritourism Association considered these a well-attended and engaging informal peer-learning opportunity to consider repeating next year with some modifications for better sound, more seating, and experimenting with other times of the day.

Roughly half – 30 out of 65 – of the MSU-led educational sessions were sponsored by supporting industries. Impressively, the Greenhouse Team, mostly because of Roberto Lopez, had 14 of their 18 sessions sponsored. Sponsors included AgBiome, AgroEcoPower, Ball Horticultural Co, Breckenridge Insurance Agency, Certis Biologicals, Dummen-Orange, Ednie Flower Bulbs, Germains Seed Technology, Great Lakes Ag Labor Services, Michigan Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Association, Michigan Greenhouse Growers Council, Michigan Plant Growers Co-op, Nufarm, Philips Horticulture LED, Profile Products, PW / Four Star Greenhouse, Smithers Oasis, Soil Production Solutions, Syngenta Flowers, and Syngenta.

- GLEXP0 sessions reached a regional audience
- Most attendees were fruit growers
- Attendees are gained useful knowledge and some are making changes

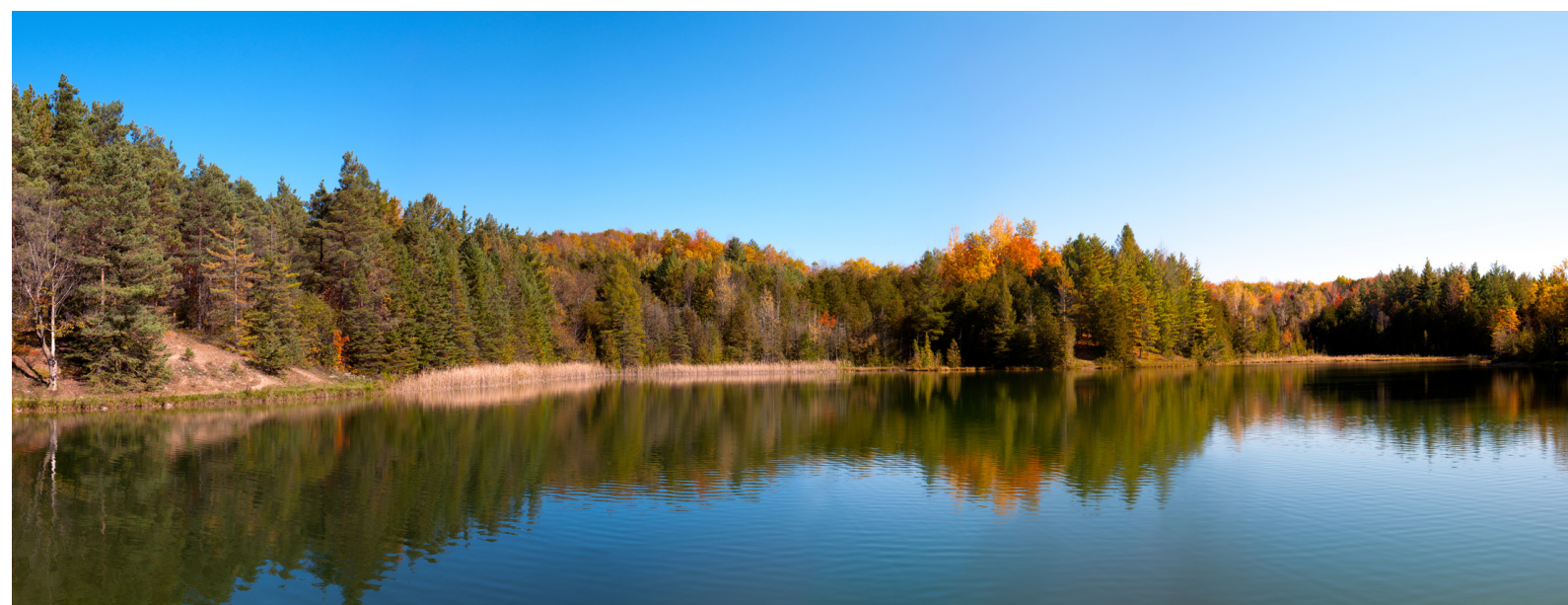


GLEXP0 is truly a team effort, with 81 of our active and emeritus educators, specialists, and students working together to invite speakers, moderate, host dinners with speakers, and present

- Kent County MSU Extension staff who presented were: Amy Irish-Brown and Garrett Ziegler,



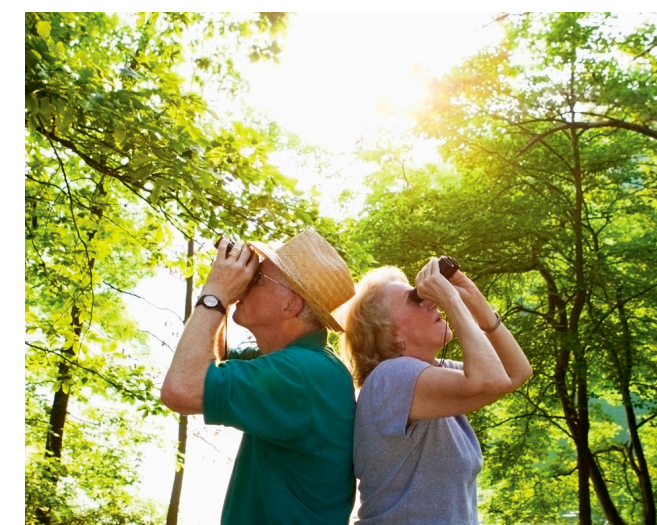
## Introduction to Lakes Online



In 2022, 24 Kent County residents grew their appreciation for Michigan's inland lakes with our Introduction to Lakes online course. Residents increased their knowledge and understanding about lake ecology, watersheds, shorelines, aquatic plant management, Michigan water law, and community involvement. The course's self-paced format is designed for anyone interested in lakes, including lakefront property owners, lake users, local government officials, lake managers and educators.

## Michigan Birding 101

Michigan Birding 101 was attended by 24 Kent County Residents in 2022. Topics included everything a new birdwatcher should know.: Equipment and how to ID birds, backyard feeding and backyard bird ID, birding ethics and backyard habitats/native planting, and where to go and what to see. This course is a great opportunity for those new to the hobby or looking to get started!



## Financial Literacy

In 2022, Kent County residents attended a variety of financial literacy webinars. MSU Extension provides resources and education on money management, foreclosure prevention, buying your own home, retirement planning and more to help residents and their families be more financially healthy. Some of the webinars Kent County residents attended are:

- Tips to Build and Protect Your Credit
- Make a Spending Plan Work for You
- Property Tax Foreclosure Basics
- Wealth Building
- Retirement Myths and Facts
- Informed Renter
- Top 10 Credit Tips
- Savvy Tips for Starting a Small Business
- Who Gets Grandma's Yellow Pie Plate
- Surviving and Thriving on a Fixed Income



## MSU Extension Product Center

In 2022, 345 Kent County residents utilized courses and consultations from the MSU Extension Product Center. The MSU Product Center supports innovation and growth for business, industry and entrepreneurs in food, agriculture and natural resource sectors. Residents utilized the following programs offered:

- Monthly Consultations
- Mobile Food Vehicle Course
- How to Start a Food Truck Business
- Value-Added producer Grant Seminar
- Getting Started with Amazon Sales
- Starting a Mobile Food Business Workshop
- Michigan Works! Going Pro
- Making It In Michigan: Food Entrepreneurs' Path to Success
- Starting a Commercial Food Business
- SpringGR Kzoo Station Workshop

## Homebuyer Education

In 2022, 77 Kent County Residents attended MSU Extension's Homebuyer Education Seminars. This seminar also reached 538 total participants with valuable information about the home buying process, advantages of homeownership, the steps in the home buying process, the costs of homeownership, the importance of good credit, how to determine how much house you can afford, mortgage loan basics, and how to maintain your investment.





**4-H Way**

4-H empowers young people with the skills to lead for a lifetime. It's a research-based experience that includes a mentor, a hands-on project, and a meaningful leadership opportunity.

The goal of the 4-H Youth Development model is 4-H is to "provide kids with community, mentors, and learning opportunities to develop the skills they need to create positive change in their lives. "

You need to look no further than the amazing youth in the Kent County 4-H program. In 2022, Kent County had 38 active clubs with a total of 339 youth registered in club programs, 67 adult volunteers, and a total of 1,433 youth who attended a 4-H program of any kind.



### **New 4-H Program Coordinators**

In 2022 MSU Extension brought on new 4-H Program Coordinator Samantha Griffith. Some of Samantha's specialties include Shooting Sports, Outdoor Adventure, Art, and Science.

She enjoys cooking, painting, and hiking the Kent County Trail System. Samantha was born in Chicago, Illinois, and is from the fourth most Irish neighborhood in America. She is currently completing a Mater of Arts in Teaching Science Education degree and is interested in pursuing more education centered on Agricultural and Career and Technical Education.

Welcome Samantha!



In 2022, MSU Extension brought on new 4-H Program Coordinator Kendra Van Order. Kendra is a graduate from Michigan State University with a degree in Animal Science. Growing up, she participated in Allegan County 4-H, showing beef cattle and sheep on local and national levels. After she aged out of the 4-H program she returned to Allegan County 4-H as a volunteer and coached livestock judging for seven years. Currently, Kendra loves to travel and help livestock families at various livestock shows across the state and country.

Welcome Kendra!



### **SPIN Clubs**

In 2022, 29 Kent County youth participated in SPIN clubs such as Photography, Small Animal Vet Science, Puertas Abiertas, 4-H Mental Health, and Chocolate.

### **State 4-H Rabbit and Cavy Show**



In January of 2022, 10 Kent County 4-Hers participated in the State 4-H Rabbit and Cavy Show. In addition to exhibiting their animals youth participants could enter in the photography contest, educational display contest, and breed identification contest. An impromptu showmanship workshop was also offered and youth expressed their appreciation for this opportunity.

### **Youth Mental Health First Aid Training Success Story**

Fifteen staff from Crossroads Alternative High School completed the first half of the Youth Mental Health First Aid Training. Throughout the training the staff were engaged and participated providing insightful feedback. The co-facilitators and myself were able to see the commitment and passion the staff had with the students they worked with. Making this one of our favorite trainings. All agreed this training was something students needed to be trained on.



**SNAP-Ed**

Kent County SNAP-ED Instructors taught 430 Kent County youth in 31 classrooms about food and nutrition. The Teen Cuisine, Show Me Nutrition, and Eat Healthy Be Active series help educate children about the importance of increasing their vegetable and fruit consumption, as well as increase their physical activity.

Kent County SNAP-Ed Instructors also taught 347 adults and seniors about eating healthy on a budget, making healthy eating part of their lifestyle physical activity and maintaining a healthy weight through a number of programs. A few of them include: Cooking for One, Lest Eat, Eat Healthy Be Active, Cooking for One, Food Demonstrations and Cooking Techniques, Food Budgeting and Meal Planning, Senior Project Fresh, and more.



**Food Safety**

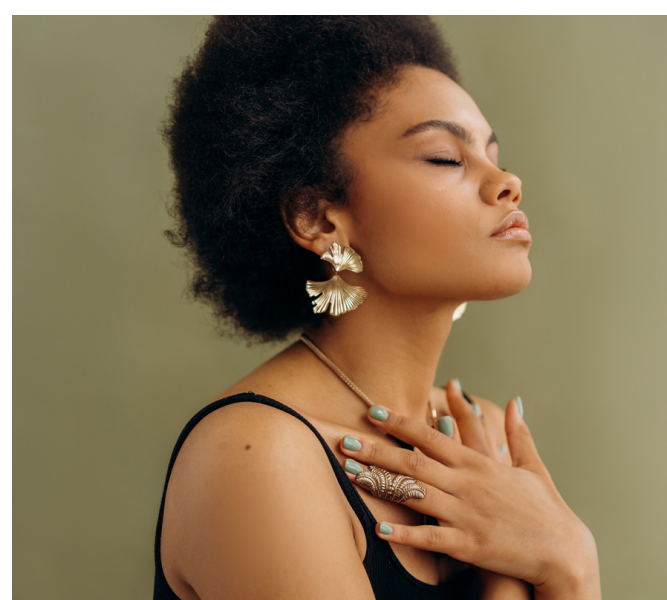
In 2022, 261 Kent County residents took classes and accessed resources from MSU Extension's Food Safety team. These classes covered a variety of topics that helped residents gain the knowledge and training to prevent food borne illnesses.

Some examples of the classes attended are:

- Food Safety for Food Service Workers
- Michigan Cottage Food Law
- Safe Food - Healthy Kids
- Food Safety Q & A
- ServSafe
- Food Security - GVSU
- Food Safety Outdoors
- Pantry Food Safety
- Canning
- Preserving Michigan Harvest
- Farmers Markets



**Mindful Mondays**



In a continued effort to manage our mental health in 2022, residents (166 Kent County) tuned in and found resources through weekly Mindful Monday Lunch & Learn sessions. These sessions explored mindfulness basics such as breathing, moving, eating, walking, thought surfing, taming your busy mind, and more. Research has shown that people who are more mindful are generally happier and report less anxiety, symptoms of depression, anger and worries. Some of the weekly topics were:

- Mindfulness of Children
- Importance of Adult Sibling Relationships
- Mindfulness for Educators
- Calming Down & Destressing
- Six Principles of Problem Solving
- Caring for the Caregiver
- Begin with a Breath
- Teaching Kids Mindful Eating
- Changing Negative Self Talk
- Maintaining Health
- Be Kind to Your Mind
- Mindfulness for Children
- RELAX
- Problem Solving
- What is Anger?
- Mindful Eating
- Laughter is the Best Medicine
- Forgiving and Letting Go

**Matter of Balance**

Falling down doesn't have to be a part of aging. Many older adults experience a fear of falling. People who develop this fear often limit their activities, which can result in physical weakness, making the risk of falling even greater. This program is designed to reduce the fear of falling, increase confidence and improve activity levels among older adults. In 2022, 30 Kent County residents took part in this program.





## CONTACT US

775 Ball Ave NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Phone: (616) 632-7865

Facebook: [facebook.com/District7MSUE](https://www.facebook.com/District7MSUE)

Erin Moore  
District 7 Director  
616-994-4573  
mooree16@msu.edu

Kelsey Bockelman  
Aquatic Invasive Species  
Prevention Educator  
616-632-7878  
bockelm4@msu.edu

Diane Brady  
Horticultural Events & Accounts  
Manager  
616-632-7873  
bradydi1@msu.edu

Dan Davis  
Extension Program Worker  
davisd29@msu.edu

Rebecca Finneral  
Extension Educator Horticulture  
616-632-7886  
finneran@msu.edu

Debbie Green  
Extension Program Support  
616-632-7877  
greende4@msu.edu

Samantha Griffin  
4-H Program Coordinator  
616-632-7888  
griff807@msu.edu

Deb Gulick  
Master Gardener Coordinator  
616-632-7880  
gulickde@msu.edu

Georgina Guzman  
Extension Health Educator  
616-632-7884  
perrygeo@msu.edu

Jennifer Labun  
Project and Event Coordinator  
616-632-7872  
sibsonje@msu.edu

Latoyia LeRoux  
Community Nutrition Instructor  
616-632-7871  
thoma634@msu.edu

Stephanie Marino  
Extension Educator  
616-632-7889  
marinos1@msu.edu

O'Brien Staci  
Community Nutrition Instructor  
616-632-7898  
obrie343@msu.edu

Jinnifer Ortquist  
Financial and Homeownership  
Educator  
616-632-7874  
ortquisj@msu.edu

Alexandria Payton  
Community Nutrition Instructor  
616-632-7901  
paytona1@msu.edu

Tracy Reed  
Secretary III  
616-632-7885  
reedmott@msu.edu

Carly Sandoval  
Health and Nutrition Instructor  
616-632-7891  
glunzca@msu.edu

Kendra Van Order  
4-H Program Coordinator  
616-632-7870  
vanorde4@msu.edu

Yesenia Velasco  
Community Nutrition Instructor  
616-632-7882  
velasco@msu.edu

Kendra Wills  
Extension Educator  
616-632-7893  
willsk@msu.edu

Garrett Ziegler  
Extension Educator  
616-632-7879  
zieglerg@msu.edu

MSU is an affirmative-action, equal- opportunity employer, committed to achieving excellence through a diverse workforce and inclusive culture that encourages all people to reach their full potential. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status.

Issued in furtherance of MSU Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Quentin Tyler, Director, MSU Extension, East Lansing, MI 48824. This information is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names does not imply endorsement by MSU Extension or bias against those not mentioned.