MSU Extension (MSUE) in Oceana County continues to provide local educational programming and impacts to meet Oceana County and Michigan’s needs. Extension staff members work diligently to maintain programming and reach as many residents as possible each year. Educators and paraprofessionals have worked hard to innovate with creative and inventive ways of providing programming at reduced costs.

This report provides highlights of MSU Extension’s work in Oceana County during 2012 within the structure of our four programmatic Institutes:

- Agriculture and Agribusiness Institute
- Children and Youth Institute
- Greening Michigan Institute
- Health and Nutrition Institute

MSU Extension has changed in many ways since our beginnings in the early 1900’s. But we have not changed our focus of connecting education and research on campus to the people and businesses in the communities we serve. Thank you for your continued support of this critical partnership.

Kay Cummings
District #5 Coordinator
Michigan 4-H Youth Development provides programs designed to help address the critical issues that young people face during out-of-school time. 4-H also offers resources to help adults create and engage young people in fun, age-appropriate, experiential learning. Research shows that young people involved in 4-H are less likely to become involved in negative behaviors and more likely to attend college.

The Oceana County 4-H program continued to grow in 2012. There are currently 289 youth involved in 34 clubs, and an additional 1399 youth were reached through special interest and school enrichment programs. There are 67 club leaders with an additional 30 resource and associate leaders.

The Oceana County 4-H Folk Festival marked its 30th year of offering an educational trip through time on how various traditions have evolved. Joy Hamilton, 4-H Program Coordinator, taught 10 classrooms about the history of lanterns in preparation for the Annual Folk Festival. This year the Oceana County Farm Bureau Promotion and Education Committee became a new Folk Festival partner by adding agricultural learning opportunities for participants that included tractor safety, butter making and cherry harvesting. The event was attended by 450 youth, and 44 adults volunteered to make it possible.

Teaching youth the value of giving is an important principle in Michigan 4-H. The Annual County-Wide Yard Sale/Bake Sale is held over two weekends each summer. Proceeds from the sale of donated items are presented each fall to the Crystal Valley Care Fund. Donation totals have averaged $1,000 each year over the past six years. This event is organized by the 4-H Youth Council and involves both adult volunteers and 4-H youth members.

Eight new volunteers completed the MSUE Volunteer Selection Process and orientation. All volunteers are provided life skills training, financial accountability instruction and program development skills.

The 4-H Youth Council provides oversight for the Oceana County 4-H Program. Three project related committees meet monthly or bi-monthly to discuss program projects and requirements specific to their areas. These include the 4-H Horse Developmental Committee, 4-H Market Livestock Committee and 4-H Small Market Animal Association, involving a total of 46 adults and 15 youth.

Oceana 4-H has an active Facebook page that keeps youth and adults aware of local and statewide events and activities. Over 150 Oceana County 4-H members are friends of this Facebook page.
Michigan State University Extension works to increase farmers’ success while protecting the environment, ensuring food safety, reaching new markets and advancing agriculture through applied research. Our goal is for farmers to be more competitive in local, national and international marketing, making the Michigan and Oceana County economies stronger. We do this every year, but the 2012 weather required an unusual response…..

2012 Fruit Freeze and Drought

As all of Oceana County knows, early season warm temperatures followed by April frosts drastically reduced the Michigan apple crop for 2012 (estimated 2.9 million bushels statewide compared to approximately 25 million for 2011). In early March, Jeff Andresen, MSU Agricultural Meteorologist, forecast unseasonably hot conditions which would cause plants to begin growth very early. A conference call between fruit, landscape, nursery and consumer horticulture educators and specialists resulted in a plan of action. Articles at MSUE News alerted growers to the unusual conditions and strategies they could use to reduce injury, on the freeze tolerance of tree fruit, and active and passive frost control measures. In West Central Michigan (Districts 5, 7, and 8) Amy Irish-Brown and Phil Schwallier had Jeff Andresen speak on freeze control strategies with wind machines.

The MSU Extension Fruit and Resource Management workgroups surveyed the needs of producers impacted by the freeze. They worked with the agricultural industry and farm groups to monitor and coordinate efforts to respond to this crisis situation. Response efforts will continue through 2013 as the financial loss of 2012 production will continue to affect cash flows.

Even without a crop, fruit trees need to be maintained to assure a good crop the following year. Fruit Educators Amy Irish-Brown, Phil Schwallier developed plans for maintaining fruit trees and vines that had no crop. Educators visited growers to help them assess the damage, discuss their options and assess their emotional and educational needs. They worked with crop insurance loss adjustors and the USDA’s Risk Management Agency (RMA) to expedite crop insurance payments. Farm Management Educators have developed programs to help economically stressed growers. On August 8, fourteen commercial fruit growers from Oceana, Muskegon and Newaygo Counties attended a workshop in Shelby about the USDA Emergency Aid Bill and Income Tax Management related to the freeze.

In response to the drought conditions which followed the freeze throughout Michigan, MSU Extension Agriculture Educators created the Drought Resources webpage: http://msue.anr.msu.edu/resources/drought_resources. This valuable resource is available to growers and the public with updated information on a variety of state crops and issues, including: Weather, Field Crops, Forage/pastures, Fruit Crops, and Christmas Trees and Nurseries.
Keeping A Successful Farm on Track with Environmental Quality

Natalie Rector, MSU Extension Educator, provided an opportunity for the owner and employees of a well-known dairy in New Era to review farm data from a private consultant about the agronomics and environmental cautions of land application of manure. With the landowner’s participation, the dialogue between the landowner and employees allowed for a clearer understanding of the basics of the program as well as providing employees an opportunity ask questions and address improvements.

IPM Academy

MSUE’s IPM Academy is designed to assist newcomers to pest management, but can be a valuable review for growers, nurserymen, gardeners, or landscapers looking to brush up their IPM skills or bring new farm workers up to speed. In 2012, eight growers from Oceana County attended the IPM Academy. Representing farm operators and industry scouts, these participants learned valuable lessons in pest control.

Oil & Gas Lease Public Meetings

With enormous pressure on Michigan landowners in 2012 to sign oil and gas leases, Curtis Talley took the lead statewide to provide educational programs. These sessions covered the language of an oil and gas lease contracts, it’s potential affects on a business, and ways to increase income or protect against the loss. Local sessions:
- April 26, West Shore Community College: 52 Oceana County attendees
- May 3, Oceana County Planning Commission: 15 attendees
- June 14, Oceana County Board of Commissioners: 18 attendees

Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) for Asparagus Growers

This Federal aid program was in response to Peruvian asparagus flooding the US market. MSU Extension was integrally involved in providing the education and technical assistance that was required for Oceana County asparagus growers to take advantage of these funds. In 2012, there were 17 total business plans approved. Each farmer was paid $8,000 by the TAA program with the completion of their plan. A positive spin-off was that the average new investment per farm was $13,216.00 in modernized equipment or business expansion. Four farms were also assisted in completing a transition out of business (estate plan), and 8 others were assisted in using a new risk management tool for estate planning.

Oceana Asparagus Day

MSU Extension is proud to organize the Premier Midwest educational meeting focused on asparagus production every spring in Oceana County. One hundred and fifty-seven participants representing Michigan, Canada and Nebraska attended. Speakers provided the latest updates on irrigation, disease and pest management, labor and marketing outlooks and discussed financial management for the those participating in the Asparagus Trade Adjustment Assistance Program. Attendees also had the opportunity to visit with 12 commercial industry related vendors to discuss their growing season needs. The 2012 event also doubled as a retirement party for Norm Myers, long-time asparagus expert and former County Extension Director.
Successful and thriving communities combine knowledgeable and engaged legislators, businesses, community groups and residents. By connecting these groups with the best research-based tools, Michigan State University Extension helps enhance the quality of life in Michigan, helps communities create and retain important jobs and gives residents and groups the tools to positively impact their cities, towns, townships and the state.

**Good Governance Education in District 5**

As a resource for boards and community leaders in effective meetings and local public policy, Julie Pioch, MSU Extension Educator in State and Local Government, provided workshops in west and southwest Michigan in 2012. These workshops reached over 500 community leaders statewide (71 in Oceana). Topics taught included running effective meetings using parliamentary procedure, and the elected official as leader in public policy development. Over 80% of evaluation respondents reported that they learned from the workshops and were more confident to participate in meetings because of what they learned. A comment from the program held at Elbridge Township Hall was, “Julie, thank you so much for the meeting last night. Many thanked me as they left. Most got some good info and help. There were 60 in attendance, from 12 different units.” Jake Whelpley

**New County Commissioner Training**

There were 221 County Commissioners and other county elected officials and staff who attended one of six New County Commissioner workshops offered by the Government and Public Policy team in November and December 2012 around the state. Evaluations proved the workshops effective in providing an overview of county government and providing attendees with the information to make them more successful in their new roles. Oceana County’s newest commissioner was accompanied by the Chairman of the Board in 2012.
MSU Extension programs from the Health and Nutrition Institute promote healthy lifestyles. The education provided allows each individual to acquire the skills to take control and manage his or her personal health, consume an affordable and nutritious diet, improve self, family and community relationships, and reduce the spread of disease.

**Dining With Diabetes Workshop in Oceana County**

Just over nine percent of Michigan adults have been diagnosed with diabetes – an estimated 701,000 people. The cost of treating diabetes is expected to triple over the next 25 years. It is estimated that Michigan can save $545 million spent across all chronic diseases by investing $10 in preventive care per person per year. Dining with Diabetes is a series of five sessions that includes learning, demonstrations, and tasting of healthy foods.

A Dining with Diabetes series was provided by MSE Extension at the Council on Aging in Hart on November 6th, 7th, 27th, and 28th. Nine Oceana County residents attended the series.

As a result of the Dining with Diabetes classes, participants show improved control in menu selections, and improved attitudes about healthy eating including understanding the role of glucose, fiber, carbohydrates, and fats in their bodies. Participants also learned new habits like using herbs or spices in place of salt and using healthier oils when cooking meals at home.

**Project FRESH**

Over the summer of 2012, over 100 WIC families received nutrition education before being issued their $30.00 coupon booklet for fresh Michigan produce. These half-hour sessions covered what is in season, what to look for when buying, and how to prepare or keep the produce safely.

**Show Me Nutrition**

One hundred preschool students at Telemon Head Start were given a series of lessons using the Show Me Nutrition curriculum. These 5-sessions were taught at Hart, Walkerville and New Era. The teachers observed that all students had changes in their behaviors, including being more willing to try new foods and improved hand washing.