MSU Extension (MSUE) in Oceana County has again provided another successful year of local educational programming to meet the needs of the residents of Oceana County and Michigan. Educators and paraprofessionals continue to work to provide creative and informative programs from which Oceana County residents benefit. Our Educators and programming staff have worked to establish more collaborative programming with local organizations and state-wide groups.

This 2014 Annual Report will provide highlights of the work MSU Extension has provided within the structure of our four programmatic Institutes:

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

In 2014, MSU Extension continued its efforts to connect education and research conducted on campus to the people and businesses in the communities we serve.

We thank the Oceana County Commissioners for their continued support and value their partnership.

Michael S. Krauch
District #5 Coordinator
Michigan 4-H Youth Development provides programs designed to help address the critical issues 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.

In 2014, the Oceana County Commissioners granted an increase in funding for the 4-H program. Lori Cargill, 4-H Program Coordinator increased her hours from a 3/4-time to full-time position. When she first joined MSUE, she showed early success in program growth. With an increase in her hours, Lori has been able to continue to build on that success by achieving a year-over-year increase in program participation and by offering new programming opportunities to Oceana County Youth.

Oceana County’s 4-H Youth Program experienced another year of sustained annual growth with enrollment increasing to 312 youths involved in 35 clubs. An additional 1025 youths were reached through special interest and school enrichment programs. There are 56 club leaders and assistants with and an additional 40 resource leaders and volunteers supporting the Oceana County 4-H program.

The Oceana County 4-H Folk Festival marked its 32nd year in 2014. This festival offers educational opportunities for Oceana County 5th grade students to investigate cultural traditions and ways of living throughout the past 300 years. Lori Cargill and several 4-H volunteers visited 5th grade classrooms and conducted lessons on popular toys and games of the past including yo-yos, making string figures like Cat’s Cradle and playing Abraham Lincoln’s favorite marble game—Old Bowler. Festival exhibitors included wool spinners, square tappers, Native American tools/pottery/attire, an apple cider press and pottery wheel to name a few. Our partnership with the Oceana County Farm Bureau Promotion and Education Committee contributed to the agricultural learning opportunities for participants. This event was attended by 150 youths. Forty-five adult volunteers helped make the event possible.

Oceana County’s outstanding 4H leaders helped the Oceana Goat Quiz Bowl team to another successful season by placing 1st Place in the Junior Division at the Goat Quiz Bowl event at MSU this past spring. Diane Cole has lead this group for many years and has earned a reputation of bringing a very competitive and knowledgeable team to the Quiz Bowl event each year. Members begin studying and practicing for the April event each November. Several members involved have been just as successful with individual showings in categories such as “Skillathon” and photography.
4-H Leaders and members continued to show the importance of service and philanthropy in Oceana County again this year. The Annual County-Wide Yard Sale/Bake Sale generated proceeds which totaled $1500.00. Monies raised were donated to the Crystal Valley Care Fund. 4-H youth, parents and leaders participated in many community activities including: parade appearances promoting 4-H, biannual MDOT Adopt-A-Highway Program pickup, participation in County Park cleanup days, participants assisted as servers with the Oceana Historical Society Fundraising Spaghetti Dinner and volunteered at the Saddle-Up for St. Jude’s Trail Ride.

The 4-H members also showed an increased interest in various 4-H Statewide programs offered throughout the year. Each February, Michigan State University offers a Beef, Sheep and Swine Leaders and Vet Science workshops at Kettunen Center in Tustin, MI. Fourteen teen members and adult volunteers attended this unique learning experience. Topics included animal health, management, care and nutrition. Participation in 2014 increased from previous years when only a few members would participate. 4H Exploration Days is held each June on the campus of Michigan State University. There was a similar increase in participation with 17 4H’ers attending this three day event. Exploration Days participants have the opportunity to stay within the MSU dormitories and participate in a variety of classes including animal care, sports, crafts and performance arts among many others.

The 4-H Youth Council serves as an advisory group to the Oceana County 4-H Program. Three project related committees meet monthly or quarterly to discuss program projects and requirements specific to their subject matter areas of expertise. These include the 4-H Horse Developmental Committee, 4-H Market Livestock Committee and 4-H Small Market Animal Association. There are a total of 44 adults and 15 youths involved with these project based committees.

2014 was a record year for sales at the 4-H Market Livestock Auction. Total gross income for the 4-H members exceeded $194,000,. Community support for this worthwhile event was outstanding. Many of the 4-H participants designate funds received from raising and selling their animals to offset post-high school education expenses.

The Cloverbud Nature Awareness Program was held again this year. This is a collaborative effort of the 4-H programs in Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana counties. More than 20 Oceana County youth ages 5-6 participated in this day camp held at the P.J. Hoffmaster State Park and Gillette Nature Center. Those in attendance studied reptiles and amphibians with state park rangers. Oceana Conservation District Forester, A.J. Smith, was on hand to provide participants with a forest ecology lesson and included some fun lessons in ecology and nature.
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. Educators housed in Oceana County provide direct assistance to vegetable growers in vegetable production and assist with farm management related issues for all growers.

**West Michigan Ag Employer/Farm Safety Meeting**

Dr. Ben Werling, Vegetable Educator, partnered with the State of Michigan Workforce Development Agency and MI Works to offer local area growers updates on the latest employment requirements when hiring farm labor. He also provided farm safety reminders related to equipment operation and provided a review of accidents that have happened around the state. Growers from Oceana, Mason and Manistee attended the one day training at the West Shore Educational Service District Offices in Scottville. Growers learned new rules and regulations related to hiring documents required of employers which must be completed by new employees. Craig Anderson, Michigan Farm Bureau, provided the afternoon session on farm safety and regulatory requirements when moving equipment between fields. He provided some examples of accidents that happened in the past year and measures growers could take to improve safety and reduce potential liability. There were more than 50 growers in attendance.

**Oceana Asparagus Day**

Each spring, MSU Extension is proud to organize and host the premier midwest educational meeting focused on asparagus production in Oceana County. One hundred and seventy participants representing Michigan and Canada attended the 2014 event. Speakers provided the latest updates on international competition, disease and pest management and labor and marketing outlooks. Attendees also had the opportunity to visit with 10 commercial industry related vendors to discuss their growing season needs.

**Annie’s Project**

Curtis Talley Jr., Farm Management Educator, and Kathy Lee, MSU Extension Dairy Educator, organized “Annie’s Project” for farm women from Oceana, Mason, Newaygo and Muskegon Counties. “Annie’s Project” is designed to empower farm women to be better business partners in the ever-changing and complex world of agriculture. Participants built local networks with other farm women and learned more about services provided through local agriculture related agencies and agribusiness professionals. Six consecutive sessions were attended by 20 area farm women at the Fremont Area District Library in the Spring of 2014. Several women in attendance commented how they enjoyed the program and would encourage other farm women to attend future programs.
Oceana Research Tour

Dr. Ben Werling, Vegetable Educator, co-organized the annual Oceana Research Tour attended by Mason and Oceana County growers. The tour showcased the unique MSU-grower partnership established in Oceana County. The first two stops showcased five different research trials, all conducted on Oceana County farms. The final stop on the tour showcased our asparagus research farm. The Oceana County research farm is one of the only research farms in Michigan completely funded by growers. This farm is used by both industry and MSU researchers, and has produced results that influence many aspects of our industry, from varieties grown to how they are managed.

Tom Cast Sensor and Soil Moisture Monitoring

Dr. Ben Werling, Vegetable Educator, assisted growers this season with monitoring leaf wetness and temperatures in carrot and asparagus fields to help growers protect crops from disease. Working with 8 growers to place monitoring equipment in their fields and coordinating with local chemical field representatives, Dr. Werling posted results on the weekly electronic newsletter to keep growers informed of changing conditions. Dr. Werling also assisted growers with monitoring of soil moisture to help growers assess their irrigation schedule. Crops monitored in 2014 included asparagus, carrots and peppers.

Farm Business Management

Curtis Talley Jr, Farm Management Educator, worked with John Jones, MSU Outreach Specialist, MSU Telfarm Center, to demonstrate the new PC Mars farm accounting system to local fruit producers. PC Mars is a complete accounting package which allows growers to track income and expenses, print expense checks and provide detailed accounting reports that are generated on the farm. The Oceana/Mason Pomesters group invited Curtis to their monthly meeting to provide this new update.

In addition to the PC Mars demonstration, Curtis also worked with the Pomesters to provide them with information on the Non-Insured Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) Retro-Active Buy-up, which is a program within the 2014 Farm Bill. Producers of uninsurable crops, such as tart cherries have been able to enroll in the NAP disaster assistance program for many years. Both sessions with the Pomesters reached more than 25 local fruit growers.

BeeneGarter LLP Fall Food and Agricultural Industry Update

In October, Curtis Talley was invited to speak to 63 agricultural business producers and professionals from Muskegon, Kent, Newaygo and Oceana counties on the economic outlook for 2015. Curtis provided a comparison of Michigan’s water resources and irrigation costs to areas of California. He provided outlooks and upcoming challenges for the dairy, nursery and fruit industries, along with energy supplies, particularly crude oil.
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.

**Ag Legislative Breakfasts in District #5**

An opportunity for Oceana residents to interact and engage with state legislators is available on a bi-monthly basis at an early morning breakfast held in Fremont. This 90 minute informal meeting is hosted by MSU Extension and supported by both State Representative Jon Bumstead and State Senator Goeff Hansen. It gives growers and residents an opportunity to discuss their concerns directly with state officials as well as giving those officials an opportunity to update residents on happenings within the State government. Meeting attendance generally reaches 25-30 participants every other month with Oceana County representing a steady participation of growers.

**Citizen Planner Programs**

Kurt Schindler, MSU Extension Land Use Educator, conducted two Citizen Planner Programs in MSUE District 5 (Mason, Lake, Oceana, Newaygo and Muskegon counties) in 2014. The Michigan Citizen Planner program offers land use education and training to locally appointed and elected planning officials throughout Michigan. Educators within the district assisted with the coordination and running of the seven week course in Mason and Muskegon Counties this year. The Mason-Lake Program attracted 36 participants representing planning officials from Lake, Mason and Oceana Counties. The Muskegon Program attracted 26 participants representing Muskegon and Oceana Counties.

**Annual Oceana Agricultural Banquet**

Each March several groups come together to host the Oceana Agricultural Banquet to recognize the diversity and outstanding producers in Oceana County. The organizing group consists of MSU Extension, Oceana Conservation District, National Asparagus Festival members and former Oceana Dairy Committee members. Offering a night of fine dining, entertainment and recognition of producers that impacted the agricultural industry of Oceana County. Prior to the Banquet beginning, attendees can taste some of the delicious samples provided by local businesses using locally grown commodities during the “Taste of Oceana” reception. The banquet has been averaging 150 attendees representing growers, industry representatives and community members. The 2014 “Friend of the Oceana Agricultural Industry” award was presented to Ken Nye, Michigan Agricultural Commodities Marketing Association Asparagus Division Director. Ken was recognized for his many years of support to Oceana’s agriculture industry.
Nutrition Presentations

Liz Baker, Nutrition Program Instructor, began working with MSU Extension in September 2013, covering Mason and Oceana counties. She provides various nutrition education presentations for groups including pre-school and school age children and senior citizens. In 2014, she partnered with Spitler Elementary’s Project Focus afterschool program, reaching 1st through 4th graders. She also partnered with Thomas Read Elementary’s “Project Aspire” afterschool program, reaching 1st through 3rd graders, teaching students the importance of following “MyPlate” nutrition guidelines, physical activity, and food safety principles. There were 125 students reached with this “Show Me Nutrition” curriculum.

Liz also completed a series of presentations at Chase Migrant Head Start in Walker-ville. All students were ages 4 or 5 and had a great time learning through various stories such as “Oliver’s Milkshake” and “Germs, Germs, Germs.”

Hart Senior Center Presentations

Liz Baker also partnered with the Seniors at Hart Oceana County Council on Aging to present the “Eat Smart, Live Strong” curriculum. This curriculum incorporates tips on increasing fruit and vegetable consumption and physical activity among 60-74 year olds. There were 11 seniors reached by this program about challenges and solutions related to nutrition and physical activity.

Women, Infant & Children Presentations

Liz also worked with local WIC program sites to offer parents an opportunity to learn about the importance of eating fresh fruits and vegetables and how to utilize “Project Fresh” coupons to purchase produce available at local farm markets. Following their participation in the sessions, the 84 parents received a Project Fresh coupon booklet valued at $20 for use at local farm markets. The coupons represented up to $1680.00 of spending in the local economy.

Conclusion

We appreciate your taking time to review this Michigan State University Extension 2014 Annual Report. The members of the Michigan State University Extension Oceana County staff are proud of the work they have done in 2014 for the residents of Oceana County and the State of Michigan. MSU Extension helps people improve their lives by bringing the vast knowledge resources of MSU directly to individuals, communities and businesses. It is only through the dedicated efforts of MSU Extension staff, our adult volunteers and the support of our partners in county government, that we are able to meet that mission for the residents of the communities we serve.