Grand Traverse County
2016–2017 ANNUAL REPORT
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FROM THE DISTRICT COORDINATOR:

MSU Extension staff continue to provide education and outreach on needs facing Grand Traverse county residents. Our recent needs assessment utilized focus group and online survey input to solicit feedback from the public on what are the most vital needs and priorities for Michigan residents. These results have provided a local direction and educational focus to meet the emerging, critical issues facing Grand Traverse County residents.

Your local MSU Extension staff have linked the knowledge resources of MSU directly to individuals, communities and businesses over the past year. It is my distinct privilege to present these accomplishments in our annual report. This report summarizes the important work done by MSU Extension staff in Grand Traverse County. It has captured most of the significant highlights of our work in 2016 and provides a sense of the direction of our work into the future.

As always, I thank you for your continued support every year. Without you, we would not be here doing this important work with your constituents.

Jennifer Berkey
District 3 Coordinator

MEASURING IMPACT:

CONNECTING WITH RESIDENTS

4-H: Developing Youth & Communities ........................................2,231
Keeping People Healthy...........................................................1,125
Supporting Agriculture & Agribusiness........................................769
Fostering Strong Communities & Businesses, and Enhancing Our Natural Assets..................184

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS IN GRAND TRAVERSE .......... 4,309

CONTACT US:

520 West Front Street, Suite A
Traverse City, MI 49684
Phone: 231-922-4620
msu.grandtraverse@county.msu.edu
msue.msu.edu/county/info/grand_traverse

STAFF HOUSED IN GRAND TRAVERSE:

John Amrhein
Govt. & Public Policy Educator

Mark Breederland
Michigan Sea Grant Educator

Linda Cronk
Extension Health Research & Geriatric Educator

Sarah Eichberger
Disease Prevention & Mgmt. Educator

Duke Elsner
Small Fruit & Consumer Horticulture Educator

Karin Stevens
4-H Program Coordinator

Michelle Smith
Nutrition Program Instructor

Jane Rapin
Nutrition Program Instructor

Jenny McKellar
Office Manager

Veronica Mork
Office Specialist

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When you support MSU Extension 4-H programs, youth participants learn life skills that prepare them for the workforce – especially for highly sought after jobs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Extension programs help children develop early literacy skills that support school readiness. They learn leadership and decision-making skills in 4-H that increase their likelihood of becoming civically active.

4-H Youth Experience Awesome Hands-on Learning!

- 30 youth and 5 adults attended 4-H Exploration Days at MSU in June to experience college life – making friends, taking classes, and living in the dorms. One youth said it gave them “more confidence in being independent and going to college.”

- This year we increased educational requirements for youth with swine projects participating in fair. This resulted in a better quality of pigs and showmanship skills of the youth.

- We provided the opportunity for youth to learn about swine health, nutrition and anatomy through a stillborn fetal swine dissection. 65 youth were able to get hands-on learning as they touched, explored, and asked questions about a swine’s health and internal organs. It was an awesome experience for many students!

- 12 youth explored the Boardman River to learn why this river is so important to our area. The youth learned about water quality based upon the bugs they pulled out of the river.

- A parent said our 4-H program “provides a place where our son who is not into athletics or academically strong has something to excel at and can learn from.”

- We provided STEAM learning (STEM learning with the addition of Art) through a Makerspace event in Fife Lake. This event brought in approximately 50 youth and their families from the community. Tables were set up with electronics and power tools. Examples of the interesting activities at this event included snap circuits and robots made from different electronic parts.
Developing Youth and Communities, continued

Animal Science Learning through 4-H Projects

- Youth learn responsibility, self-discipline, marketing, communication, problem solving, and disease prevention through 4-H at the Northwestern Michigan Fair.

- 463 local 4-H youth (ages 9-18) participated in the auction for 2016

- 1,150 local 4-H youth registered and participated in the 4-H Livestock Council program in 2016

- 35 Swine, 3 Steers donated to local food pantries/charities

- Gross sales from the auction totaled $724,213.12

Differently Abled and 4-H – Focusing on Children’s Abilities

- A differently abled 4-H youth won first place showing her cow at fair in her age group. She worked hard with the calf and it showed in how she and her calf placed at fair.

- On Special Kid’s Day, our 4-H horse clubs and Horse and Pony Council provided horse related activities for many Differently Abled youth and adults. More than 50 youth and adults participated in games, making horse treats, and painting on therapy horses at the horse arena during fair. There was a wonderful response from the special kids and adults who attended - some wanted to just look at the horses, others wanted to touch them, and still others painted on these horses. It was a very calming and peaceful activity for all involved.

4Her’s Give Back to the Community!

- 4-H clubs removed invasive species, planted trees, and laid ground cover at a local park. Youth learned to identify and clear autumn olive bushes and garlic mustard plants in order to beautify Hickory Meadows park.

- 4-H Clubs, councils, and individual families of Grand Traverse County 4-H gave packages, containers, bags of food and personal products to a local alternative high school’s food pantry. This pantry helps to feed youth so they can concentrate on their education.

- A young 4-H teen gave her entire auction check to a 4-H family who lost their son in a car accident.

- 4-H clubs organized a “Cloverbud Fun Day” for children ages 5-9 to learn about animal projects through 4-H with horses, goats, and rabbits. About 40 children and their parents attended in April.
**KEEPING PEOPLE HEALTHY**

When you support MSU Extension, you help participants learn safe food handling practices, increase their physical activity, and improve the quality of their diets. Extension programming also helps decrease incidents of violence and bullying. Encouraging these healthy behaviors helps reduce food and health care costs by helping prevent chronic health conditions and providing safe environments throughout a person’s life span.

**Improving Nutrition and Physical Activity**

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Education (SNAP-Ed) provides nutrition education to income-eligible adults and children. This program focuses on improving dietary quality and increasing physical activity while stretching food dollars. The ultimate goal of these programs is to promote healthy weight maintenance and obesity prevention. In 2016, 751 adults and youth were reached through nutrition education classes at various venues in Grand Traverse County.

- 218 youth were enrolled in Show Me Nutrition (SMN), a six-week program for youth from Pre-K through eighth grade. Participants will have the opportunity to engage in age appropriate, interactive, hands-on activities that promote good eating habits, positive body image, physical activity, and food safety. Through each interesting and fun nutrition class, students will gain the skills necessary to make healthy lifestyle choices. SMN is taught at schools where at least 50 percent of students are eligible for the National School Lunch Program.

- 418 adults participated in nutrition presentations.

- 29 Adults participated in Cooking Matters series. Cooking Matters is a six week course for low income adults and families. Each course is team-taught by a volunteer chef and nutrition educator and covers meal preparation, grocery shopping, food budgeting, and nutrition. Participants take home a bag of groceries at the end of each class.

- Another adult class MSU Extension staff teach each year is called Project FRESH. In collaboration with the Health Department, MSU Extension Program Instructors provide nutrition education to families involved in the Women, Infants and Children

**Impacts with Youth:**

- 94% of teachers reported that children increased their awareness of the importance of good nutrition.

- 69% reported that children were making healthier snack choices.

**Impacts with Adults:**

- 100% improvement in one or more nutrition practices like planning meals, making healthy food choices or reading food labels.

- 95% of participants in Project FRESH will eat more fresh fruits and vegetables per day.

Traverse City Officer Reed Shea joined Instructor Michelle Smith in congratulating participants at Brickways for completing the Cooking Matters Series in their new community kitchen.
Keeping People Healthy, continued

program (WIC) on the benefits of including more fruits and vegetables in their diet. Coupons were provided to these participants to purchase locally grown fresh fruit and vegetables from Grand Traverse County farmers markets though Project FRESH. Local farmers then redeem coupons for payment of local produce. In 2016, 365 books were distributed valued at $7,300. The redemption rate of coupons was 67%, which is significantly above the 58% state average.

Connecting Kids to Healthy Food in Schools

MSU Extension serves as one of six FoodCorps service sites in Michigan. FoodCorps is a national organization working to connect kids to healthy food in school, so they can lead healthier lives and reach their full potential. Through this program, MSU Extension provides leadership and support to a FoodCorps service member. Service members support Farm to School strategies through delivery of hands-on nutrition and food systems experiential learning in classrooms, support healthy school meals, and work with the whole school community to support a schoolwide culture of health.

Throughout the last year MSU Extension’s FoodCorps service member Julia Paige has served Traverse Heights Elementary School. From September 1, 2016 – March 30, 2017, Julia has taught 24 engaging, hands-on lessons to 62 students in two classrooms and exposed all 282 Traverse Heights Elementary students to 7 cafeteria taste tests. FoodCorps service at Traverse Heights through MSU Extension has served to complement the elements and transdisciplinary learning specific to international baccalaureate school.

‘I've never had a salad, but I would vote that I love this one! I'm gonna ask my mom to make some spinach tonight!’ – 3rd grader Traverse Heights Elementary

‘Last year I didn’t like carrots, but I tried it again today and I think I actually really love it.’ – 4th grader Traverse Heights Elementary

Strengthening School Health through District Wellness Policy Support

MSU Extension Grand Traverse County, under staff Sarah Eichberger, has served as a preceptor for public health graduate student David Vachon from January – May. MSU Extension Grand Traverse County was able to respond to a request by Kingsley Area Schools to update their district wellness policy. Local school district wellness policies are an important tool for parents and school districts in promoting student wellness, preventing and reducing childhood obesity, and providing assurance that school meal nutrition guidelines meet the minimum federal school meal standards. David created and facilitated a process for the superintendent and the wellness team to efficiently and comprehensively assess the existing policy, vote and prioritize health topics to consider, and provided sample policy statements for the team to examine for integration into their existing language.
In addition to core programming, MSU Extension Grand Traverse County Health & Nutrition staff support local and regional events, networks, and community initiatives aimed at increasing community health and engagement. One example includes summer camp programming with Grand Traverse Bay YMCA Summer. MSU Extension provides direct and engaging education to over 200 youth campers enrolled in YMCA summer camp. MSU Extension will return this summer to provide hands-on food and nutrition learning activities for youth campers.

**Preventing and Managing Chronic Disease**

Chronic diseases are among the most prevalent, costly, and preventable of all health issues. Compared to the national average, Michigan adults suffer from more risk factors (obesity, hypertension, and high cholesterol) that contribute to chronic disease. Health factors such as obesity and physical inactivity significantly influence risk for developing chronic diseases, such as type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

MSU Extension’s Disease Prevention and Management (DPM) programs work to promote health and wellness by reducing and managing the incidence and impacts of chronic diseases among Michigan residents and communities. These community-based, evidence-based core programs provide participants with proven strategies for improved dietary quality, management of chronic health conditions, and prevention of chronic diseases.

Dining with Diabetes is a fun and interactive course series targeting individuals with prediabetes, type 1 or type 2 diabetes, members of their support system and/or anyone interested in learning more. Participants learn to make healthy food choices and incorporate balanced menus into the family dining experience. Classes include research-based education, cooking demonstrations, and healthy recipe tasting. MSU Extension Grand Traverse County continues to partner with the Grand Traverse Bay YMCA and local chefs to provide engaging programming.

**National Diabetes Prevention Program (NDPP)** is designed to bring to communities’ evidence-based lifestyle change programs for preventing type 2 diabetes. MSU Extension has achieved full program recognition from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and is one of two “fully recognized” program providers in the northwest Michigan region. MSU Extension Grand Traverse County continues to partner with the Northern Michigan Diabetes Initiative, Grand Traverse Bay YMCA and Priority Health to support delivery and recruitment of this year long program.

The NDPP shows that making modest behavior changes, such as improving food choices and increasing physical activity to at least 150 minutes per week, results in participants losing 5% to 7% of their body weight. These lifestyle changes reduced the risk of developing type 2 diabetes by 58% in people at high risk for diabetes.

“Keeping People Healthy, continued”

“My blood sugar level is now in the normal range.”

“I have learned food strategies that I will use for the rest of my life.”

“My cholesterol has dropped 10 points.”

~ Diabetes Prevention Program Participants
“The Diabetes Prevention Program has been fun and beneficial. Our facilitator from MSU Extension presented the course information in a manner that was easy to understand and fun. She encouraged class participation and friendships grew among members of the class. Her suggestion that we try out a class or two at the local YMCA was a great one! I tried out a few classes, and my husband and I both ended up joining the YMCA. We now have “healthy dates” every Tuesday and Thursday at our fitness class.”

Diabetes Personal Action Toward Health (PATH) is a self-management workshop aimed at empowering people to take an active role in managing diabetes. Over the course of 6 weeks, participants learn strategies to help them deal with difficult emotions, how to develop a healthy eating and exercise plan, goal setting and problem solving, and a variety of other tools to manage diabetes. MSU Extension Grand Traverse County relies on a longstanding partnership with the Northwest Michigan Area Agency on Aging to deliver this self-management series.

A Matter of Balance is designed to reduce the fear of falling and increase activity levels among older adults. A Matter of Balance includes eight two-hour sessions for a small group led by an MSU Educator and coordinated with the Northwest Michigan Area Agency on Aging and was offered through partnerships with the Grand Traverse Bay YMCA, the Village at Bay Ridge Assisted Living, and the Grand Traverse County Senior Center. This nationally recognized program was developed at Boston University.

Powerful Tools for Caregivers has been designed to support caregivers of adults with a chronic condition in a way that enhances their well-being as they care for others. Research studies find high rates of depression and anxiety among caregivers and increased vulnerability to health problems. Caregivers frequently cite restriction of personal activities and social life as problems. They often feel they have no control over events, and that feeling of powerlessness has a significant negative impact on caregivers’ physical and emotional health. In the six weekly classes, caregivers develop a wealth of self-care tools to: reduce personal stress, change negative self-talk, communicate their needs to family members and healthcare or service providers, communicate more effectively in challenging situations, recognize the messages in their emotions, deal with difficult feelings, and make tough caregiving decisions.

Michigan State University Model of Health Extension
MSU Extension has begun development on the MSU Model of Health Extension in Traverse City with researchers at the MSU College of Human Medicine Community Campus, located at the Munson Family Practice Clinic. Our goal is to develop the capacity of the MSU Model of Health Extension in our local northwest Michigan communities to increase community health and address local health issues in partnership with our local communities.
Reducing Anger, Bullying, and Stress

Stress Less with Mindfulness

Provided in collaboration with West Virginia University Extension, Stress Less with Mindfulness introduces participants to the experience and practice of mindfulness to reduce stress. Mindfulness can be defined as paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.

Research has shown that practicing mindfulness is effective in reducing stress related symptoms such as worry, depression, and physical tension, and may be helpful in managing chronic conditions such as cardiac disease and diabetes. The MSU Extension program is offered as a five-part series or as a one-time workshop. Two program evaluation surveys collect different outcomes for series and one-time events.

RELAX: Alternatives to Anger

RELAX is a four-part educational series designed to help adults, parents, teens, and caregivers increase their knowledge about anger issues and put anger management and healthy relationship skills into practice. Through discussion and skill-building activities, participants explore what anger is and what triggers it. This interactive program teaches participants techniques for calming down and de-stressing, the principles of problem solving, effective communication skills, and ways to forgive and let go of the past. It is offered as a series, and also as a one-time workshop, including a Train the Trainer version and RELAX: For Parents and Caregivers. RELAX is available as an online course.

During 2016, more than half of program participants left with improved knowledge or new skills designed to promote social and emotional well-being with others in their lives and immediate social environments.
**Integrated Pest Management Update Seminars** – District 3 Fruit Educator, Emily Pochubay, coordinated and hosted a total of 42 seminars in northwest Michigan from May – July 2016. Over the course of this program, a total of 584 repeating participants comprised primarily of NW MI fruit growers and local crop consultants attended these seminars. A post-program survey polled 72 participants who represented approximately 1,757 acres of apples and 7,065 acres of cherries in northwest MI. Participants were asked how valuable IPM Updates were for helping them manage production risks.

**Grower SWD Trap-Swap and Training Sessions** – The invasive pest, spotted wing drosophila (SWD), has become a significant threat to Michigan’s fruit industry and is the cherry industry’s top priority. To help cherry growers combat the threat of SWD, Extension Educators Emily Pochubay and Nikki Rothwell worked with the Michigan Cherry Committee to secure funding from an MDARD Specialty Crop Block Grant to offer growers an SWD trap-swap program that aims to facilitate on-farm SWD monitoring and detection to reduce the likelihood of economic and crop losses caused by SWD. This program also offered SWD identification, monitoring, and management training sessions.

**Wine Grapes**

Ongoing programming in support of the wine grape industry included educational meetings for growers, reports on growing conditions and pest problems, and data collection from wine grape variety test plots.

In February of 2016 a one-day Vineyard Establishment Conference was held at the Northwest Michigan Horticultural Research Center. Presenters from Michigan and three other states provided information on all aspects of vineyard development, from site selection on through to caring for young vines.

A series of meetings, starting with the annual Wine Grape Kick-Off meeting in April of 2016, and followed by monthly “First Friday” sessions in May through August, featured topics related to efficient and environmentally safe pesticide application methodologies. The Northwest Michigan Orchard & Vineyard Show in January 2017 attracted over 70 local grape growers and winemakers to hear the latest news on crop insurance, viral diseases of grapevines, spotted wing drosophila infestations, and harvest-time insect problems.

2016 marked the last year for data collection from the wine grape variety trial at the Northwest Michigan Horticultural Research Center. Several planning sessions were held to gather input of area growers and winemakers on what projects should be
conducted next in the research vineyard. The old vines are scheduled to be removed in early 2017 to make space for a new planting which will be used for studies on vine cold-hardiness and sustainable production practices.

Saskatoon Berries
MSU Extension and campus specialists continued to work with this relatively new crop to Michigan, providing pesticide recommendations, collecting data from a pruning demonstration plot, conducting a summer field day for growers, and studying important insect pests of this fruit. An MSU GREEEN (Generating Research and Extension to meet Economic and Environmental Needs) grant was awarded for the establishment of variety trials and plots for pesticide trials at the Northwest Michigan Horticultural Research Center.

Other Small Fruits
In 2016 crops such as blueberries, raspberries, and strawberries suffered significant losses from spotted wing drosophila. A half-day session on the recognition and management of this insect in small fruit crops was added to the 2017 Northwest Michigan Orchard & Vineyard Show.

Home Horticulture
Throughout the year, the Grand Traverse MSU Extension office receives requests from area residents for help with pests and problems of gardens, landscapes, and households. Dozens of clients took advantage of weekly diagnostic clinics hosted by the office from May to September. In total, over 200 people were assisted by our office staff. In addition, Grand Traverse County residents used the MSU Extension Garden Hotline (888-MSUE-4MI or 888-678-3464) 209 times in 2016.

Through volunteer outreach, Extension Master Gardeners share science-based gardening knowledge and engages citizens and empowers communities in environmentally responsible gardening practices, improving food security, improving community, and developing youth through gardening.

Native Pollinator & Monarch Butterfly Conservation
Starting in early 2017 Duke officially took on a new role with MSU Extension, conducting educational programming on the conservation of native pollinating insects and the monarch butterfly for all of northern Michigan. Increased efforts in this topic area began in 2016 through speaking engagements, extension articles, and joining a Michigan Department of Natural Resources committee which planned and facilitated a “Monarch Summit” in September. The goal of this committee is to formulate a state-wide plan for monarch conservation efforts, including goals for habitat expansion and increased butterfly populations.
Supporting Hops Production

MSU Extension provides valuable hops education throughout northwest Michigan. Grand Traverse County currently boasts more acres in hops than any other county in the state.

The reemergence of commercial hop production began in 2009 with a 1.5 acre yard on Old Mission peninsula. Since then, hops have been planted in many counties across Michigan—though the majority of Michigan’s acreage is in northwest Michigan. Hops are currently grown in eastern, western, and southern Grand Traverse as well as on Old Mission Peninsula. In addition to growing 200+ acres, MI-Local Hops in Williamsburg, will harvest and process over 400 acres in 2017. MI-Local has invested tens of millions of dollars in hopyard, harvest, and processing infrastructure since 2015. Moreover, they have offered to help subsidize a 2+ acre research and demonstration farm in partnership with Michigan State University Extension. Public/private partnerships like these have the potential to provide beneficial impacts to the industry at large.

Multiple Grand Traverse County growers were invited to speak at the 3rd annual Great Lakes Hop & Barley Conference. The conference attracted over 300 participants from multiple states and countries. MSU Extension has taken a leadership role across the North Central and North East regions by providing valuable research and outreach to current and prospective growers on best practices for planting, harvesting, and pest management.

In 2016, MSU Extension hosted members of the Hop Quality Group (HQG), a national organization dedicated to improving hop quality for the craft beer industry. Throughout two days, the HQG toured multiple hop harvest and processing facilities offering recommendations to improve quality. The HQG was extremely impressed with the quality control measures and food safety protocols that growers had in place.

Supporting Food and Agriculture, continued

Assistance to support beginning farmers across MI

The MSU Product Center Food-Ag-Bio assists county residents in developing products and businesses in the areas of food, agriculture, natural resources, and the bio economy. Extension Educators are specially trained as innovation counselors to deliver these services to local residents. Business counseling is conducted on a one-on-one basis and may take place at the MSUE office or the client’s home or business location. The assistance provided is tailored to meet the needs of the client and may include...
Supporting Food and Agriculture, continued

things like developing a business plan, navigating the regulatory maze, accessing the supply chain or seeking funding options. The innovation counselor also assists clients in accessing specialized services they may need that are offered through Michigan State University like feasibility studies, nutritional labeling, food science, and packaging assistance.

The Great Lakes Potato Chip Company in Traverse City has been working with the Product Center for several years and has gone through tremendous expansion. Today, the company has over 30 full-time employees processing over 80,000 pounds of potatoes per week. The product line now includes seven permanent flavors of kettle-cooked potato chips, two flavors of tortilla chips, two flavors of salsa, and a few seasonal potato chip flavors. Seventeen distributors supply a growing list of customers in the six states surrounding the Great Lakes as well as Texas, Tennessee, and Canada with future distribution planned in the Southeast.

“The Product Center has been a great partner for us. Their efforts in keeping us in the loop in all food-related opportunities in Michigan has been instrumental in securing thousands of dollars in sales. We have benefited from the efforts with Kroger and Meijer and have found the Making It In Michigan Trade Show an excellent opportunity to connect with buyers and distributors.” ~ Ed Girrbach, owner of the Great Lakes Potato Chip Company.

2015-16 MSU Product Center Impacts in Grand Traverse County:

- 328 Counseling Sessions
- 3 Ventures Launched
- 12 Jobs Created
- Increased Annual Sales: $520,000
- Value of Increased Investment: $6,238,000

MSU Extension is also facilitating economic development opportunities within the community food systems realm. MSU provides leadership for the Grand Traverse Foodshed Alliance, a non-profit organization based in Traverse City, MI that developed the Grand Traverse Food Innovation Hub (GTFIH) in partnership with Cherry Capital Foods at 1610 Barlow. The GTFIH, currently managed by Taste The Local Difference, is comprised of ten suites that house multiple value added food businesses such as: The Redheads, Michigan Hop Alliance, Kale Mary, WhiskTC, Cultured Ferments, and more. A commercial teaching kitchen is in the planning stages as well. The facility is also home to the NW Michigan Food and Farming Network, hosts a monthly permaculture design course, and has served as a venue for Traverse City SCORE (Service Core of Retired Executives) chapter meetings.
FOSTERING STRONG COMMUNITIES

When you support MSU Extension, participants learn how to implement best practices in good governance that keeps communities solvent, productive and engaged; learn effective conflict management skills that help leaders and residents work collaboratively on complex issues; and engage youth leaders in decision-making. In the personal finance area, MSU Extension helps youth and adults alike learn the skills they need to increase their savings, manage their spending, avoid predatory lending, and reduce mortgage defaults. All of these outcomes help lower the cost of governmental services and lead to personal and community stability, strong neighborhoods, and safe communities.

The Northern Michigan Counties Association is organized by MSU Extension and incorporates commissioners from 34 counties in northern lower Michigan. The Association meets 8 times per year to share information and learn from the experiences of others.

Building Strong Sovereign Nations is a leadership building program developed by MSU Extension in cooperation with leaders of Tribal Nations in Michigan and delivered annually in conjunction with the fall meeting of the United Tribes of Michigan. The program is open to leaders from all Tribal Nations in Michigan and is also available to leadership and staff of individual tribes. Onsite workshops are also available.

New County Commissioner Workshops were held at 7 locations in November and December of 2016. Participants included both new and experienced commissioners and other county officials, with 92% indicating that they found the program valuable for their professional (or personal) growth and development.

Registers of Deeds who are members of the United County Officers Association learned about Intergovernmental Cooperation at their annual meeting in May.

The Stronger Economies Together (SET) program is a national initiative collaborating with USDA and local partners in Manistee, Benzie, Grand Traverse, and Kalkaska to help identify and develop business sectors that hold the highest growth potential in an effort to help create, attract, and retain jobs.

MSU Extension Educators were also involved in the following Government & Public Policy related efforts in and around Grand Traverse County this year:

- Strategic Planning
- Right to Farm Act Training
- Medical Marijuana Training
- Professional development and planning education programs with County Planners
- Form Based Code Training with Networks Northwest
- Sign Training with Networks Northwest
- Zoning Administrator Certificate Training
Fostering Strong Communities, continued

Sea Grant Extension

MSU Extension's Greening Michigan Institute supports efforts to carry out Sea Grant programs throughout Grand Traverse County and the rest of Michigan. Michigan Sea Grant Extension helps apply research, conducts educational activities, and is connected to more than 40 coastal counties. Extension Educators provide technology transfer by interpreting scientific knowledge for decision-makers, public officials, community leaders, businesses, and industries.

Michigan Sea Grant Extension provides targeted support focusing on marinas and other businesses, restoring coastal habitats and related industries, such as commercial and recreational fishing. In partnership with state and federal agencies, Extension Educators are responsive and proactive in addressing local, regional, and national issues relevant to Michigan, with outreach topics and programs such as:

- Economic Impact of Charter Fishing
- Vibrant Waterfront Communities
- Restoring Fish Habitat
- Michigan Clean Marina Program
- Coastal Hazards – Dangerous Currents

Sea Grant Educators are working with the Grand Traverse County Health Department’s Water Safety Network on drowning prevention issues, particularly in Lake Michigan. Also, Sea Grant has been active with the Freshwater Roundtable and hosted the sold-out 9th annual Freshwater Summit in October, 2016. Over 170 people attended and learned about the fight to prevent Asian carp in the great lakes, the biology of the New Zealand Mudsnail - a new mussel invader in the Boardman River, fishery changes to Lake Michigan, and water level updates among other topics.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Amrhein</td>
<td>Government &amp; Public Policy</td>
<td>231-922-4627</td>
<td><a href="mailto:amrhein@msu.edu">amrhein@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Breederland</td>
<td>Coastal Communities Development</td>
<td>231-922-4628</td>
<td><a href="mailto:breederl@msu.edu">breederl@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann Chastain</td>
<td>Leadership and Community Engagement</td>
<td>231-439-8972</td>
<td><a href="mailto:chastain@msu.edu">chastain@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie Crick</td>
<td>Forestry &amp; Natural Resources</td>
<td>989-275-7179</td>
<td><a href="mailto:crickjul@msu.edu">crickjul@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda Cronk</td>
<td>Extension Health Research</td>
<td>231-922-4621</td>
<td><a href="mailto:cronkl@msu.edu">cronkl@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christina Curell</td>
<td>Environmental/Water Quality</td>
<td>231-745-2732</td>
<td><a href="mailto:curellc@msu.edu">curellc@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James DeDecker</td>
<td>Specialty Field Crops</td>
<td>989-734-2168</td>
<td><a href="mailto:deedeke5@msu.edu">deedeke5@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heidi Lindberg</td>
<td>Greenhouse/Nursery</td>
<td>616-994-4701</td>
<td><a href="mailto:wollaegEth@msu.edu">wollaegEth@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phillip Durst</td>
<td>Beef</td>
<td>989-345-0692</td>
<td><a href="mailto:durstp@msu.edu">durstp@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Eichberger</td>
<td>Disease Prevention and Management</td>
<td>231-922-4836</td>
<td><a href="mailto:eichber2@msu.edu">eichber2@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erwin Elsner</td>
<td>Small Fruit, Consumer Horticulture</td>
<td>231-922-4822</td>
<td><a href="mailto:elser@msu.edu">elser@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Ferry</td>
<td>Swine</td>
<td>269-445-4438</td>
<td><a href="mailto:franzeli@msu.edu">franzeli@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merrill Gould</td>
<td>Livestock/Bioenergy</td>
<td>616-994-4547</td>
<td><a href="mailto:gouldm@msu.edu">gouldm@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Guthrie</td>
<td>Pork/Equine</td>
<td>517-788-4292</td>
<td><a href="mailto:guthri19@msu.edu">guthri19@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andy Hayes</td>
<td>Community Prosperity</td>
<td>231-582-6482</td>
<td><a href="mailto:andy@northernlakes.net">andy@northernlakes.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philip Kaatz</td>
<td>Forage/Commercial Agriculture</td>
<td>810-667-0341</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kaatz@msu.edu">kaatz@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam Kantrovich</td>
<td>Farm Business Management</td>
<td>231-533-8818</td>
<td><a href="mailto:akantrovich@msu.edu">akantrovich@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerald Lindquist</td>
<td>Grazing Management</td>
<td>231-832-6139</td>
<td><a href="mailto:lindquis@msu.edu">lindquis@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erin Lizotte</td>
<td>Integrated Pest Management</td>
<td>231-944-6504</td>
<td><a href="mailto:taylo548@msu.edu">taylo548@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerald May</td>
<td>Environmental/Air Quality</td>
<td>989-875-5233</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mayg@msu.edu">mayg@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley McFarland</td>
<td>Malting Barley</td>
<td>906-439-5176</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ashleymc@msu.edu">ashleymc@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Metzger</td>
<td>Goats &amp; Sheep</td>
<td>517-788-4292</td>
<td><a href="mailto:metzgem@msu.edu">metzgem@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stan Moore</td>
<td>Dairy/Agricultural Human Resources</td>
<td>231-533-8818</td>
<td><a href="mailto:moorest@msu.edu">moorest@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill O'Donnell</td>
<td>Christmas Tees/Ornamental/Landscapes</td>
<td>231-779-9480</td>
<td><a href="mailto:odonne10@msu.edu">odonne10@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dennis Pennington</td>
<td>Biomass</td>
<td>269-838-8265</td>
<td><a href="mailto:pennin34@msu.edu">pennin34@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily Pochubay</td>
<td>Fruit Production</td>
<td>231-946-1510</td>
<td><a href="mailto:pochubay@msu.edu">pochubay@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily Proctor</td>
<td>Tribal Governance</td>
<td>231-439-8927</td>
<td><a href="mailto:proctor8@msu.edu">proctor8@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethany Prykucki</td>
<td>Leadership and Community Engagement</td>
<td>231-258-3320</td>
<td><a href="mailto:prykucki@msu.edu">prykucki@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia Roth</td>
<td>Social Emotional Health &amp; Nutrition Supervision</td>
<td>231-882-0025</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bannopasa@msu.edu">bannopasa@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikki Rothwell</td>
<td>Commercial Fruit</td>
<td>231-946-1510</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rothwel3@msu.edu">rothwel3@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurt Schindler</td>
<td>Government &amp; Public Policy</td>
<td>231-882-0026</td>
<td><a href="mailto:schindl9@msu.edu">schindl9@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeannine Schweihofer</td>
<td>Meat Quality</td>
<td>810-989-6935</td>
<td><a href="mailto:grobbelj@msu.edu">grobbelj@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J Robert Sirrine</td>
<td>Community Food Systems/ Hops</td>
<td>231-256-9888</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sirrine@msu.edu">sirrine@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sienna Suszek</td>
<td>4-H Supervision</td>
<td>989-354-9870</td>
<td><a href="mailto:suszek@msu.edu">suszek@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Staton</td>
<td>Soybeans</td>
<td>269-673-0370</td>
<td><a href="mailto:staton@msu.edu">staton@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtis Talley, Jr.</td>
<td>Farm Business Management</td>
<td>231-873-2129</td>
<td><a href="mailto:talleycu@msu.edu">talleycu@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marilyn Thelen</td>
<td>Agriculture Systems</td>
<td>989-227-6454</td>
<td><a href="mailto:thelen22@msu.edu">thelen22@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy Trautner</td>
<td>Early Childhood</td>
<td>231-779-9480</td>
<td><a href="mailto:trautner@msu.edu">trautner@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine Venema</td>
<td>Family Financial Literacy</td>
<td>810-667-0341</td>
<td><a href="mailto:venema@msu.edu">venema@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy Wieland</td>
<td>Product Center Innovation Counseling</td>
<td>231-348-1770</td>
<td><a href="mailto:wieland5@msu.edu">wieland5@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Wilson</td>
<td>Master Gardener</td>
<td>248-347-0269</td>
<td><a href="mailto:wilsonm1@msu.edu">wilsonm1@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonnie Zoia</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>989-345-0692</td>
<td><a href="mailto:zoiaj@msu.edu">zoiaj@msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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