MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT COORDINATOR

It is my pleasure to compile the 2017 Annual Report for the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners. It has been another great programming year with impactful work taking place in the county, throughout my district and in the state. As always, I want to thank the commissioners and county administration for your continued support of our educational programs. Our team serving Calhoun County is made up of our local 4-H program coordinator and educators throughout the state that are providing educational programs and expertise to Calhoun County residents. You will see some of their work highlighted in this report. We continue to reach people not only in face-to-face programs, but also through our web-based classes and through timely articles on the MSU Extension website. Please feel free to contact me at any time, especially if you want to talk about expanding our educational impact in Calhoun County! Cheers to another successful year!

Julie Pioch, District Coordinator

MIDWEST EXHIBIT HALL

Michigan State University Extension Staff Serving Calhoun County

• Julie Pioch, MSU Extension District 13 Coordinator
• Kathy Fischer, 4-H Youth Development Coordinator
• Roger Betz, Farm Management Senior Educator
• Leatta Byrd, Food Safety Educator
• Mariel Borgman, Community Food Systems Educator
• Dave Thompson, Swine Educator
• Paulo Bacigalupo Sanguesa, Dairy Educator
• Eric Anderson, Field Crops Educator
• Sarah Johnson, HNI Supervisor
• Patricia Dadow, Support Staff

Find other experts serving Calhoun County
at www.msue.msu.edu

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Developing Youth and Communities

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'ers also demonstrate reduced high-risk behaviors such as drug use, and learn to complete tasks, solve problems and seek any help they might need from peers and adults. 4-H involvement also helps participants avoid or reduce involvement with the court system. This helps ensure more young people succeed in school, attend college and contribute to their communities. More successful young people in communities results in greater tax revenues and consumer spending and increases the likelihood that young people will stay in, or return to, their communities.

Growing true leaders

This year in the Calhoun County 4-H program, Kathy Fischer, 4-H Program Coordinator, reached a total of 2,603 youth through traditional club participation, short-term programs, school enrichment and after school programs. She has provided leadership and technical assistance to 169 adult volunteers, and manages 37 4-H Youth clubs.

Kathy has been busy presenting and representing MSU Extension and Calhoun County at several conferences. She presented at the state conference for MSU Extension sharing her expertise and knowledge regarding the 4-H Creative & Expressive Arts program that has been successful in Calhoun County for 20 years. This same program was the highlight for a presentation at the 2017 Michigan Afterschool Conference held in Battle Creek.

Kathy was also invited to present at the National Association of Extension 4-H Agents held in Indianapolis. There she talked with Extension professionals from around the country regarding starting cloverbud camps in their own states. Kathy’s background in environmental education has led her to being a presenter/speaker at several environmental programs around the state and throughout the nation.

Classroom Gardens in Pennfield

Kathy continues to work with schools in the area, bringing gardening programs to the classroom. These programs are science based, but also incorporate math, reading, and social studies. Students are also given the opportunity to try fresh vegetables and fruits, some of which they have grown themselves. The garden at Pennfield High School has been successful enough to be selling produce to the cafeteria for use in school lunches.
Lemonade Stand Provides Youth with Business Training

The 4-H Council runs a lemonade stand, which is the biggest fundraiser for the county program. Fund from the lemonade stand are used to support the programs offered to youth as well as provide scholarships for youth to attend state and national 4-H events. The lemonade stand not only provides income for Calhoun County 4-H but provides youth with a valuable business opportunity. Youth run the stand as a business with guidance from Kathy and other adults. They decide what to order, how much to order, what our prices should be, where the stand is used and every other aspect of this business. When our old stand was becoming run down and in need of major upgrades, it was the youth who took the lead in designing the new stand. The new stand has now made appearances in Battle Creek and Marshall and we hope to hit all areas of the county in 2018.

4-H Members and the Calhoun County Fair

Calhoun County 4-H continues to be a big part of the Calhoun County Fair, having 608 youth involved in various clubs that exhibit both livestock and still projects during the fair. These projects help teach youth many life skills which they will use for years to come. Not only are we preparing them for their immediate future of college, but we are helping build skills that will take them into the work force. These skills include team work, leadership, character building, citizenship, and much more. During kids day at the 2017 Calhoun County Fair, Calhoun County 4-H gave away over 600 books to young people of all ages. Kathy continues to work with fair management to increase fair participation and make changes that will benefit the youth of Calhoun County.

4-H Members Show Accomplishments at State Awards Program

Michigan 4-H State Awards youth are 13-19 years old with three or more years of 4-H experience. To qualify for the award, 4-H'ers must submit a written application that showcases the learning experiences, knowledge and skills they’ve acquired through their participation in 4-H, as well as their contributions to their local 4-H programs, clubs and
Developing Youth and Communities, continued

communities. Submissions are reviewed by the Michigan 4-H State Awards selection committee. This group of volunteers, staff members and industry experts determine which members are selected as award delegates. Delegates are then invited to participate in one of two additional phases: an interview process for seniors (ages 16-19), in which their skills and experience are further evaluated, or a vigorous leadership program for junior delegates (ages 13-15).

• In 2017 we had 3 youth who applied and become state award delegates, they included
  • Torey Fischer – Equine Science,
  • Julianna Adams – Sheep Science, and
  • Maria Ruedisueli – Leadership & Personal Development

Calhoun County 4-H Tractor Operator Program
The Calhoun County 4-H Tractor Operator Program was launched in 2017. This program teaches youth tractor and machine operation, along with safety, maintenance and repair. Those who successfully complete the written, pre-operational, and driving test receive a license from the US Department of Labor which allows them to operate a 20 PTO HP or grader tractor and allows them to be employed on property that is not owned or operated by their parents or legal guardians. This program was a great success for Calhoun County youth.

• Ten youth participated in 24 hours of instruction time, both in the classroom and on or around various pieces of farm equipment. All 10 participants passed their testing have been awarded their license.

4-H Tractor Operator Program youth were presented with their Certificates of Achievement. Completion of the course allows youth to operate a 20 PTO HP or grade tractor and allows them to obtain employment on farms other than their own.
Developing Youth and Communities, continued

4-H Exploration Days
2017 Impact Report

Exploration Days is a three-day campus-based pre-college program that is designed to help youth build the skills they need to successfully transition to college and to life as an adult. Youth participants stay on campus in Michigan State University residence halls and attend action-filled classroom and field trip sessions on a wide variety of topics, including animal science, business & entrepreneurship, international language & culture, performing & visual arts, and science, engineering & technology. Nearly 2,000 youth attended Exploration Days in 2017, including 41 from Calhoun County.

Post-event evaluations revealed that participating youth gained important life skills like decision making, problem solving, and communication. Youth also reported feeling more prepared to attend college.

90% of youth feel more independent
91% of youth built time management skills
84% of youth feel more prepared for college
73% of youth are now interested in attending MSU

“4-H Exploration Days has helped me get the feel of a college life. Being responsible for... being on time to class gave me a huge idea on how college will be like in my future.”

“[Exploration Days] helped me get out of my comfort zone and be more independent.”

“Coming in here, I was set on another college, but after seeing the gardens, trails, and all the buildings, I can see myself going here in the future. MSU STOLE MY HEART!”

DID YOU KNOW?
Youth who participate in Michigan 4-H pre-college programs are more likely to go to college: 68% of youth who participated in Exploration Days between 2009 and 2016 enrolled in college within six months of finishing high school. That’s 14% higher than the Michigan average!
Ensuring Safe and Secure Food

When you support MSU Extension’s efforts to enhance residents’ access to an adequate supply of safe, affordable food, program participants will focus on food safety measures in the field and at harvest, learn proper food preparation and food preservation techniques, and bring community partners together to strengthen access to healthy food supplies. This leads to a healthy population, which in turn helps keep health care costs in check and our communities viable.

MSUE Programs Focus on Prevention of Foodborne Illness in Calhoun County

Michigan State University Extension food safety education programs train participants to prevent incidents of foodborne illness associated with unsafe food handling practices. ServSafe and Cooking for Crowds are two programs that focus on equipping people who cook and prepare food for the public with the knowledge they need to do their jobs well and handle food safely. ServSafe is a national certification program offered by MSU Extension for people who work in food service. Cooking for Crowds is designed for nonprofit organizations. Research has shown that those food establishments who have a certified food safety manager have fewer food borne illness outbreaks.

- Cooking for Crowds evaluation results estimate that within 3 months after the class, a typical participant reaches an average of 428 individuals with served food.
- 80% of ServSafe participants passed the certificate exam with an average score of 81%.
- 89% of Cooking for Crowds participants know the correct methods of cleaning and sanitizing food preparation surfaces.
- 77% of Cooking for Crowds participants understand the cause of foodborne pathogens.

Topics covered in the ServSafe training include food safety, personal hygiene, temperature control, preventing cross-contamination, cleaning and sanitizing, food preparation, storing food, thawing, cooking, cooling and reheating food.

- 16 foodservice managers working at businesses in Calhoun county participated in MSUE’s 8 or 16-hour ServSafe courses offered in southwest Michigan in 2017.

Cooking for Crowds is a program for nonprofit groups who prepare large quantities of food the for their members or for the public as fundraisers. The class teaches about the risks of cooking large amounts of food and how to reduce those risks.

- A cooking for crowds program held in Battle Creek in partnership with the County Health Department, reached 8 community volunteers; a program held in Branch county was attended by 2 Calhoun residents.
Ensuring Safe and Secure Food, continued

FSMA Produce Rule Grower Trainings
The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) regulates growers of fresh produce in the United States for the first time in history.

Public value: a greater awareness of food safety on the farm will lead to safer food and a decrease in foodborne illnesses.

Produce growers have obtained the required certification to comply with the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) requirement by attending a MSU Extension Produce Safety Alliance Training between November 2016 and August 2017. Four growers in Calhoun County received certificates by D13 county.

Making Michigan Recipes Work Training Series
Michigan-specific culinary skills and menu planning training and supplemental materials for school nutrition professionals. The training was delivered regionally in a pilot round of five sessions between August and November 2016. Attendees of the Making Michigan Recipes Work training make changes in their institutional food service practices that will increase purchases of Michigan specialty crops. This will ultimately boost Michigan’s local economy, support Michigan’s specialty crop producers and better connect producers to Michigan’s schools and communities. In schools, serving more specialty crops will provide fresh, healthy products to Michigan students, thereby increasing their overall school nutrition. This has the potential to increase academic performance, focus, and overall long term health outcomes for Michigan students.

- 89 people attended the five pilot round trainings, representing 23 Michigan counties, including Calhoun.

The top informational items participants indicated learning were:
- How Michigan ingredients could be substituted for non-Michigan ingredients in recipes
- What SOPs are and how they can help your team safely handle Michigan produce
- When Michigan vegetables and fruits are in season
- How to connect to MSU Extension Community Food Systems Resources

Participants reported learning an average of 3 new skills as a result of the training. The top skills participants indicated learning were:
- How to properly and safely use kitchen knives
- How to store locally-grown produce

A train the trainer course was held in 2017 for statewide trainers from the School Nutrition Association of Michigan. The curriculum was adopted by the School Nutrition Association and is now part of their statewide training offerings.
Ensuring 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.

Regulating Medical Marijuana Facilities: A Workshop for Local Government

MSU Extension developed and delivered this training in quick response to recent legislation that requires local governments to make significant public policy decisions on barring or accepting and regulating five new types of commercial medical marijuana facilities. This series of workshops in early 2017 trained over 846 individuals state-wide. The team followed up across the state with on-demand programming for communities who wanted to host the workshop. Finally in the fall of 2017 the MSUE team developed a webinar version of the program which included legislative updates necessary for community decision making related to medical marijuana facilities. The follow up programs reached another 200 community leaders. Nearly 90% of evaluation respondents reported feeling more assertive or much more confident to address this topic in their community as compared to before the workshop.

- 11 Calhoun County Leaders participate in one of these programs.

Michigan Citizen Planner: Fundamentals of Planning and Zoning Course

Local communities that proactively plan to succeed in the New Economy can improve their quality of life and lead Michigan’s recovery and transformation. The Citizen Planner Classroom Program is delivered locally to provide a convenient way for busy volunteer community leaders to obtain the latest technical knowledge and skills they need to perform their duties more effectively and responsibly. MSU Extension also offers online and webinar versions of the course along with the Master Citizen Planner webinar series for continuing education.

- Five Calhoun County local leaders participated in the self-paced online version of the program in 2017.
Training and Updating Local Leaders

Calhoun County leaders attended programs taught by MSU Extension public policy educators throughout the state and online this year. Educational topics and locations included: County Budgeting—Sustainability and long term decision making; Expanding Broadband Access; Communicating through Conflict; updates on legislative actions, Data Informed Decision Making and Effective meetings through parliamentary procedure. MSUE worked with the Michigan Association of Counties, Michigan Township Association and the Michigan Farm Bureau on some of these programs. In total 22 Calhoun elected or appointed officials participated in these programs through out 2017.

The Michigan Association of Equalization Directors (MAED) conference was held at Firekeepers Conference Facility in Battle Creek in the summer of 2017. MSU Extension educators provided a presentation on strategic planning which was woven together with an actual planning process for the MAED who wanted to set some direction for their organization’s future.

Natural Shorelines Partnership & Natural Shoreline Landscaping

Protecting Your Shoreline: A workshop for inland lakefront property owners was held in cooperation with the Michigan Natural Shoreline Partnership, local County Conservation District offices, and local organizations. This program provides four hours of intensive instruction in shoreline landscaping and erosion control techniques. Featured workshop topics include healthy lake ecosystems, designing and maintaining natural landscapes on lake shorelines, bioengineering techniques to address high impact shorelines, using native plants in shoreline landscapes, attracting fish and wildlife to your shoreline, shoreline invasive plants to watch for, Michigan rules and regulations, and local examples of natural shoreline projects. This program is a part of a statewide effort with multiple simultaneous sessions held throughout the state annually. Four repeat programs were held in 2016-17 in Berrien, Cass, Van Buren & Kalamazoo Counties; Thirty-eight attendees from District 13 attended including 2 from Calhoun County.
Ensuring Strong Communities, continued

Homeownership Education
Homebuyers make decisions that require them to determine their own financial situations and what financial products are available on the market. Research suggests individuals may not accurately estimate their own financial status, including information about debt and creditworthiness, which leads to less desirable financial decisions. The MSU Extension Homeownership Education course is offered in person and on-line and assists homebuyers with up to six hours of education on these topics:

Advantages of home ownership and steps in the home-buying process;
Understanding costs of home ownership and how to maintain the investment;
Mortgage loan basics and why good credit is important;
How to determine how much house can be afforded.

Pre- and post- program evaluations revealed participants improved knowledge and skills in home buying and home ownership.
As a result of this program (n=934):
• 91% are making changes to improve credit report and score
• 90% save money for home ownership
• 80% can identify down payment and closing requirements of loans
• 90% can calculate reasonable monthly housing costs based on a budget
• 84% pay mortgage on time every month
• 81% set aside funds for home maintenance costs
• 84% now understand predatory lending practices

During 2017, MSU Extension reached nearly 1,100 adults from 37 counties including Berrien County (2); Calhoun County (2); and Kalamazoo County (1).
Building entrepreneurial spirit and skills

As the backbone of the economy, small business owners play a critical role in the prosperity of the nation. But to be a successful entrepreneur, one must have not only the ambition and moxie to take a risk, but also the business sense and skill to make a profit. MSU Extension is helping to meet this need by providing youth and the adults that support them with the skills and resources necessary to turn ideas into business ventures.

MSU Product Center

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. The innovation counselor has special training 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 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 and packaging assistance.

Fifty-six counseling sessions took place in Calhoun County to assist six entrepreneurs. Specialty food processors were connected with MSU services on campus where they received assistance with food safety, product classification and labeling. The Product Center also assisted Farmers on Move which is headquartered in Battle Creek. Farmers on the Move is the only cooperative of Hispanic farmers in Michigan. With 13 members on 12 different farms they grow and market fresh produce with a quality assurance plan and full product traceability. The partnership between MSUE and the MSU Product Center Food-Ag-Bio is providing support for entrepreneurs in supporting economic development across southwest Michigan.

Michigan Cottage Food Law

Michigan’s Cottage Food Law permits those with an entrepreneurial spirit the chance to sell certain foods, made in their home kitchens, to the public at local farmers’ markets. The workshops that were offered by MSU Extension combined the business and food safety features of preparing and selling cottage foods safely and successfully. In the workshop participants learned what foods can be legally produced as well as how to label and sell them. MSU Extension Educators provided techniques to develop and maintain a successful small business. Ten Calhoun county residents attended a program in Marshall in 2017.
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 increasing physical activities in Michigan communities

Limited income and poor nutrition affect quality of life and can increase healthcare costs. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that more than 30 percent of Michigan adults are considered obese, and one out of every three deaths in Michigan is caused by cardiovascular disease, influencing the quality of life and adding billions of dollars each year in economic burden.

Between October 1, 2016 and August 31, 2017 MSU Extension provided interactive direct nutrition education to a total of 118,466 unduplicated individuals from across Michigan through the SNAP-Ed program. Out of the total number of participants reached with direct nutrition education (YTD) 86% were SNAP eligible participants (n-101,356). Our goal for the year is to reach at least 65,000 SNAP eligible youth and adults with direct nutrition education. As of August 31th we had reached 156% of our outreach goal for the year. The total number of contacts with SNAP-eligible participants (units of service) through direct education YTD is 320,379.

- SNAP-Ed programming has been conducted at 1657 different venues throughout Michigan, including summer SNAP-Ed programming at camps, fair grounds, summer feeding sites, and parks.
- Additionally 1,533,068 individuals have been reached year-to-date with nutrition education through indirect methods, such as written nutrition materials delivered face-to-face and nutrition messages sent through electronic media and radio PSAs.

SNAP-Ed and EFNEP Impacts in Calhoun County during the 2016-2017 program year:
- 25 adults completed a 6 week series
- 160 youth completed a 6 week series
- 107 adults were present for a one-time presentation

Nutrition and Health Program Partnerships in Calhoun County
- Arbor Academy; Grace Health; Battle Creek Parks and Recreation; Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi/Pine Creek Reservation; MI Works; Battle Creek Public Schools; Lakeview Public Schools.
When you support MSU Extension, you help participants learn profitable and efficient business and production practices. Participants also learn how to optimize and reduce the use of pesticides and fertilizers, and how to conserve and protect water resources. This education leads to better use of time, money and human capital, and helps retain and create agricultural jobs. These measures strengthen Michigan’s economy while connecting farmers to local food opportunities and global markets. In this way you help MSU Extension encourage growth in a sustainable and prosperous Michigan food and agriculture system.

Responding to Stress in Farming Communities

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health recently examined 130 occupations and found laborers and farm owners had the highest rate of death due to stress-related conditions like heart and artery disease, hypertension, ulcers and nervous disorders. In 2016, the CDC reports that out of every 100,000 farmers, 90 commit suicide. That is six times higher than the National rate of suicide with non-farmers. Michigan has seen an increase in suicides and suicide attempts over the last year since the commodity prices have fallen dramatically.

Phase one: Mental Health First Aid training is a full-day, hands-on, certification course that can help those people working with farmers and farm families to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental illness and emotional crisis. Two classes were offered during 2016 and 35 MSU Extension and Industry professionals are now certified in Mental Health First Aid.

Phase two: MSU Extension has developed a workshop specifically designed for people who work with agricultural producers and farm families who want to know more about managing farm-related stress and learn ways to approach and communicate with those in need. Educators discuss the present agricultural market situation with an overview of how this affects a farm’s financial situation and cash flow, communication techniques, highlighting impact of stress on our body and state of mind, providing information on how to recognize some warning signs of depression, self harm and mental illness.

Since October 2016, workshops have been offered throughout the state of Michigan and Indiana which included 300 participants. A session held in Marshall was attended by 33 Calhoun farmers or agriculture professionals. As a result of the program:

- 72% of participants increased their understanding of the current agriculture financial situation; 27% of participants were already very informed on the issues facing Michigan agriculture.
- 87% increased their understanding of the impact that stress has on their own bodies.
• 91% were now able to recognize warning signs of depression, suicide, and mental illness.
• 95% learned where to send people for help in the community, and of those, over 50% said their awareness of community resources greatly increased.
• 95% of participants will use MSU Extension resources and training in the future.
• 94% of participants were already familiar with MSU Extension prior to this workshop; 68% had previously participated in an MSU Extension workshop on a different topic.
• 89% of participants left the workshop more aware of MSU Extension resources and opportunities.

Follow-up workshops held around the state reached 22 additional Calhoun residents with programs held in partnership with Sigma Alpha in East Lansing, Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi in Fulton and the Dairy Farmers of America in Lansing.

MSUE Field Crops programs

Michigan State University Extension educators are reaching more farmers by providing an annual Field Crops Webinar Series. Five years ago, Michigan State University Extension educators decided to change the way they conduct winter field crop programs by using a webinar format in addition to traditional in-person meetings. The annual Field Crops Webinar Series reaches underserved audiences who may have trouble attending regular programs due to scheduling conflicts, geography or ability. It gives participants the flexibility to join live sessions or access recorded versions online.

Through the webinars, experts share research results and key points pertinent to crop production for the upcoming year. Topics have included western bean cutworm, resistant and troublesome weed control, soybean sudden death syndrome and wheat stripe rust management, wheat inputs selection, soil fertility for field crops and forage, as well as cover crops for potato and soybean systems.

During 2017, 214 individuals from 50 Michigan counties, five other Midwest states, and Ontario participated in the program. As a result of the webinars:

$680,057 was projected in savings or added revenue to farms based on growers who indicated that they intend to implement 174 practice changes.

Participants earned 603 Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development pesticide applicator recertification credits.
Irrigation Updates

Improving irrigation water management through better scheduling, improved uniform application, checkbook irrigation scheduling and controlling run-off was the goal of 56 meetings, educational presentations and farm/dealer visits including one in Calhoun County that reached 13 Calhoun producers.

Herbicide Resistant Weeds

Weeds, insects and diseases continue to develop resistance to crop protection programs. The most common herbicide resistant weed species we deal with in Calhoun County is glyphosate and ALS Inhibitor resistant marestail. However, we have several fields that we identified with multiple herbicide resistant common waterhemp in Southwest Michigan in 2017. These weeds pose a significant threat because they can only be controlled by a limited number of expensive herbicides in corn and soybean production. Dealing with these weeds can often mean the difference between operating with a small profit potential or a significant loss. MSUE has been working with growers to learn how to develop more intensive strategies including increased tillage, broader crop rotations and targeted herbicide applications to provide answers in reducing the spread of these expensive to control weed species.

Solving lawn and garden challenges with consumer horticulture hotline

Responders on the Michigan State University Extension Lawn and Garden Hotline assist Michigan residents throughout the state, regardless of the location of the caller or expert. They provide reliable, research-based information to help Michigan residents solve lawn and gardening challenges. In 2016, the hotline received calls from all 83 counties in Michigan. When callers ask about fertilizer use, insect control and plant disease prevention, responders provide environmentally friendly advice that helps them maintain healthy soils, solve landscaping issues, and grow fruits and vegetables in their home landscape. Consumers who contact the hotlines are directed to a variety of lawn and garden tools and services available through MSU Extension. These services encompass soil testing, MSU Diagnostic Services, the Gardening in Michigan website, Ask an Expert and Smart Gardening tip sheets and articles.

- From 2012 to 2016, calls have increased 14%. There were 7,806 total contacts in 2016.
- In 2017, 8,177 calls were handled by MSUE Master Gardeners and Consumer Horticulture staff up 4.5% from 2016. 28 calls were documented from Calhoun County.
- MSU Extension’s Consumer Horticulture educators are tasked with delivering science-based, environmentally sound information to the 70% of Michigan adults who engage in yard and garden activities, which is nearly 5 million people statewide. Assisting MSUE Educators at farm markets, community gardens, the MSUE Homeowner Hotline and other community education projects are Volunteer Master Gardeners. Currently of the 4,379 registered volunteers 40 are from Calhoun County.
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Dairy Roundtable Discussions
To discuss the latest topics, trends and research in the dairy nutrition field, several roundtable meetings involving dairy nutritionists, consultants, business professionals were held around the state including one in Marshall in December 2017.

Swine Health Workshops
The MSU Extension Pork Team held 3 training opportunities for pork producers, farm employees and people involved in the swine department of county fairs that focus on swine health in March, 2017. Attendees learned how to improve heard health, management disease outbreaks, promote safety on the farm and take steps to safeguard the environment. By attending, participants were able to meet the caretaker training criteria for the common swine industry audit and Pork Quality Assurance Site Assessment.

- 10 producers from Calhoun County were in attendance

Variety of Agricultural Programs reached Calhoun Residents
- MSU Extension reporting shows that a variety of agricultural programs held across the state and in Calhoun county resulted in over 60 agricultural producers, agri-businesses or others interested in producing an agricultural commodity attending one or more programs. Workshops were offered in person, on line, as parts of conferences, field days etc. Topics offered include soybean and corn production, Christmas trees, hops and barley, cover crops, dairy, swine, berries, farm finance, floriculture, estate and succession planning.