Cass County
2015–2016 ANNUAL REPORT
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Programs, community impacts and partnerships were noteworthy for Cass County MSU Extension. Stephanie Consford, 4-H Program Coordinator continued to grow the numbers of youth and adults enrolled in the program, as well as provided coaching to several young people to take on leadership roles locally and in the state. Our partnership with the Cass County Fair and the Parks Department enable us to promote youth development, showcase our programs and the projects of our youth. Beth Ferry and Beth Clawson are known throughout the state for their programming in pork production and natural resources education, respectively. Their local and statewide programs have had an impact on the economy and quality of life in Michigan. In 2016, they forged new partnerships with businesses and non-profits to help them disseminate information and connect them with the residents who needed their educational programs. Nora Lee continues to bring her expertise in nutrition and physical activity education to school aged youth and adults, partnering with local schools and non-profits.

Customer service and quality control are critical to the Cass office and Patty Dohm, administrative assistant, provides oversight to that effort. New additions to the Cass team this year include administrative assistant Erin Young and Wendy Michigan State University helps people improve their lives through an educational process that applies knowledge to critical issues, needs and opportunities.

Cass County Board of Commissioners—thank you for your continued support and partnership!

| Base Assessment:                             | $50,512 |
| Additional contribution: - 4-H .5 FTE | $30,351 |
| Subtotal                                  | $80,863 |
| Plus: 1.5 FTE County Support Staff     | $68,070 |
|                                            | $148,933 |

Plus: facilities, internet, and telephone

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Connecting with residents

Educators connect with Cass Residents through:

- Local, district, and state-wide programs
- One-on-one conversations and consulting
- Providing online education opportunities
- Answering “Ask an Expert” questions through E-extension
- Authoring informative and relevant articles published to the MSU Extension website
- Radio Programs

Cass County MSUE reaches more people through many local partnerships, and thanks the following for their support:

- Cass County 4-H Leaders’ Association
- Cass County Fair Board
- Cass County Horse Leaders’ Association
- Southwestern Michigan College
- Cass County Farm Bureau
- Michigan Works!
- Cass County Parks and Recreation
- Cass County Head Start
- Action Ministries
- The Stepping Stone
- Midwest Energy
- Department of Human Services
- WIC
- Cass, Van Buren and St. Joseph Conservation Districts
- Rolling Meadows Farms
- Mennel Milling
- Hartsell Farms
- Mapleview Farms
- Our Father’s Family Keeper Ministries
- Lewis Cass ISD
- Region 4 Area Agency on Aging
- Hope’s House
- Cass County Drug Courts—Swift and Sure Program
- Patrick Hamilton School
- Sister Lakes School
- Volinia Outcome School
- Cassopolis Public Schools
- Michigan Lakes and Streams Association

More than 76,000 visitors viewed more than 183,000 pages from D13 Newsletters covering 90 topic areas were sent to about 200 email addresses.

Cass MSUE 4-H has 610 Facebook followers.
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

With innovative ideas, exuberant energy and the ability to look beyond preconceived obstacles, youth have the capacity to change the world. However, many lack the skills and confidence to empower these assets into motion. They need experiences and training that help them to feel ready and capable to lead.

Michigan 4-H helps to prepare current and future leaders by offering numerous opportunities for leadership development. From the club experience to statewide youth councils, all youth have the chance to serve in a leadership role. Those experiences and various leadership trainings provide youth with skills to last a lifetime and empower them to stand up today as true leaders in their families, schools and communities.

In the past year:

- 25 youth formed the Michigan 4-H State Youth Leadership Council, becoming statewide champions for 4-H. Erin Kramer is from Cass County.
- 801 Cass County youth were enrolled in 4-H.
- There were 225 Cass County adult volunteers.
- 50 of the 2,500 Michigan youth aged 11-19 attending Exploration Days on the MSU campus were Cass County 4-H'ers.
Whether it is written, spoken or visually represented, the way we express ourselves makes a big impact on our daily lives at home, work and play.

Building communication skills for a lifetime

Communication is an essential element of every aspect of life – personal and professional. Whether it is written, spoken or visually represented, the way we express ourselves makes a big impact on our daily lives at home, work and play. Youth who practice and enhance their communication skills in adolescence will find these skills to their advantage in future employment and adulthood.

To help young people develop this important life skill, MSU Extension’s Michigan 4-H has made communication an aspect of nearly every area of its programming. Youth are required to record their progress on projects, verbally report their activities and illustrate their understanding in a number of ways. Some Michigan 4-H programs make communication a major focus, further allowing youth to cultivate and enhance these critical skills.

In 2016 Cass County Youth attended the following programs:

- 4-H Companion Animal Camp
- Financial literacy Course
- State Livestock Judging and State Quiz Bowls
- Renewable Energy Camp
- Exploration Days
- Citizen Washington Focus
- Capital Experience
- Animal and Veterinary Science Camp

Educators assisting with program efforts reaching Cass County youth include Stephanie Consford, Julie Thelen, Shelby Burlew, Katie Ockert, Jan Brinn, Deb Barrett, Janice Zerbe, Roxanne Turner, Frank Cox

4-H State Youth Leadership Council
Erin Kramer, Cass County (2015-2016)

Educators: Jackie Martin, Connie Lange, McKenna Shultz
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.

Reducing foodborne illness through education of individuals, small businesses

The National Institutes of Health estimates that every year, 48 million people in the United States become ill and 3,000 die from pathogens in food. Causes range from outdated home food preservation practices to unsafe sanitizing practices at public events and small businesses. Since 2013, MSU Extension food safety and preservation programs have taught almost 10,500 Michigan residents safe food handling, food preservation and methods to reduce foodborne illness.

Participants include youth, nonprofit organizations that prepare food for the public and food preservers who want to create safe products for their small businesses.

Through face-to-face and online learning, Michigan communities receive high-quality, research-based education using U.S. Department of Agriculture guidelines for safe food preservation.

- 95% of participants report they will follow research-based and tested recipes for home food preservation.
- 86% of youth participants gained knowledge about food spoilage organisms and learned how the organisms’ growth can be slowed or prevented.
- 85% of participants can correctly list strategies for cross-contamination prevention.
- 91% know correct methods of cleaning and sanitizing surfaces.
- MSU Extension offers a wide array of programs in food safety in our district:
  - Food Safety for Community Pantries-11
  - ServSafe Certification workshop-2 (16 hours)
  - Food Safety for Food Service Workers-1

Educators: Jeannie Nichols, Jane Hart, Phil Toco, Mariel Borgman
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.

Improving the fiscal health of Michigan communities

Only with healthy, vibrant communities can Michigan residents be expected to thrive. To help Michigan prosper in a sensible, sustainable fiscally responsible way, MSU Extension launched the Center for Local Government Finance and Policy in late 2015.

The center is led by MSU Extension economist Eric Scorsone, who has assisted multiple cities during fiscal crises including Detroit, Flint and Lansing. The center will advise cities during fiscal hardships so communities can find a sustainable path forward. It will also develop fiscal tools and offer outreach to help communities improve their fiscal health. In addition, the center is committed to connecting legislators with experts in public policy and forging partnerships in the public and private sector.

The center’s efforts include:

- **Good Governance**
  - Citizen Planner in Cassopolis – 5
  - Right to Farm Sample Zoning webinar – 2

- **Entrepreneur Development**
  - Product Center Clients – 7
  - Cottage Food Business Development – 3

- **Finance and Homeownership**
  - eHome14 session on line course – 7/19
  - Financial literacy/Home ownership – 14

Educators: Brad Neuman, Kurt Schindler, Ingrid Ault; Dean Solomon, Joanne Davidizar, Mark Thomas, Khuram Imam, Brenda Long
MSU Extension and the MSU Product Center help Michigan entrepreneurs develop and commercialize high-value, consumer-responsive products and businesses in the food, agriculture, natural resources and bio economy sectors. When you support MSU Extension, you help participants understand the economic, environmental and social benefits of purchasing local and regional foods. You also help young people develop business skills that will help them succeed as adults and help communities capitalize on their ecological, social and cultural assets. This fuels the economy by creating and retaining jobs, and helps ensure a healthy tax base.

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. To ensure the business owners of tomorrow – today’s youth – are triumphant in their future endeavors, they need to learn the entrepreneurial concepts that pave the way for success.

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. Through simulations and workshops, youth learn how to develop business plans and operate their own companies, as well as how to be more entrepreneurial in their everyday 4-H experiences. In 2015, these programs were delivered to nearly 1,200 people in 59 Michigan counties.

As a result:

- 92% said they learned how entrepreneurial skills could be used in any career, and 60% reported planning to start their own businesses.
- Six youth from our district 4-H Youth Entrepreneurship Program started their own businesses and began selling their products at a local store.
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.

MSU Extension delivers affordable, relevant, evidence-based education to help residents in urban and rural communities stay healthy throughout their lifespans. Programs teach participants how to buy and prepare nutritious, budget-friendly foods and increase physical activity. In 2015 alone, these programs reached more than 112,000 adults and youth across the state in over 1,600 different locations.

- Nutrition and physical education
  - Six-part series for adults—39
  - Six-part series for school aged youth—230
  - One time presentations to adults and youth—242

Instructors and Educators:
Nora Lee, Renee King, Yolanda Thrash, Sarah Johnson, Zelda Felix-Motley

- MSUE also provides high-quality and affordable education related to the prevention and management of chronic diseases.
  - Diabetes prevention/education
    - Dining with Diabetes—1 (class of 5 participants)

Educators: Diana Fair, Diana Hassan
Making the Most of Our Natural Assets

When you support MSU Extension’s natural resources education programs, participants learn about income-generating opportunities, ecological principles, natural resource issues and the role of natural resource professionals. They also explore public policy issues related to environmental stewardship. Our programs can lead to increased income for families that retain their natural resource assets, help landowners become better stewards of their land, and protect land management opportunities for future generations. Better land stewardship benefits communities by protecting and enhancing Michigan’s natural resource assets.

- Clean Boats, Clean Waters – 6
  The Clean Boats, Clean Waters program trains volunteers to organize and conduct boater education in their community helping to protect local water resources for aquatic invasive species that disrupt the ecosystem.
- Intro to Lakes On-Line Course – 2
  - 18 hours of online education plus one–on–one cohort chats.
- Septic System Health Webinar – 1

Educators: Beth Clawson, Terry Gibb, Bhindu Bakta, Luke Reese, Dan O’Keefe
Michigan agriculture continues to be a growing segment of the state’s economy. The production of commercial food and nonfood agricultural operations is growing rapidly. The number of households raising a portion of their own food and raising livestock or gardening for pleasure or relaxation continues to increase. 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.

Preparing youth for future careers in agriculture

As a pillar of Michigan’s economy, agriculture must continue to grow and thrive. One way to ensure this success is to prepare an informed and skilled workforce ready for careers in this essential sector.

To meet this need, MSU Extension offers youth a continuum of learning opportunities in the agriculture industry. These opportunities range from interactive experiences such as 4-H Renewable Energy Camp and World Food Prize Michigan Youth Institute, to educational resources such as the Youth Business Guide to Success animal marketing curriculum and zoonotic disease prevention tools. Through these experiences and resources, as well as county 4-H projects, youth are educated about agriculture and prepared for careers in this important industry. In the last program year:

- More than 24,000 Michigan 4-H youth participated in animal, biological and plant science projects in 78 counties.

- More than 850 youth took part in Michigan 4-H pre-college programs with an agricultural focus. These programs, which include 4-H Exploration Days and 4-H Animal and Veterinary Science Camp, among others, are designed to help youth explore potential careers or academic areas.

- Fifty Cass County youth attended 4-H Exploration Days
Raising awareness of the benefits of cover crops

Cover crops are a hot topic in agricultural circles, thanks to an MSU Extension specialist’s message that’s resonating with the right crowd. Dean Baas, a senior research associate, conducts cover crop and organic agriculture research and education.

Cover crops are plants seeded into agricultural fields, either within or outside of the regular growing season, with the primary purpose of improving or maintaining ecosystem quality. Environmental benefits include enhanced biodiversity, increased soil infiltration and attraction of honeybees and beneficial insects.

Researchers are focusing on ways cover crops can be used by farmers to bring diversity to the crop system; to reduce reliance on fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides; and to determine the impact of cover crops on overall operation economics.

Agriculture and Agribusiness

- A main economic driver of Cass County
  - $187,159,000 industry in Cass County
  - 798 Farms
  - Employing 905
    - $10 million in payroll
- Field crops (corn, soybeans, wheat)
  - Programs held throughout the district
    - 2 programs in Cass, 148 Participants
    - Restricted Use Pesticide Training, 2 trainings in Cass
    - Weather– Flooding, Drought 2016
    - Research and Demonstration (SDS in soybeans and white mold, wheat fusarium head blight)

Educators: Bruce Mackellar, Eric Anderson, Mike Staton, Lyndon Kelley

- Animal Agriculture
  - Swine programming
    - 120 participants, 10 local programs
    - TQA, PQA (Trucker Quality Assurance, Pork Quality Assurance)
    - Exhibition Animal Management
    - Sow housing
    - Site assessments

Educators: Beth Ferry, Tom Guthrie, Shelby Burlew, Mike Metzger
Supporting Food and Agriculture, continued

- Horticulture– Research and Outreach
  - Spotted Wing Drosophila
  - Brown Marmorated Stink Bug
  - Annual Events:
    - Hort Days
    - Ag Action

Educators: Mark Longstroth, Bill Shane, Ron Goldy, Carlos Garcia, Brad Baughman, Heidi Wollager

**Farm Business Analysis**

This program provides a farm analysis to be used by the farm owner/operators to make better management decisions through knowing what the accrual adjusted income statement and developing a long-term trend line. This also allows us to collect valuable data for the development of statewide production reports, cost-analysis, and state production budgets.

- Ag Tech program introduced at Southwestern Michigan College—16 students
- Integrated Pest Management online academy—22 participants
- Restricted Use Pesticide training—6 area trainings
- Farm business analysis—7
- Affordable Care Act and labor update—3
- Consumer education opportunities
  - Veggies 101—2
  - Master Gardener—2
  - Smart gardening training—2
  - Technical assistance—8

Educators: Brad Baughman, Jim Islieb, Carlos Garcia, Heidi Wollager, Adam Kantrovich, Roger Betz, Tom Dudek, Mary Wilson, Rebecca Finneran

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