

Bringing Knowledge to Life in

Ionia County

Ionia County

Ionia County Extension
100 Library Street
Ionia, MI 48846-1605

P: 616-527-5357
F: 616-527-5312

E-mail: msue.ionia@county.msu.edu
Web: msue.msu.edu/Ionia

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Extension part of effort to prevent childhood obesity

Michigan WIC 2005 data for Ionia County show 40.5 percent of Ionia County WIC children ages 2-5 are either overweight or at risk for becoming overweight. This trend has worsened in the last several years and Ionia has one of the highest rates for preschoolers at risk for becoming overweight among Michigan counties. School-aged youths are likely to follow this trend. These data indicate the strong need for healthy lifestyles programming with various age groups in Ionia County.

To meet this need, the Ionia Youth Workgroup, a coalition of community agencies including Ionia MSU Extension, is promoting healthier student lifestyles, thanks to a \$10,000 nutrition and physical activity grant from the Michigan Department of Community Health.

MSUE staff members have been working with schools by coordinating Healthy Kids after-school programs. Fruit and vegetable samples, parent handouts, nutrition posters, book kits, food models, press releases and school newsletters were used as educational tools.

When MSU Extension asked Ionia residents to identify local needs during a 2006 meeting, two of the issues related to teaching the knowledge and skills needed to implement healthier lifestyles. Increased public awareness and knowledge of health risks related to personal habits and lifestyle choices can help prevent health complications. The school activities work to address both of these stated needs.

New guide offers ideas for affordable, local, healthy family fun

A struggling state and local economy and higher gasoline prices put challenges on many families' recreation budgets.

To help Ionia County families explore opportunities in their backyard, MSU Extension developed the "Family Fun Guide."

This publication helps parents handle complaints from kids who say, "There's nothing to do," while mom and dad worry about family finances.

The 30-page guide offers fun, free or low-cost activities in Ionia County. Many involving nutrition and physical activities, like apple picking, fishing, gardening and snow fun are described. Book links for family reading are included.

Twenty five hundred copies of the guide have been distributed through students at Emerson, Jefferson, Twin Rivers, and Alternative Education in Ionia Public Schools; Ellis, Woodview, and Alternative Education in Belding Area Schools; Palo Community Schools; and Threshold Academy in Orleans.

One copy of the guide has also been sent to each family with a child in Head Start, to Michigan Works clients, and Family Nutrition Program participants in Ionia County. Project FRESH (the Farm Market Nutrition Education Program) and Senior Project FRESH (offered in conjunction with the Ionia County Commission on Aging) participants will also receive a guide during the summer with their nutrition education.

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Michigan State University Extension helps people improve their lives through an educational process that applies knowledge to critical issues, needs and opportunities. Offices in counties across the state link the research of the land-grant university, MSU, to challenges facing communities. Citizens serving on county Extension councils regularly help select focus areas for programming. MSU Extension is funded jointly by county boards of commissioners, the state through Michigan State University and federally through the US Department of Agriculture.

Task force helps cattle owners meet new identification requirements

As a result of a bovine tuberculosis (TB) outbreak in northeastern lower Michigan during the late 1990s, Michigan lost its TB-free status with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Since then, the state has expended significant resources to eradicate the disease and to ensure the continuation of a safe and wholesome food supply.

To help accomplish this goal, the Michigan Agriculture Commission adopted a policy requiring Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) devices for cattle moving off premises after March 1. Cattle producers cannot receive the devices without first registering their premises with the USDA.

MSU Extension initiated a Michigan RFID Education Task Force to inform the state's cattle producers about the importance of animal identification. Many organizations partnered in this effort, including the Michigan Department of Agriculture, Michigan Farm Bureau, the Michigan Cattlemen's Association, and the Michigan Milk Producers Association.

The partners – government, producers and industry associations – meet monthly to develop communication tools to inform the public about animal identification and premises registration. The diversity of perspectives on the Task Force ensures the tools meet the needs of the Michigan audience.

Task Force educational programs were offered across the Lower Peninsula. They were promoted via newsletters, press releases and the Task Force Web site to engage large-scale producers, the youth population, and feedlot operators.

Task Force members held more than 50 events between April 2006 and January 2007, which included animal identification presentations as well as interactive demonstrations on how to properly tag animals.

Extension educators visited sale barns to provide demonstrations. Task Force members created a variety of educational tools, including fact sheets, posters, press articles, videos, news releases, mailings, as well as radio and television spots.

Michigan has seen a significant rise in premises registration since the inception of the Task Force. In June 2006, less than 13,000 of approximately 29,000 livestock premises in Michigan were registered.

At the beginning of May 2007, the number of premises surpassed 18,400, an increase of 41 percent. Even more telling than the numbers are the qualitative results: Task Force members earned the producers' trust by delivering consistent messages and serving as resources for accurate information that responded to the needs of Michigan's cattle owners.

With these efforts, Michigan beef and dairy producers are well on their way to increased market access and other benefits from RFID cattle identification.

For more information about the Michigan RFID Educational Task Force, visit the website at <http://www.michigananimalid.com/>.

*Contact: Kevin Gould, Interim Ionia County
Extension Director*