Ionia County
2014–2015 ANNUAL REPORT
msue.msu.edu
In September we announced that Jeff Dwyer will become interim director of MSU Extension, effective Jan. 1, 2016. Dwyer replaces Ray Hammerschmidt, who will resume his research and teaching roles in the MSU Department of Plant, Soil and Microbial Sciences.

We are excited to welcome Dr. Dwyer to this difficult position that has undergone much transition in the last 18 months. Though our leadership will be changing, our long-range plan of working diligently to serve Michigan residents has not. Our staff members continue to follow their work plans that they, along with Extension leadership and their colleagues, have developed to meet the ever-changing needs of District 8 and Ionia County. MSU Extension staff are committed to serving their communities.

Our overall plan for our leadership team is the same as it has been since Tom Coon resigned in June of 2014 to take a position as vice president and dean at Oklahoma State University. We will have an interim Extension director until a new dean is named for the MSU College of Agriculture and Natural Resources in early 2016. Once that dean has settled in, he or she will have an opportunity to help choose a permanent MSU Extension director whose goals, style and vision complement those of the dean. Until then, we continue to move forward with a strong leadership team.

In this report you will find examples of programs that support youth, encourage better health and nutrition, inspire entrepreneurs, keep farmers up-to-date, protect natural resources, stimulate business, develop communities and help to prepare government leaders. In each of these areas, MSU Extension is committed to utilizing information which is current to research and relevant to communities.

As we transition through these changes, I look forward to our continued partnership in moving Michigan forward.

Don Lehman
District Coordinator, District 8
MEASURING IMPACT

CONNECTING WITH RESIDENTS

SNAP-ED Participants..................................................483
4-H Program........................................................................530
  - 4-H Club members.....................................................450
  - 4-H Volunteers.............................................................80
Gardening Hotline............................................................39
Residential soil test.........................................................23

IMPACTS.........................................................................1,075

DISTRICT 8 DIGITAL REACH

From July 1, 2014, to June 30, 2015, 118,744 visitors from our 7-county district viewed more than 349,343 pages of rich, science-based content on the MSU Extension website (msue.msu.edu).

Search engine rankings make msue.msu.edu one of the most visited Cooperative Extension Systems education sites in the country.

Based on data from July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014.
DEVELOPING YOUTH AND COMMUNITIES

When you support MSU Extension 4-H programs, you are helping youth participants acquire life skills that are necessary for success in today’s competitive economy. One way Extension works to accomplish this is by helping children develop early literacy skills that support school readiness. Children who participate are also learning leadership and decision-making skills that increase their likelihood of becoming civically active. Active 4-H participation has also been associated with a reduced risk for negative behaviors such as drug use. This helps ensure that more of our young people succeed in school, attend college and contribute to their communities. Successful young people in communities results in greater tax revenues, consumer spending and increases the likelihood that they will stay in, or return to, their home communities.

Advancement for Ionia County 4-H

The 4-H program has been supporting youth participation at the Ionia Free Fair for many years and is an important part of Ionia County history and culture. This year was no different. We had a very successful fair with almost 400 youth participating. Now that the fair is over, the focus will be on promoting 4-H to more youth and increasing enrollment, starting new clubs, finding new superintendents of programs, planning events such as the Awards Banquet and workshops, and restarting the teen leader program. All of this will be made easier due to the additional support from the Ionia County Board of Commissioners, who approved to move the 4-H Program Coordinator position from part-time to full-time beginning in 2016. This move will allow more time to make the program larger and more encompassing for all families in Ionia County.

Preparing children for academic success

Youth who are not proficient readers by fourth grade are 68 percent more likely to drop out of high school. Research shows that young children who develop literacy skills prior to entering kindergarten are better prepared for school reading curriculum. Children’s school readiness improves when parents and caregivers are taught methods that increase early childhood science and reading literacy, and ways to prepare children socially

MSU Extension provides resources aligned with Michigan science education standards to teach confidence, leadership and responsibility related to STEM.

2015 Ionia County 4-H statistics:
- 450 Youth 4-H members
- 80 Adult volunteers
Developing Youth and Communities, continued

and emotionally. Programming provided through MSU Extension and other organizations prepare children for academic success by giving parents and caregivers the tools they need to help their children succeed in school. MSU Extension is also making learning to read more accessible by putting books into the hands of thousands of children from low-income households.

» To date, 250,000 books have been distributed to more than 2,500 children, including youth in Ionia County, through programs sponsored by MSU Extension and its partnership with the Molina Foundation.

» As a result of MSU Extension trainings and workshops, adults indicated an increase in knowledge of concepts of early childhood development and techniques that promote school readiness and academic success.

Highlights of Ionia 4-H

» 4-H youth gained valuable leadership skills.

» In 2015, 450 Ionia County youth were enrolled as 4-H club members, many of whom participated in 4-H workshops including but not limited to 4-H Winterfest, 4-H Teen Leadership and Community Change Conference, and the 4-H Arts and Visual Crafts workshops.

» 11 youth and adults from Ionia County participated in 4-H Exploration Days on the Michigan State University campus. Two of the Ionia County youth represented Ionia County as state award delegates.

» 7 youth and 3 adults from the Ionia 4-H Service Club took an educational leadership and teambuilding trip to Wisconsin this year. The Service Club raises money throughout the year for all Ionia County 4-H members to attend workshops and events.

» 15 youth and adults of the Ionia County 4-H Club World Wide Kids, participated in Heifers Global Village this past summer. This is an overnight event designed to educate the participants about the cause and effect of hunger and poverty. World Wide Kids club members also held their annual soup dinner that raises money for Heifer International and IM Kids 3rd Meal.

MSU Extension programs such as the Michigan 4-H Youth Conservation Council (M4-HYCC) allow Michigan’s youth to get involved and become community leaders, but also shows them how to be engaged in the legislative process.
ENSURING SAFE, SECURE AND ACCESSABLE FOOD

When you support MSU Extension, you are also supporting our food safety programs. Our food safety educators are working to ensure that all have access to an adequate supply of safe, affordable food. Programming focuses on food safety measures in the field from planting to harvest. Participants also have the opportunity to learn proper food preparation and food preservation techniques. MSU Extension offers a variety of programs that bring community partners together to enhance access to healthy food supplies, leading to more viable and healthy communities with lower health care costs.

Teaching residents about food safety

From the field to the table, food safety is an important issue. Foodborne illness affects all socioeconomic categories and costs the U.S. economy billions of dollars each year in lost productivity, hospitalization, long-term disability and even death. The Cottage Food Law took effect in July 2010, allowing home-processed foods to be sold to the public, emphasizing the need for food safety education.

MSU Extension Cottage Food Law workshops supply Michigan residents with up-to-date, scientifically backed information on food safety. In 2013, nearly 4,000 Michigan residents learned about preserving and preparing food safely for public consumption. Participants who successfully complete the training are given an MSU Extension food safety certificate. This increases consumer confidence when buying locally grown and produced food products.

Another program offered by MSU Extension is the ServSafe course offered through MSU Extension. This is a national certification program for food service workers, taught by certified Extension educators. ServSafe topics include:

» Providing safe food
» Forms of contamination
» The safe food handler
» The flow of food
» Food safety management systems
» Safe facilities, cleaning and sanitizing

Participants who complete the course, will earn their ServSafe Certificate.

When doing home based food preservation, it’s important to not use just any recipe. MSU Extension can provide you with research based recipes for delicious and safe food!
ENSURING STRONG COMMUNITIES

When you support MSU Extension, you are helping to implement best practices in good governance that keep communities solvent, productive and engaged; learn effective conflict management skills; help leaders and residents work collaboratively on complex issues; and engage youth leaders in decision-making. In the personal finance area, MSU Extension helps both youth and adults 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, lead to personal and community stability and create strong and safe communities.

Helping Michigan make smart health insurance decisions

In 2013, many Michigan residents and businesses were facing important health insurance decisions they had never had to consider before. The passage of the Affordable Care Act not only opened up the health insurance market to hundreds of thousands of additional people and many small businesses, but also changed the insurance landscape for the previously insured.

These changes along with the launch of the Health Insurance Marketplace in Michigan, caused confusion regarding the new health insurance laws and requirements. MSU Extension conducted targeted outreach to both uninsured and underinsured residents as well as small businesses including farm owners to increase knowledge, understanding and confidence in the ability to purchase health insurance.

MSU Extension educated through weekly webinars, social media and other online outreach. From November 2013 to April 2014, MSU Extension:

» Presented 59 direct education sessions reaching 987 consumers.
» Made 328 one-on-one contacts via email and phone to answer questions.
» Provided 14,467 indirect educational outreach activities via social media, website page views, educational news articles, email newsletters and other media.
» Made 854 referrals to local health insurance enrollment counselors.

As Michigan looks to rebound from recent fiscal difficulties and become stronger and more fiscally sound, MSU Extension has been a valuable partner in educating the public, as well as legislators, on fiscal health and responsibility.
Sustainable homeownership strengthens individuals and communities. As a HUD- and MSHDA-certified counseling agency, MSU Extension helps potential homeowners understand the complex home-buying process and learn the true costs of homeownership.

Ensuring Strong Communities, continued

Helping residents save their homes from foreclosure

When individuals and families in Michigan are financially healthy, it creates an environment for sustained community prosperity. MSU Extension’s financial literacy and housing education programs help families and individuals at any stage of their lives make smart money decisions and work through the homeownership process. These courses help reduce mortgage defaults through the counseling of new homebuyers as well as homeowners going through the foreclosure process.

Widespread efforts by MSU Extension have led to a significant increase in knowledge gained and behavioral changes across Michigan. Since July 2010, MSU Extension’s foreclosure counseling has aided participants spanning 24 counties, across all income levels. As a result of receiving this counseling, a higher percentage of homeowners are able to better communicate with their mortgage servicers, obtain loan modifications and in over half of the cases, keep their homes.

From January 2010 to December 2015, the MSUE client counseling staff were able to bring a staggering $132,421 in back taxes for the Ionia County Treasurer through the Step Forward program. The program was set up to assist property homeowners with delinquent taxes, including the application process and the follow-through, until a funding decision was reached. The funds that the MSUE counseling staff helped to secure, brought 232 Ionia County homeowners current on their property taxes and paid over $1.5 million in back mortgage payments, allowing them to keep their homes. Funds brought in by the Step Forward program will help to contribute to long term outcomes by keeping families and communities stable.

As a result of all financial and homeownership education and programming by MSU Extension:

» 84% of participants pay their mortgage on time.

» 80% of participants now save money for home maintenance costs.

Help is also available to those who have gone through the foreclosure process. MSU Extension’s University-back, unbiased Starting Over After Foreclosure Toolkit offers research-based tools and resources to those who have experienced foreclosure. Accessible and easy to read, this toolkit helps Michigan residents understand their situation both emotionally and financially and is offered online for free at http://msue.anr.msu.edu/program/mimoneyhealth/startingover.
KEEPING BUSINESSES STRONG

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.

Providing valuable work experience to young professionals

MSU Extension encourages Michigan’s young people to envision a future career path that can help them positively impact their communities and build valuable professional skills. A new internship program creates a link between campus life and future career success. Started in 2013 with seven interns, the program has been expanded in 2014 to 13 interns because of its initial success.

The internship program has been popular with communities, MSU Extension educators and, most importantly, with the students, who have shown growing interest. In 2013, the program was piloted in regions in Michigan with a focus on agriculture. It provided students with a valuable networking opportunity with farms and within the agriculture industry, and allowed them to gain important skills in vital areas of agriculture.

In the internship program’s first year, interns worked on:

» Improvement of air quality around swine production facilities through an investigation of various plant species for use as vegetative environmental buffers.

» Basic equine health and body condition as well as safe handling of horses.

» Pork quality assurance and site assessment.

» Forage management for sheep and goat production.

Michigan 4-H offers many opportunities in career exploration and workforce preparation to help youth look at internships as well.

A new MSU Extension internship program provided students with a valuable networking opportunity with farms and within the agriculture industry, and allowed them to gain important skills in vital areas of agriculture.
When you support MSU Extension, you are helping participants to increase their physical activity and improve the quality of their diets. Extension also provides programs that work to decrease incidents of violence, bullying and to improve the social and emotional health of Michigan residents. Encouraging these healthy behaviors helps reduce health care costs by helping prevent chronic health conditions and providing safe environments throughout a person’s life span.

Working to improve social and emotional health

Many negative factors affect social and emotional health, including ongoing and toxic stress that may result from situations including abusive relationships, bias, damaging coping behaviors and relationship violence. Across the lifespan, people faced with these situations and settings are at risk for a wide range of physical, psychological, social, emotional, cognitive, financial and spiritual health challenges. The United States spends an estimated $425 billion in direct and indirect costs of violence each year.

RELAX: Alternatives to Anger is designed to actively engage adult learners to increase knowledge and skills around anger management and give them constructive ways to deal with anger. In 2013, MSU Extension collected 712 RELAX evaluations from participants.

Consistently, more than half of program participants leave RELAX with improved knowledge or new skills designed to promote social and emotional well-being with other in their lives and immediate environments.

Fighting obesity through education

Michigan has the 11th highest adult obesity rate in the United States, according to the CDC. More than 30 percent of adults are obese, and an additional 35 percent are considered overweight.

Extension programs reached more than 87,000 adults and youth and worked to equip them with skills needed to buy and prepare nutritious, budget-friendly foods; increase their physical activity; breastfeed their babies and stretch their food dollars. MSU Extension reached more than 87,000 adults and young people across the state through programming. Nearly one-third of youth increased their level of physical activity and more than two-thirds of adults increased time spent being physically active, including three-quarters of older adults.
Keeping People Healthy, continued

More than one-third of youth decreased their intake of sugary drinks.

Nearly one-third of youth increased their level of physical activity.

Nearly half of adults increased their daily vegetable and fruit consumption.

More than two-thirds of adults increased time spent being physically active, including three-quarters of older adults.

More than two-thirds of adults reported improved ability to make their food dollars go further.

Teaching valuable healthy-eating skills

More than 1.7 million Michigan residents receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. MSU Extension's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) programs including Cooking Matters for Adults, Project Fresh, Healthy Harvest and Show Me Nutrition teach adults how to make the most of their food dollars, by developing skills such as menu planning, understanding recipes and keeping food safe. Participants learned about the nutrition and health benefits of foods to feed their families in healthy ways. These evidence-based nutrition programs are interactive and discussion-based with an aim to move clients into the action stage of positive change.

In Ionia County, the partnership between the SNAP-ED MSU Extension Instructor and the Mid-Michigan Migrant Resource Council led to the delivery of our curricula to Woodview Elementary summer migrant students this past July. The instruction has evoked positive changes in students and teachers alike, as teachers are modeling healthy food choices in the presence of their students. Beyond individual outcomes is the potential for these behaviors and attitudes to shape the school’s environment.

The SNAP-ED program also partnered with the Commission on Aging. The partnership led to current and future programming in the community rooms of Section 8 housing developments. Seniors are now engaging in discussions relating to the planning of quick and healthy meals, cutting back on food cost, and increasing physical activity. The participants have reported an increased knowledge of the importance and ease of meal planning based on the information gained in these classes.
When you support MSU Extension’s natural resources education programs, you are helping 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.

Helping Michigan residents become better stewards of our inland lakes

Michigan has more than 11,000 inland lakes, which are among our most beautiful and precious resources. To marshal all of the passion and energy so many people and organizations have regarding Michigan’s lakes, MSU Extension helped organize the first Michigan Inland Lakes Convention. The convention hosted 372 lake enthusiasts, professionals, government officials and others for an intensive three-day convention. The convention helped participants learn how to become better stewards and to better protect Michigan’s inland lakes. It boasted more than 25 educational opportunities, including sessions regarding youth and volunteer education, aquatic invasive species, plant identification, algae blooms and water quality.

The convention was a partnership between MSU Extension, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, the Michigan Lake and Stream Associations, the Michigan Natural Shoreline Partnership, the MSU Institute of Water Research and the Michigan Chapter of the North American Lake Management Society.

» 372 people attended the Michigan Inland Lakes Convention.
» More than 66% represented nonprofit agencies or were riparian landowners.
» More than 75% reported increased leadership, confidence and stewardship.
» More than 90% reported gaining information that will assist them as professionals or volunteers.

To marshal all of the passion and energy so many people and organizations have regarding Michigan’s lakes, MSU Extension helped organize the first Michigan Inland Lakes Convention.
SUPPORTING FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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.

Dairy Calf Care school

On August 6th, 2015, two MSU Extension Educators, Kevin Gould and Faith Cullens, conducted the Michigan State University Calf Care School. This educational workshop was held at the Ionia County MSU Extension office. The Educators provided current science-based information to forty-two participants on refining their caregiving skills for raising dairy calves. Discussions centered around successful calf management and how to raise a calf to reach their maximum potential, contributing to the farms profitability. The tools and knowledge provided can be implemented on any dairy farm. Just a few of the topics covered included:

» Newborn calf care.
» Colostrum management.
» Vaccinations.
» Weaning.
» Monitoring performance.
» Basic calf nutrition.

Breakfast on the Farm (BOTF) bridges the gap between Michigan’s farmers and consumers who often have little idea where the food on their plates comes from.
Bridging the gap between farm to fork

Breakfast on the Farm (BOTF) bridges the gap between Michigan’s farmers and consumers who often have little idea where the food on their plates comes from. BOTF invites the public to enjoy a delicious farm-fresh breakfast on a working farm and educates them on the farm-to-fork process. BOTF is an open door for the community to learn about modern food production and build trust with an appreciation for local farmers. An online survey showed that 88 percent of participants told others they should attend a BOTF event.

In 2015, five BOTF events took place on Michigan farms. There have been 26 events held since the program’s launch in 2009. A total of 13,481 adults and children attended the five BOTF events held this past year.

Fighting back against emerging pests

The spotted wing drosophila and the brown marmorated stink bug are two invasive pests that pose the biggest threats to Michigan’s fruit production. Michigan growers will likely have to implement new management programs to control these pests from harming their fruit crops.

The spotted wing drosophila has an optimal developing temperature of 65 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit, normal conditions during a Michigan growing season. This makes early detection information vital to activate pest management programs that prevent rapid population increases and potential infestations.

MSU Extension partners with farmers and statewide agencies to monitor these pests. Working together to eliminate these invasive species will be essential to lessen the loss of the Michigan tree fruit crops in the future.

Invasive plant and animal species pose an enormous threat to Michigan’s biodiversity and economic wellbeing. Emerald ash borer, garlic mustard and zebra mussels are also notable examples of species that harm our state’s land and water resources. MSU Extension provides educational resources to identify, assess and control invasive species throughout the state.
### Extension Educators Serving Ionia County

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