MSU Extension—Serving Mecosta County since 1917

It is my pleasure to bring to you the Annual Report for Mecosta County Michigan State University Extension. Thank you for your continued support of Extension services and 4-H in your county. We continue to strive to help people improve their lives by bringing the vast resources of MSU directly to individuals, communities and businesses. For more than 100 years, MSU Extension has helped grow Michigan’s economy by equipping Michigan residents with the information that they need to do their jobs better, raise healthy and safe families, build their communities and empower our children to dream of a successful future.

2013 was an exciting year for MSU Extension in Mecosta County. While we experienced staffing changes, we gained some fantastic employees to add to our already excellent team. We are looking forward this year to new opportunities to serve the residents of this county.

2014 marks the anniversary celebration of 100 years of Cooperative Extension in the United States. On May 8, 1914, the Smith Lever Act was signed, granting federal legislation to the vast cooperative extension services throughout this county. In 1917, Mecosta County received its first agriculture agent and joined many counties throughout the state of Michigan in a cooperative extension program.

Shari Spoelman, District Coordinator

Mission
Michigan State University Extension helps people improve their lives through an educational process that applies knowledge to critical issues, needs and opportunities.

Staff
Lisa Baker
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Carlos Garcia-Salazar
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Pam Daniels
Disease Prevention & Management Educator
Shannon Lindquist
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2013 By the Numbers
Soil Samples (Commercial Ag and Homeowner).................................84
4-H Club Members .................................................................503
Mecosta County Youth Served ......................................................891
Nutrition Programming for Low Income Adults ................................430
Nutrition Programming for Low Income Youth ..............................322

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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.

Small Fruit Production

In 2013, we provided training, technical assistance and farm visits to Amish berry growers and other stakeholders involved in small fruit production in the county. The most important service provided to growers in the county was training and technical assistance to the Amish community in areas of IPM for controlling the Spotted Wing Drosophila, and disease and insect pest management in greenhouses. The Spotted Wing Drosophila is a new invasive pest affecting small fruit crops in Mecosta county and West Michigan Small Fruit industry in general. These activities were conducted with assistance of the MSUE Ornamentals Educator.

Half-day training on Integrated Pest Management for small fruit insect pest and ornamentals was conducted at Stanwood Town Hall in Stanwood, MI on March 6, 2013. The meeting was advertised through the Amish community by means of their communication network. Topics discussed included the identification and management of the Spotted Wing Drosophila, insects and diseases of strawberries and insect pest management in ornamental plants. We provided 4 hours of in classroom training followed by farm visits to assist participants with specific pest and disease problems. At the meeting participants received a copy of the PowerPoint presentation and the opportunity of handling insect specimens was provided. We provided a dissection microscope that was used for all participants. At the end of the training, farm visits were conducted at the request of growers that produce vegetable and ornamentals in greenhouses.

In 2013, from June to August we conducted 60 farm visits to Amish farms that requested assistance with SWD and other pest problems. MSUE has provided monitoring devises, pest identification and provided recommendations for SWD control. Growers that requested MSUE assistance have reduced substantially their fruit losses. In contrast growers which are not requesting assistance are reporting up to 50% fruit losses due to SWD damage. In 2014, we are expecting to continue with our programing in support of the small fruit growers of Mecosta County.

- Carlos Garcia-Salazar, PhD

Pork Quality Assurance Plus and Transporter Quality Assurance— Held in February in Remus, Extension Educator Gerald May provided training and certification for 63 Mecosta County residents that are involved with the swine industry. Those attending the training included swine farm managers, employees, pig handlers, transport drivers, and contract growers.
Reproductive and Genetics Management of Dairy Cattle—This MSUE educational program was held at 4 locations across Michigan in February 2013 including the Kettunen Center. Participants learned about new strategies to enhance reproductive performance and to improve the genetic potential of dairy herds. Profitability of Michigan dairy herds is dependent on cows beginning a new lactation on a regular interval. In addition, selecting genetically superior sires is necessary to ensure the availability of high-quality heifers for herd replacements.

People who attended these meetings consisted of dairy farm owners and employees, veterinarians, agribusiness professionals and students. The veterinarians and agribusiness professionals act as amplifiers by sharing the information gained from these meetings with their clientele.

MSU Extension Guides Beef Farms on Drought Recovery & Rising Feed Costs—The MSU Beef Team, including District 6 educators Jerry Lindquist and Kable Thurlow, coordinated a series of three educational meetings across the State entitled “Feeding the Beef Herd in 2013 & Beyond.” This series helped 50 beef farms to strategize their recovery from the 2012 drought with the associated high feed costs and rising price of land. Eighty-three percent of the attendees surveyed said they planned to adopt new management practices highlighted in the series. Follow up survey work on some of these farms documented feed cost savings of $10,000 - $15,000 per farm for the year. One of the meetings was held at Kettunen Center near Tustin with producers attending from Osceola, Mecosta, Clare, Missaukee and Gladwin Counties.

Beef Breeding Soundness Clinics—In an industry where the major product sold is a live calf, all breeding bulls should receive an annual breeding soundness exam. By identifying potential male fertility problems, producers are able to reduce the risk of a less than optimum breeding season. In 2013 there was a Beef Breeding Soundness clinic at the Kevin Wernette Beef Farm in Remus where bulls were tested. Statewide, there were 290 bulls tested by Dr. Grooms and MSUE Beef Team members, and 77, or 26.5% of them did not pass the test. Producers were able to test the bulls in advance of the breeding season, allowing them ample time to replace them with a satisfactory breeding bull.

Helping Farms Raise Better Soybeans in Northern Michigan—With rising interest in soybean production in Northern Michigan an educational meeting was coordinated by Extension Educator Jerry Lindquist in conjunction with the Michigan Soybean Association and Extension Soybean Educator Mike Stanton to update cash crop producers. Thirty-eight farms attended the February meeting in Cadillac with 27% of those surveyed the following fall reporting increased incomes of an average of $4,845 per farm as a result of information gained at the meeting. Farmers attended from the following counties Clare, Gladwin, Mecosta, Missaukee, Osceola & Wexford.
Disease Prevention & Management Programs

In 2013, MSU Extension added a Chronic Disease Prevention and Management educator to District 6. Pam Daniels works out of the Mecosta County MSU Extension office. She provides the following educational offerings:

- **Personal Action Towards Health**—PATH (Personal Action Towards Health) workshops are designed to benefit adults with chronic or long-term health conditions including arthritis, heart disease, diabetes, emphysema, asthma, bronchitis and depression. During 2013, MSU Extension saw the beginnings of some great partnerships to bring PATH (Personal Action Towards Health) Living with Chronic Illness’ & Diabetes PATH workshops to Mecosta County.

- **Dining with Diabetes**—Dining with Diabetes, taught exclusively by MSUE, is a five-session course designed for people at risk of diabetes or who have diabetes, as well as their family members. Through Dining with Diabetes participants learn how to prepare healthy meals using less fat, how to make meals using less sodium and sugar without reducing flavor and enjoyment, the causes of diabetes, tools for managing diabetes, and the importance of diet and exercise in managing diabetes.

- **National Diabetes Prevention Program**—MSU Extension has recently earned accreditation from the CDC as a registered licensed agency to offer NDPP. Pam Daniels is a trained Lifestyles Coach.

- **Mecosta County**—Percent of adults aged 20 and above with diagnosed diabetes = 11% (Above the statewide average of 8-10%).

**RELAX Training**—Holly Tiret, MSUE Extension Educator, provided a RELAX: Alternatives to Anger Facilitator Training in Big Rapids on 4/10/13. It was coordinated by MSUE 4H staff Sandra Risedorph and Lori Cargill. There were 11 participants from a variety of community agencies including DHS and Michigan Works. After attending this workshop, participants are able to facilitate MSU Extension’s RELAX: Alternatives to Anger four lesson series to their own staff, clients and community members.

**Community Connections Expo**—October, 2013. MSUE Health & Nutrition Institute Educators, Program Instructors and Program Assistants, were on hand serving residents of Osceola and Mecosta Counties during the Community Connections Expo sponsored by Great Starts of Osceola/Mecosta Counties. Over 350 people received free information, event and program information as well as health related giveaways.
Nutrition Education - MSU Extension provides nutrition education to persons receiving (or eligible to receive) food assistance. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Education is funded through a statewide grant from the Federal Government (Farm Bill). “SNAP-Ed” plays a vital role in helping to improve nutrition among low-income individuals.

Youth Nutrition

» Show Me Nutrition—This evidence-based curriculum of six to eight sessions provides youth in grades prekindergarten to 8 with age-appropriate literacy-based education in areas of nutrition, food safety, physical activity, body image and media influence on health choices. In Mecosta County this curriculum was taught in 5 Head Start Preschool classrooms in Big Rapids and at Weidman Elementary.

» Nutrition Presentations around the County - MSU Extension provided nutrition education (one time sessions) at Weidman Elementary and Morley Stanwood

» Cooking Matters for Teens—Local chefs work with participants in this hands-on, six-part series teaching the basics of selecting nutritious, budget friendly ingredients and preparing healthy meals. This was taught at Morley Stanwood Alternate Education.

Adult Nutrition

» Presentations & Health Fairs - Nutrition education presentations were provided at Senior Enrichment Day—Big Rapids and Mecosta Youth and Family Center.

» Eat Healthy, Be Active—Healthy food can be delicious and physical activity can be fun. This evidence-based curriculum is an opportunity for adults to learn the skills needed to make healthy eating and regular physical activity part of their lifestyle. This was taught at the New Journey Club House (Community Mental Health).

» Project FRESH and Market FRESH for Seniors - MSU Extension provides the nutrition education portion for Market FRESH for Seniors (Mecosta County Senior Center) and WIC Project FRESH. The coupon books were redeemed for fresh local produce.

Community events – 236 people at Ferris Students with families group

New partnerships this year: Head Start

Community meetings attended: Human Services Coordinating Body and Poverty Reduction Initiative
Cooking Matters - This six-part series teaches the basics of selecting nutritious, budget friendly ingredients and preparing healthy meals. This curriculum was taught at the Mecosta County Services Building teaching the participants about healthy eating habits and basic cooking skills.

National Recognition— In June 2013, Nutrition Program Associate Effie Jack and District Coordinator Shari Spoelman attended the Share our Strengths Conference of Leaders in Washington DC along with Cooking Matters volunteer chef Don Zimmer who was being honored for his volunteer contributions in Mecosta County.

“I've lived alone for many years and almost forgot how to cook. I never understood how to portion out food until this class.”

“I really liked seeing the amount of sugar in things we drink and the serving sizes of what we eat. This was the most helpful part of the class.”

“This class has taught me to eat healthier. I actually can shop and know what to look for when going. I can put more whole grains into my diet.”

“It’s easier than I thought to cook healthier. We are now eating more vegetables than before and a larger variety than before and I am working on getting more activity into my day.”

“Great class made you think about the little things to help improve your health.”

“Learned the value of fruits and veggies in diet - feeling much healthier since the class.”

- Cooking Matters participant

- Cooking Matters participant

Mecosta County Nutrition Education Numbers

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<th>Youth in Series</th>
<th>Youth in Presentations</th>
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<td>339</td>
<td>104</td>
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Mecosta County has a thriving 4-H program. In addition to the animal clubs that provide opportunities for youth to learn many skills, various other clubs and opportunities are provided for youth to explore potential careers, increase their reading skills, and be introduced to science activities. Each year youth projects are showcased at the county fair in Big Rapids.

Areas of growth in 4-H programming continued in community service, science, and technology areas. 4-H clubs in Mecosta County continue to be strong in the area of livestock and horse projects where the youth involved are learning about animal science and animal welfare. The Hippology Club (horse science) continues to grow and do an outstanding job at the State competition.

Being able to offer projects in clubs such as science, community service, shooting sports, outside activities as well as the Proud Equestrian Program has increased the delivery of the 4-H program to youth who might otherwise not have had the opportunities.

Hippology—Hippology is ‘the study of the horse’. If it pertains to the horse, hippology is studying it. From feed and nutrition, to breeds and origin, trailers, trucks and equipment.

» Teri Ouderkirk has coached the team for the past 9 years with as many members as 13 to as few as 3. In 2013 the team qualified to compete at the National level in the 4-H National Equine Expo. It is a ‘brain game’ competition in the 4-H horse world. There are no riding classes. This competition is about how much horse knowledge the youth knows and can convey. The youth members aged 9-19 compete in four different sections of the competition. There is a written exam, a video identification, a skills station and two judging classes of live horses. In addition to the four different areas of competition, a communications competition is also offered.

» Members of the team include; Kailey Ellison, Bridget Lapinsky, Rebecca Herzog, MacKenzie Gillium, Josie and Abby Shelton, and Andrea Sorrels.

» Hippology is a unique 4-H horse experience because it allows youth to be horseey and not have to actually own a horse or ride a horse. Youth members may also be a member of the team and choose to not compete but simply expand their horse knowledge. Along with competing as a team, the youth are also scored individually.

Mecosta County Fair—The skills youth learn from their 4-H fair projects include decision making, record keeping, entrepreneurship, responsibility, marketing, and animal care (to name a few.)

* Junior Livestock Sale — The 2013 Mecosta County 4-H Junior Livestock Sale had a gross income of $137,769.00
Science, Citizenship & Healthy Lifestyles!

Youth involved in science, engineering and technology programs and projects through 4-H: 1,132

Youth involved in citizenship programs and projects through 4-H: 825

Youth involved in healthy lifestyle programs & projects through 4-H: 356

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<th>Mecosta County 4-H</th>
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<td>Membership in 4-H Clubs</td>
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**Exploration Days**— Thirteen youth from Mecosta County attended this annual event on MSU’s campus. Exploration Days is designed to help students learn new ideas and techniques, increase their interest in and readiness for college, explore career options, and develop decision making, independence and teamwork skills.

**Summer Camp**— The Mecosta County 4-H Summer Adventure Camp Program celebrated its 15th summer. This 4-H program has received two awards for quality programming and life skills development. The summer camp counselor training program model has been developed in Mecosta County is being used in other counties for their 4-H summer camp programs. Curriculum and activities developed in the programs are being used by other staff in Michigan and in other states with summer camp programs.

**Mecosta County 4-H Teen Club**— is a Service Learning and Leadership Club. The primary goal of the club is to educate the teen population on community service, leadership skills, and life skills. In the Teen Club the youth are encouraged to express their ideas as well as run the club with the adult leader being an advisor. Teen Club has approximately 25 youth members ages 13-19. The youth include an eclectic mixture of backgrounds and experiences.

The Mecosta County Teen Club had a busy year in 2013 and this year is turning out to be just as productive. In 2013 the club collected coupons for Coups for Troops, winter clothing for local clothing closets, food drives for local food pantries, animal food drive for local ARC, cleaning and painting tables in the exhibit building at the fairgrounds, sewed bone pillows for hospice, county park clean up and then we began working the soup kitchen at a local church. The Soup Kitchen has been an amazing experience.

- Kathleen Smith
Consumer Horticulture

Science-based gardening, environmental awareness and sustainability have long been a hallmark of MSUE consumer horticulture programs yet somehow, these messages were not getting through to the home gardener, according to Dr. David Smitley, MSU Professor of Entomology. This prompted MSU faculty and staff to start developing simple messages centered on smart lawns, soils and plants that were supported by years of research at Michigan State University: “Smart Gardening.”

A crucial part of the multi-level Smart Gardening campaign was “taking it to the street” which meant employing electronic means, appearing at public venues and through print media. During the winter of 2013, MSUE consumer horticulture educators and trained volunteers actively engaged clients at three home and garden shows which allowed them to interface with tens of thousands of people representing more than half of the state’s counties. Professional displays where over 36,000 fact sheets were distributed allowed volunteers to dialogue with clients about how to “green” up their lawn and landscape while protecting Michigan’s water and environment.

However, the education and adoption of earth-friendly practices couldn’t stop here. This team of educators also ramped up their home gardening website to reflect the “Smart Gardening” messages and populated the site with tip sheets, dozens of “smart” news articles and Smart Gardening videos. The popularity of the website has allowed it to be first choice when using a search engine for gardening in Michigan. Throughout the year, over 35,000 people visited the website making over 136,000 page views.

Planning and Zoning

» **Fundamentals of Planning and Zoning**— This ten session Michigan Citizen Planner course was taught at the Big Rapids Department of Public Safety building and provided attendees with:

  » Introduction to Planning and Zoning
  » Legal Foundations of Planning and Zoning
  » Roles and Responsibilities (master plan, planning process, zoning board of appeals, site plans, etc.)
  » Plan Implementation and Development Controls
  » Best Practices for Innovative Planning and Zoning
  » The Art of Community Planning

» **Hardy Pond Trail**—MSU Extension has provided assistance to Newaygo and Mecosta Counties, and Consumers Energy to develop “rural place-making” plans for a linear county park connecting the rural countryside and forests along the Muskegon River and the Hardy Pond area.
Online resources for MSU Extension Information

MSU Extension News is an online resource that contains the most recent and relevant information from MSU throughout the state.

MSU Extension News features pertinent articles on a variety of categories. It is available both in a traditional format and in a mobile format that can be accessed from any smart phone or pad. MSU Extension News is updated daily to provide the most up-to-date, relevant information available. You can find it at http://msue.anr.msu.edu/

A useful feature is the option to request an email notification of articles that recently appeared on the MSU Extension News website. The MSU Extension Digests will be emailed to you about every 2 weeks, listing new articles that have appeared. Digests are available by topic or category.

Lawn & Garden Questions:
Online: http://migarden.msu.edu/
Toll-Free: 1-888-678-3464
Product Code: E3154

Information Bulletins:
http://bookstore.msue.msu.edu/

MSUE News
http://msue.anr.msu.edu/

MSUE Events and Programs:
http://msue.anr.msu.edu/events

District 6:
Mecosta County

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