

2013-2014 Annual Report:

Van Buren County



Proven, Relevant, Life Changing



A MESSAGE FROM THE

DISTRICT COORDINATOR:

This year, Michigan State University Extension is celebrating its 100th birthday. In May of 1914, President Woodrow Wilson signed the Smith Lever Act. This legislation extended the land grant university concept beyond campuses and into communities. It was that legislation that led to the establishment of MSU Extension.

For 100 years, MSU Extension has integrated MSU’s knowledge and resources into the public, equipping Michigan residents with the information they need to improve their work, health and safety. The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 was created to foster economic development by stimulating the transfer of knowledge from research into practice on farms, in factories, and in families through agriculture, 4-H & youth, family, food & health, business, community, lawn & garden, natural resources, coastal issues and many other subjects.

In honor of this historic birthday, MSU Extension is recognizing our long standing partnership with county governments across the district by presenting resolutions of support for county governments to pass, acknowledging and recognizing this long standing successful partnership serving Michigan’s citizens. We have had formal relationships with counties across District 13 for the past 97 years. It is our honor and privilege to do so and we look forward to the next 100 years.

Sincerely,
Ginger Hentz, District 13 Coordinator



VAN BUREN COUNTY STAFF:

- Julie Pioch**
Public Policy Educator
- Mark Longstroth**
Small Fruit Educator
- Bruce MacKellar**
Agriculture Educator
- Beth Clawson**
Community Foods Systems/Water Quality
- Janice Zerbe**
4-H Youth Development Educator
- Diana Hassan**
Health and Nutrition Educator
- Janean Danca**
Citizen Planner Coordinator/Secretary
- Melissa Franklin**
Office Manager

2013 4-H PARTICIPATION NUMBERS

4-H Members (Traditional Club Enrollment)	488
4-H Special Interest /Short Term Programming.....	752
4-H Volunteers	130
School Enrichment Participants	470
4-H Clubs	13
Total: (with duplicates eliminated)	1658



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Photos: MSU, Denise Noble, Melissa Franklin, Mark Longstroth

4-H CHILDREN & YOUTH INSTITUTE

- » Van Buren County 4-H Clubs — 4-H Clubs are the foundation of every successful 4-H program. They provide volunteers and youth with unlimited opportunities for learning, relationship building and fun. 4-H clubs can take many different forms. They can be single project clubs, afterschool clubs, in-school clubs, or community clubs. Regardless of the structure, the primary purpose of 4-H clubs is to support the development of each youth participant's full potential. The club structure is designed to help volunteers and members build significant and lasting relationships. In 2014, Van Buren County had 13 4-H Clubs with 488 members and 130 adult volunteers.
- » 4-H Exploration Days — Exploration Days is designed for young people aged 11 to 19 and involved about 2,500 participants from all parts of Michigan in a multitude of hands-on learning sessions, field trips and recreation opportunities. In June 2014, Van Buren County had 35 delegates attend along with 6 adult 4-H Volunteers. The volunteers also took on roles as CCAs, session instructors, and session helpers, along with being chaperones.
- » The Van Buren County 4-H Leaders' Association Auction was held Saturday, March 1, 2014 and over \$12,000 was raised. This was the 7th year for this auction. All items are donated by 4-H families, individuals from the communities and businesses. The auction is an event where all of the 4-H clubs come together to raise money that is used for 4-H event scholarships, county medals, member and leader pins, etc.
- » 4-H Science Blast offers an opportunity to connect in-school learning with real world experiences and gives the youth a small portion of what 4-H has to offer. Youth are given the opportunity to learn about the world around them through fun hands-on activities. All of the experiments assist the youth in expanding their knowledge. Youth are given the role of a scientist and more! 4-H Science Blast is geared toward all youth ages 5-12. Between June and July Van Buren County 4-H hosted 4 Science Blasts; 3 were held at libraries in conjunction with their summer reading programs; the 4th event was held during the Van Buren Youth Fair on Kid's Day. Through these 4 events 284 youth were reached along with 151 adults. These events would not have been possible without the 16 adult and 28 teen volunteers that ran each station. The 4-H Science Blast was possible through donations from businesses, individuals and a 4-H club, totaling \$1,500!
- » Van Buren Voyagers 4-H Club— First of it's kind club in the state of Michigan! Prior to 2014, the 4-H projects of Shooting Sports, Project F.I.S.H., and Outdoor Adventure Challenge were housed in different 4-H clubs throughout Van Buren County.



4-H programs teach youth life skills that help them succeed in school and college while preparing them for the workforce, especially highly sought after jobs in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.



*Van Buren County 4-H Voyagers Club
Scuba Adventure*

4-H CHILDREN & YOUTH INSTITUTE



In an effort to bring together like-minded people, conserve resources, and expand project opportunities, all of these activities were joined together in the Van Buren Voyagers Club in March, 2014. This is the first outdoor project club of this kind known to exist in Michigan 4-H.

Van Buren Voyagers 4-H Club includes, but is not limited to, the following outdoor activities: Shooting Sports (shotgun - trap and skeet, air rifle, muzzleloader, archery), Project F.I.S.H. (fly tying, inland fishing, fly fishing, ice fishing) and Outdoor Activities (camping, canoeing, backpacking, kayaking, winter camping, climbing/rappelling, wilderness survival, wildlife photography).

- » State 4-H Awards- The purpose of this awards program is to recognize 4-H youth for engaging in rich learning experiences that result in outstanding knowledge and life-skill development.

After participating in the State 4-H Awards Program youth will:

- Learn to better communicate and represent their accomplishments on professional applications such as scholarships, college-entrance applications, résumés and cover letters for employment.
- Have more experience and be better able to communicate during job interviews.
- Build long-lasting friendships and establish connections with industry and academic leaders.
- Be encouraged to set new goals, continue building skills and assets, and broaden interests.

The Michigan 4-H State Awards Celebration was held during Exploration Days on the campus of Michigan State University. There were several changes to the program this year; one being the 2 age division juniors and seniors. This year Van Buren County had six youth who participated in this program. We are extremely proud to announce that five of the youth won. Lacey Burke won the Junior Poultry award, Hannah Baljeu won the Junior Sheep award, Iris deFinta won the Senior Companion Animal award, Victoria Kubin won the Junior Biological Science award, and Megan Miller won the Junior Leadership award!

Because Michigan 4-H is part of MSU Extension, the activities kids participate in are all backed by and based on child development research. We use experiential (i.e. hands-on) learning and time spent intentionally thinking about what's been learned to make it a meaningful experience, with skills and ideas learned that last a lifetime.

4-H members at the fair



AGRICULTURE & AGRIBUSINESS INSTITUTE (ABBI)

Michigan State University Extension's effort in fruit is provided by a team of AABI Educators. Tree programs are planned by Dr. Bill Shane based at the Southwest Michigan Research and Extension Center in Benton Harbor. Small fruit programming is provided by Mark Longstroth based in the Van Buren MSU Extension office in Paw Paw. Mark's programming focus is blueberries, Van Buren County's major fruit crop at 10,000 acres. Most fruit farm visits in Van Buren County are made by Mark Longstroth. In June Brad Baughman, a new Fruit Educator in Berrien County, began working in grapes.

MSU Extension has focused its efforts on increasing irrigation in blueberries and improving irrigation efficiency in blueberries. For several years blueberry water use and irrigation scheduling have been the focus of winter and summer blueberry programming.

Spotted wing drosophila (SWD) is an invasive pest of berries that was discovered in Van Buren County in 2010. This small vinegar fly has the ability to lay its eggs in ripening fruit of thin skinned soft berries such as blueberries and raspberries. This pest also attacks wild berries and its population builds continuously throughout the season. It must be controlled in commercial berry plantings. Infested fruit is destroyed and growers have lost thousands of dollars to this pest. Mark Longstroth has trapped SWD in surrounding counties since 2010. This gives growers current information on their risk. Insecticidal controls need to be applied at weekly intervals to protect fruit during harvest. This is a major change from previous practices that only required insecticide sprays when pests were present. It has taken several years for growers to make effective changes to their Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices. Habits developed to control native blueberry pests had to be unlearned. This made changes hard to implement. Effective information about common grower mistakes and effective control programs has allowed growers to adapt to this new pest. In 2014, most growers achieved good control and allow complete harvesting of late season berries.

MSU Extension works to increase farmers' success while protecting the environment, ensuring food safety, reaching new markets and advancing agriculture through applied research.





AGRICULTURE & AGRIBUSINESS INSTITUTE (AABI)

Bird predation of fruit such as blueberries, cherries and grapes can be a significant problem especially in years when fruit is scarce as in years when spring freezes kill fruit blossoms and reduce the fruit crops. MSU Extension participated in a grant tracking birds as a pest in blueberries and looking at several control measures.

Winter programming is focused on grower meetings to develop and increase growers' knowledge of current production practices and pest control options. These meetings are held in Van Buren and other Southwestern counties.

Great Lakes Expo in Grand Rapids in December was the statewide fruit meeting for growers. This three-day trade and educational show included many crop specific meetings planned by MSU Educators. Mark Longstroth developed the blueberry programs and Bill Shane did the Stone Fruit session.

Ag Action Day in Kalamazoo County on the last Friday of January included Blueberry and Tree Fruit sessions among many others that focused on current production practices and improving production efficiencies.

A **Grower Labor Conference** in March was held at the Lawrence Conference Center. This meeting focuses on labor issues and is a joint effort between MSU Extension and the Southwest Michigan Migrant Resource Council

Preseason fruit grower updates were held March 19 in Lawrence. These meetings focused on pest and disease control with presentations by Extension Educators.

A **Blueberry preseason meeting** held in March at the Trevor Nichols Research station near Fennville in Allegan County focused on reports from campus specialists on insect, disease and weed control and featured presentations by MSUE Educators on improving irrigation in blueberries.

During the growing season, grower meetings focused on current pest conditions and keeping growers abreast on developing issues.

Weekly fruit IPM meetings focused on current pest conditions and keeping growers abreast on developing issues. These meetings were held every Monday afternoon at a fruit farm near Coloma from April to June.

*One of
Southwest
Michigan's
largest Ag &
Home
Horticulture
Events*

AGRICULTURE & AGRIBUSINESS INSTITUTE

Blueberry prebloom meeting was held May 7 at the MBG Conference room in Grand Junction. This meeting focused on early season insect and disease control. MSU Extension presented material for using overhead irrigation to prevent or reduce spring freeze injury during bloom.

Hispanic Blueberry Grower Meetings were held on a grower's farm near Grand Junction. These meetings are focused on increasing Hispanic participation in regular grower meetings by demonstrating the information available to Hispanic growers from MSU Extension. These meetings were held May 10th and 17th for updates on SWD and its control. A preharvest meeting was held June 27.

Blueberry preharvest meeting was held June 18 at the Beeches Golf Course near Grand Junction. This meeting focused on fruit rot control, SWD control and integrating irrigation, harvest and SWD sprays in blueberries.

Mark Longstroth produces a weekly fruit update that focuses on current fruit development and insect and disease pressure. This report is emailed to many growers and is posted with pictures on the MSU Extension News website. This report is based on farm visits and phone calls from growers and gardeners seeking information on fruit.

Bill Shane is heading up the effort for the fruit educators along with Dale Rozeboom from the animal agriculture group in developing a resistance management programming effort that will cut across commodities and provide a common identity for MSUE research and educational efforts to protect the viability of crop protection chemicals. The goal is to provide a common banner to help growers understand that resistance management education at MSUE has a common thrust, and is important for the continued success of Michigan Agriculture. Initial discussions have focused around developing a common graphic to be used for meetings, articles and published materials. The hope is to be able to leverage grant resources around various research projects and promote these programs as a group to help raise grower awareness about the scope of the challenges that we are likely to face in the future.

Extreme weather effects or newly introduced pests are identified and featured in grower meetings.





AGRICULTURE & AGRIBUSINESS INSTITUTE

Michigan State University Extension's work in field and vegetable crops is provided by a large team of educators and specialists. This team includes Mike Staton, Soybean Educator based in Allegan County, Lyndon Kelley, Irrigation Educator based in St. Joseph County, and Dr. Ron Goldy, MSUE Vegetable Educator, based in Berrien County. Primary coverage is provided by Bruce MacKellar, who develops educational programs and coordinates research projects that address challenges to local producer's profitability.

There are several high profile research and education efforts that were conducted in Van Buren and adjacent counties in 2014. MSU Extension is continuing to conduct research on Soybean Sudden Death Syndrome (SDS) at a farm near Decatur. A field survey conducted in late August revealed that 68% of the soybean fields visited in western Van Buren and Northern Berrien Counties showed at least some sign of infection of this fungal disease. Severe infection of susceptible soybean varieties can cause yield losses of 85% or more under high disease pressure. MSU is conducting research on resistant varieties and seed treatments to evaluate their potential to control SDS.

Monitoring and research has also continued on Palmer Amaranth, an aggressive invasive pigweed relative that now has been shown to be resistant to Glyphosate (Roundup), ALS Inhibitors and Atrazine in Michigan. The results of research and recommendations for controlling this new weed threat have been shared with local growers at several area meetings. Other pests we are monitoring include Bt Resistant corn rootworms and Brown Marmorated Stink Bugs, an invasive pest that likes to damage crops and share your home with you during the winter.

Irrigation remains critical to making Agriculture an economic force in Southwest Michigan. Educators Lyndon Kelley and Bruce MacKellar helped host a southwest Michigan meeting of the Michigan Ground Water Advisory Council. They developed a bus tour which focused on irrigated agriculture and its importance to the southwest Michigan economy. A compilation of these economic impacts is available.

AGRICULTURE & AGRIBUSINESS INSTITUTE

Winter grower meetings are designed to help producers better understand threats to their businesses from new and changing pests, market factors and regulations.

The following meetings were held in Van Buren and surrounding Counties:

MSU Field Crop Management Meeting — held in Lawrence in 2013 and 2014 in February. This meeting was one of 6 sessions offered around Michigan to provide growers with the latest recommendations for field crops pest management, fertilizer recommendations and marketing insights. This program featured presentations from MSU and invited specialists.

Ag Action Day was held in Kalamazoo County during the last Friday in January. This program focused on management operations to improve economic efficiency in corn and soybean production in 2014.

Soybean Research Programs were held in Cass County (Dowagiac) and Allegan County (Hamilton) in Late February. Focused on research projects growers wanted to see to improve productivity on their farms.

Southwest Michigan Hort Days – considerations for reducing drift and volatilization of 2,4-D and Dicamba herbicides when field crop producers begin to utilize the new crop tolerant herbicide programs in fields adjacent to fruit and vegetable production – February 2014.

Restricted Use Pesticide Application Training — Educational sessions were held in Van Buren, Cass, St. Joseph and Berrien Counties providing training for producers and commercial pesticide applicators on procedures for pesticide application and safety.

Irrigation Management Meeting – MSUE Educators Kelley and MacKellar held an irrigation management meeting focused on utilizing the State's Groundwater Withdrawal Assessment Screening Tool in March. They also worked with Soybean Educator Mike Staton on a larger irrigated soybean management meeting held jointly with Purdue University in March in Shipshewana Indiana.

IPM Breakfast Meetings - Pest management update meetings were held bi-weekly from April until July in Centreville. A published newsletter was e-mailed to seed corn and contract vegetable growers.





GREENING MICHIGAN INSTITUTE

- » Government Board Leadership Development - 358 participants received training in effective meeting management in 2013-14. Township, city, village and county officials learned the basics of good communication among board members and public engagement techniques. They also received training on the implementation of the Open Meetings Act and how to comply with that law while meeting the demands of policy making.
- » Strategic Planning and Public Engagement—Kalamazoo, Oshtemo, Comstock and Texas townships were assisted by MSUE in developing, implementing and communicating a township wide public input survey. The townships assessed the communities' satisfaction with current services and assessed needs for future services. MSU Extension facilitated the development of strategic plans for both Kalamazoo and Comstock townships.
- » Citizen Planner Program – the seven week classroom program was held in Cass and Kalamazoo Counties in 2013-14. Thirty-seven members of local planning and zoning boards and the general public successfully completed the course, several finished their capstone projects and obtained Master Citizen Planner status. Land use technical assistance was provided to many communities in the Berrien, Van Buren and Cass counties over the course of the last year.
- » Economic Development with Placemaking — MSUE teamed up with the MI-Place Partnership Initiative to introduce a new curriculum devoted solely to placemaking. The MI-Place Partnership Initiative is a statewide initiative made up of the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, the Municipal League, the MSU Land Policy Institute, and other statewide organizations with the purpose of restoring economic prosperity to Michigan. MSUE educators trained over 200 private consultants and state agency personnel in this curriculum in 2013. The 2014 portion of the project focused on providing training and facilitation across the state to selected big city, suburban and small communities to assist them in looking at community assets and how to leverage them to develop strategic placemaking plans. Workshops took place across the state, including in Benton Harbor, Battle Creek and Kalamazoo teaching community leaders about the importance of including placemaking in their economic strategies to attract talent and retain entrepreneurs. MSU Extension educators were responsible for teaching and facilitating the second session of the two-part program in each community. Results show that the trainings are making an impact in increasing awareness of the new economy trends and placemaking principles and people understand the importance of developing place as an attraction/retention strategy. The facilitated workshops have helped communities develop a vision for developing walkable urban places, that are attractive to knowledge workers and entrepreneurs. Leaders have developed lists of strategic placemaking assets and defined areas for improvement in their communities.

MSU Extension helps strengthen communities through programs that teach community leaders how to implement best practices that keep communities solvent, productive and engaged.

GREENING MICHIGAN INSTITUTE

- » Community Food Systems: MSU Extension participated in supporting and acting as a professional reference for the development of food hubs, farmers markets, and farm markets. MSU Extension works with Niles Downtown Development Authority (DDA), Benton Harbor and Kalamazoo to develop additional markets and food hubs in their communities. Two facilitation events were coordinated with the Niles DDA stakeholder committee regarding the planning and development of a local food hub using reclaimed space in a downtown building known as “the gallery.”
- » Beginning Farmer Trainings were offered during the winter for new and beginning farmers as an online course. This was a multi-educator collaboration bringing their expertise to a 14 week online course that provided trainings covering a wide range of topics. Field crops, soil, vegetables, planning, business recordkeeping, etc. Each session was offered independently and as a series. All were well attended and averaged 25 participants per session.
- » Community Garden Development Workshop: Growing Community Gardens: Leading & Feeding. Topics covered: managing the garden, memberships, rentals, rules, marketing, fundraising, and connecting with gardeners. This workshop is based on the National Community Gardening Association Growing Communities Curriculum. Usually this type of program focuses on how to grow a garden, planning and planting etc. This program focuses on how to organize, operate and run the garden as its leader. This was very successful in the Kalamazoo area drawing people from across the state.
- » Natural Resources: Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) revitalized the Clean Boats Clean Waters program. Partnered with Michigan Lakes and Streams Association. Trained volunteers to help identify and remove AIS from their watercraft and sport equipment to help prevent the spread of AIS in Michigan's inland lakes.
- » Firewise: Michigan Wildlife, Recycling, and Outdoor Safety and Fun. This program offered the opportunity to speak with 7 classroom-size groups of 5th graders about wildfire prevention and discuss what plants growing near homes are more and less likely to catch fire in the event of a wildfire. Sharing Firewise information with grade school students through questions, visuals and a home model showing a defensible space and a non-defensible space around a home is always a rewarding experience.
- » Firewise on the Farm: A booth at the Van Buren Youth Fair annually provides an opportunity to connect with farmers and provide information about wildfire prevention and protection of farm property. Barn fires can be catastrophic through loss of not just buildings, but livestock and valuable equipment.



A Michigan State University survey lists the spread of invasive species as one of the greatest threats to Michigan's tourism industry.

HEALTH & NUTRITION INSTITUTE

» **Dining with Diabetes** 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. The program offers opportunities to sample a variety of healthy foods and take home recipes to further encourage behavior change.

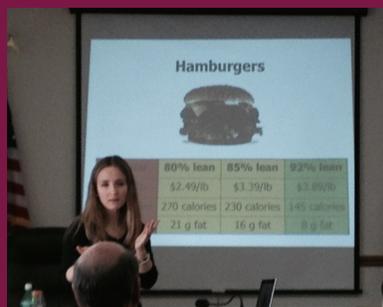
- One series was offered in Van Buren County in 2013-2014 with 9 attendees.
- 79% of participants report consumption nearer to the recommended types of healthy oils and fats
- 66% of participants report increased controlling of portions
- 64% of participants report reading food labels

» **The National Diabetes Prevention Program** is designed to bring to communities evidence-based lifestyle change programs for preventing type 2 diabetes. It is based on the Diabetes Prevention Program research study led by the National Institutes of Health and supported by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The lifestyle program shows that making modest behavior changes, such as improving food choices and increasing physical activity to at least 150 minutes per week, results in participants losing 5% to 7% of their body weight. These lifestyle changes reduced the risk of developing type 2 diabetes by 58% in people at high risk for diabetes.

- Two series have been offered in Van Buren County in 2014 (monthly sessions are still ongoing). Preliminary analysis of data show that participants lost a total 343 pounds.
- 90% of participants report being more physically active
- 92% of participants report eating healthier

» **The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Education (SNAP-Ed)** provides nutrition education to Bridge card eligible adults and children. This program focuses on increasing physical activity and improving dietary quality while stretching food dollars. The ultimate goal of these programs is to promote healthy weight maintenance and obesity prevention through the emphasis of eating more fruits and vegetables and moving more.

MSU Extension social and emotional well-being programs can ultimately benefit society through improved long-term health of individuals, better prepared citizens for the workforce, and reduced costs of violence in communities.



Diana Hassan-Van Buren County Lunch and Learn Series

HEALTH & NUTRITION INSTITUTE

- » **Lunch and Learn**-Lunch & Learns have been offered in the county for the past three years. They are part of an ongoing effort to offer health education on nutrition and other current health topics specifically to Van Buren County employees. In 2013/2014, there have been 7 Lunch & Learn sessions that were held at the Paw Paw and South Haven locations. In total, these Lunch & Learn sessions reached about 60 Van Buren County employees.

During the past year in Van Buren County, 59 adults and 50 youth were reached through nutrition education classes at various venues in the county. There were a total of 673 contacts with these groups in total. Programs delivered include Cooking Matters, Eating Right is Basic, Eat Smart Live Strong, and Show Me Nutrition with various groups including Hartford Alternative Education Program, Senior Centers, and Community Mental Health. Youth Programming occurred at Wood School, Migrant Head Start, and various groups in the county.

Adult Program Impacts:

- 92% of the participants completing the series demonstrated adoption of healthy eating practices.
- 92% of participants showed improvement in one or more food resource management practices: planning meals, comparing prices, adequately supply of food or uses grocery lists.

Youth Program Impacts

- 67% of children and youth use safe food handling practices more often
- 90% of children and youth improve their abilities to choose foods according to Federal Dietary Recommendations
- 100% of children and youth improve their ability to prepare simple, nutritious, affordable food



Activities & handouts make learning about healthy eating fun for students of all ages.



MSU EXTENSION

Happy Birthday Cooperative Extension

2014 celebrates the 100-year signing anniversary of the Smith-Lever Act, which officially created the national Cooperative Extension System. President Woodrow Wilson signed legislation that extended the land-grant university concept beyond university campuses to reach into communities across the United States. For 100 years, the Smith-Lever Act has stimulated innovative research and vital educational programs for youth and adults through progressive information delivery systems that extend knowledge and improve lives using a state-by-state network of Extension Educators. This event was celebrated in Washington, DC in May 2014 and in Michigan throughout the year. Extension is a unique partnership between federal, state, and county governments. County-based community partnerships in Michigan have been thriving for nearly 100 years as MSU Extension, Michigan's land grant university, delivers education throughout the state and uniquely in the southwest region.



Video Conferencing Resource Installed

SWMREC in Benton Harbor is the location of a new telepresence communication center for internet-based meetings that benefits all counties in southwest Michigan. Equipment and software allows attendees at similar facilities in Michigan and other states to link together for high quality, real time meetings using large screen projection and sound systems.

MSU Fruit Management Guide – E154

Each year the MSU fruit team revises and improves the statewide Fruit Management Guide E-154. This “bible for fruit growers” is a 300-page guide that contains the latest information on ag chemicals and pests in fruit crops. An electronic version (PDF) is available.



100th Year MSU Extension anniversary celebration at Van Buren County Board of Commissioners Meeting

MSU EXTENSION

ServSafe-a national food safety certificate program through the National Restaurant Association. The program provides training in food service to help participants gain knowledge about food safety procedures. Topics covered include: Providing Safe Food, Forms of Contamination, The Safe Food Handler, The Flow of Food, Safe Facilities, Pest Management, and Cleaning & Sanitizing.



TelFarm-A system of farm financial record keeping available from MSU Extension's Farm Information Resources Management (FIRM) Team. It is an educational and service program designed to assist farmers with their farm financial records and decision making. Over several years, effective tax planning can save producers thousands of dollars.



Entrepreneurship Training and Cottage Food Law Classes

The Michigan Cottage Food Law enabling the production of certain foods in a home kitchen for direct sales is still relatively new. Members of MSU Extension and Product Center Counselors collaborated with MSU Extension Food Safety Team to provide food safety, cottage food, and business development content in a single session that could be easily presented around the state. On average, of participants who completed the course, 93% understood what is necessary to run a successful food business, and 78% felt that the sessions met or more than met their needs in starting a cottage food business.



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