It is with pleasure that I bring another annual report of the good work MSU Extension is providing in Wexford County. Through our partnership with the local county, we are able to bring state and federal funding into the local Extension office to bring resources of the land grant university to this community. Our mission is to help "people improve their lives through an educational process." We do this by bringing resources from our four Institutes, or areas of programming:

- Agriculture and Agribusiness
- Children and Youth (includes 4-H)
- Health and Nutrition
- Greening Michigan (Natural Resources, Leadership Development, and Economic and Community Development)

In 2015, Wexford County commissioners asked MSU Extension to request funding from the property owners through a millage ballot initiative. We were pleased that voters approved the request in May following a successful Friends of Extension effort to educate taxpayers about the benefits of keeping MSU Extension and 4-H in the county. This 5 year millage will go into effect in 2017.

Later in 2015 MSU Extension embarked on a large needs assessment process throughout the state. In addition to conducting an online survey that netted over 5,000 responses statewide, we conducted "Issues Identification" sessions in each District. In our area - District 6 - we held three sessions in the last quarter of 2015. Almost 100 community members attended the facilitated discussions and answered questions like:

⇒ What do you think are the most important areas for Extension to focus their efforts over the next 3-5 years?
⇒ What are the needs and opportunities in our communities that research and education can make a difference by addressing?

Over the next several months, we will be processing the statewide and local data. We expect it will be very helpful in our program planning and resource allocation decisions. I would be happy to share the results of both the online Focus survey and the Issues ID sessions with anyone who is interested.

As always, I thank you for your commitment to MSU Extension and the people we serve in this great state and Wexford county.

Shari Spoelman,
District Coordinator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children &amp; Youth Programs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-H Members (traditional club enrollment)</td>
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<td>4-H Clubs</td>
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<td>Agriculture Programs</td>
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<td>Horticulture &amp; Gardening Assistance</td>
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<td>Soil Tests</td>
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<td>Health &amp; Nutrition Programs</td>
<td>1,854</td>
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<td>Greening Michigan Programs</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL PROGRAMMATIC IMPACT</td>
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DEVELOPING YOUTH AND COMMUNITIES

In Wexford County, 4-H is growing in popularity. Youth in our communities are discovering for themselves the benefits of hands-on learning that 4-H offers. 4-H was present in Mesick, Manton, Buckley, and Cadillac through several horse clubs, a rabbit and cavy (guinea pig) club, a cooking club, a canine club and a large animal club.

SPIN clubs are special interest clubs that meet for at least 6 weeks. They allow leaders that are unable to commit to a traditional year round club to teach a specific activity. They introduce new youth to 4-H and allow current members to be involved in multiple clubs. Wexford County 2015 SPIN clubs included geocaching, gardening, goats, and a cookie club.

The youth rounded out the year with a member appreciation banquet at Geers Farm in McBain. This annual event allows different clubs to spend time together. Hay rides and train rides around the farm create a fun afternoon. Celebrating with a pizza party, the youth have the opportunity to speak on how 4-H has affected them over the year. Members receive a pin for the number of years they have been involved in 4-H, and volunteers are thanked for their time throughout the year. The youth receive 5 “pumpkin bucks” that can be used on the farm for pumpkins or the food and drinks that the farm serves.

Sarah Elenbaas and Kyle Todd traveled to the state 4-H dog show in Lansing as members of the Canine Crew club. They each captured first place titles in their respective age divisions.
Babysitting club

In the spring approximately 40 junior high youth participated in the 4-H “SuperSitters” babysitting club. The youth learned about child development, basic CPR and first aid skills, what to do in an emergency, healthy nutritional snacks for the children in their care, and how to market and build their babysitting business. This class was held in Mesick and Cadillac.

Home Alone Safety

As a result of the babysitting club a new Home Alone Safety program was developed. Cadillac Fire Marshall Anthony Wolfe, Wexford County Sherriff Deputy Jason Nehmer and 4-H Program Coordinator, Tracy Trautner, developed a teen program that covered several safety topics such as stranger safety, what to do in the event of a fire, bullying and the power of the word “No”. Over 200 4th-7th graders in Cadillac and Mesick schools attended this valuable program.

One of our new 4-H SPIN clubs was the ARTSTRONG 4-H art club. The program was taught by members of the Cadillac Area Artist Association. The youth were introduced to a different type of art every week for 6 weeks.
Proud Equestrian Program

Again this year, Wexford County provided its 6 week therapy horseback riding program to 14 young adult riders with developmental delays or other disabilities. The Proud Equestrian Program has been popular for many years. A large number of volunteers help coordinate this program. Each rider requires someone to lead the horse and two side walkers. In addition, some physically limited riders require a back-rider to ride behind them and help them stay upright and balanced.

Horses are invaluable as a means of providing balance, coordination, strength and self-confidence for youth, in addition to being a big, fuzzy friend. A disabled youth riding a horse in the PEP program will tell you the animal is his friend rather than a tool.

Wexford County 4-H is appreciative of Ethan Whitley, Center Lake Bible Camp and staff in Tustin who generously provide all of the horses and its own staff to tack up the horses and monitor the riding program.

*I saw a child, who couldn’t walk, sit on a horse, laugh and talk. Then ride it through a field of daisies and yet he could not walk unaided.

I saw a child, no legs below, sit on a horse and make it go. Through woods of green and places he had never been; to sit and stare, except from a chair.

I saw a child who could only crawl mount a horse and sit up tall. Put it through degrees of paces and laugh at the wonder in our faces.

I saw a child born into strife, take up and hold the reins of life.

“I Saw a Child”, John Anthony Davies*
MSU Extension provided 5 early childhood trainings to over 55 providers in Wexford County. To provide better care to the youth in their care, providers attend 2 hour trainings periodically on topics such as science, math, social emotional development, classroom management techniques, purpose of play and more. The 55 providers provide care to over 800 youth in Wexford County.

**Cadillac Area Early Childhood Conference**

MSU Extension is proud to be a part of the group of dedicated early childhood professionals that organize the Cadillac Area Early Childhood Conference. Several providers in Northern Michigan attend the conference every spring. In 2015, the committee brought Julie Austin to be the Keynote Speaker. Julie is a dynamic, energetic performer and presenter. The conference, “Let them Sing-Let them Move” was very well attended by several providers in northern Michigan.

**Science and Literacy Nights**

Science and literacy is important at every age. Therefore several schools in the County including 3 Cadillac Area Elementary buildings and Manton Elementary hosted Science and Literacy nights in 2015. Over 1,500 youth and their families attended this hands-on event that also included dinner provided by the school. Teachers from each school ran individual stations that were set-up and planned by MSU Extension. This helps schools meet their title 9 requirement.

In 2015, MSU Extension partnered with the Molina Foundation to give away 30,000 children’s books. In addition to receiving books, children and their families were also given suggestions for literacy-related learning activities and educational information for parents and caregivers. These resources help expand the educational reach of the books, enhancing their impact and helping to create a lifelong love of reading.
MSU Extension provides nutrition education to people receiving (or eligible to receive) food assistance. The SNAP-Ed (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - 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 Programming - Show Me Nutrition**

This evidence-based curriculum of six to eight sessions provides preschool to 8th grade youth with age-appropriate literacy-based education in areas of nutrition, food safety, and physical activity choices.

Teachers of children in preschool to grade 2 classrooms were asked to complete a survey about youth behaviors after participating in our programs.

» 99% reported that the children increased their awareness of good nutrition
» 68% reported that the children were making healthier meal and snack choices
» 85% reported that the children were willing to try new foods
» 70% reported that the children were eating more fruit and vegetables

**Jump into Foods and Fitness (JIFF)**

JIFF is a research-based curriculum that features eight “Kangaroo Jumps” or sessions that help kids ages 8 to 11 (grades 3 to 5) learn the importance of nutrition, increased physical activity and food safety. Jiff the Joey invites kids and teen volunteers to experience a fun way to a healthier lifestyle! Children will participate in fun new physical fitness and nutrition activities while they:

» Increase strength, flexibility and endurance
» Taste new foods
» Prepare tasty snacks
» Learn how to keep foods safe

Encouraging healthy behaviors in youth helps reduce food and health care costs by helping prevent chronic health conditions and providing safe environments throughout a person’s life span.

Youth programs were taught at Manton Head Start, Manton Latchkey, Cadillac Annex, and Cadillac Clubhouse.

MSU Extension provided youth nutrition presentations at the Child Safety Expo, Cadillac Junior High School and Mesick 4-H Babysitting Club.
**Adult Nutrition Programming**

**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. Participants learned the importance of vitamins, minerals, and the 5 food groups. This was taught at Higher Ground and Wise Women (DHD10).

**Project FRESH and Market FRESH for Seniors**
MSU Extension provides the nutrition education portion for Market FRESH for Seniors and WIC Project FRESH. This series provides information on how to choose, store and prepare fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables. WIC-eligible individuals receive coupons to purchase fruits and vegetables from local farmers markets. The coupon books can be redeemed for fresh local produce.

There were 100 coupon books (10 coupons each) distributed to the seniors of Wexford County and 81 of them were redeemed. 1000 Project FRESH coupons were distributed to participants of WIC and 932 of them were redeemed.

**Eat Smart, Live Strong**
From the USDA, *Eat Smart, Live Strong* is an intervention designed to improve fruit and vegetable consumption and physical activity among 60-74 year olds participating in or eligible for nutrition assistance programs. This series was held at the Cadillac Senior Center. It taught older adults to eat more fruits and vegetables and to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity most days. The class also addressed goal setting and tips on saving money while eating more fruits and vegetables.

**Cooking Matters**
This six-part series teaches the basics of selecting nutritious, budget friendly ingredients and preparing healthy meals. The participants listen to a nutrition message for the first part of the class, and then they work with a local chef to prepare a meal in class. At the end of class they are able to take home groceries to prepare the same meal at home. Participants also visit a local grocery store to receive a tour to learn how to shop healthy on a budget. This curriculum was taught at the YMCA and at Love INC’s Higher Ground, teaching the participants about healthy eating habits and basic cooking skills.

**Partners**
Whether it is a school system, senior center, area business or social service organization, community partnerships are a key element of our work. New partnerships for nutrition programming established in 2015 included the YMCA, Cadillac Public Schools, Higher Ground, the Wexford County Sheriff’s Department, and the City of Cadillac Fire Department.

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MSU Extension’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) programs teach adults how to make the most of their food dollars by developing skills such as menu planning, understanding recipes, and keeping food safe.
Cooking Matters at the Store
Wexford County staff provided 7 grocery store tours at Meijer, Save-A-Lot, Mesick IGA and Wal-Mart stores where participants visited a local grocery store to receive a tour to learn how to shop healthy on a budget. At the end of the tour, participants were challenged to buy groceries that would feed a family of 4 for less than $10.

Events
Wexford County Health Summit: MSUE Disease Prevention & Management worked in collaboration to help sponsor this Cadillac Area Health Coalition first time event. Dr. Nick Yphantides of California, was the featured guest speaker at the Health Summit. He also spoke at the Cadillac Senior High School and Cadillac Rotary Club.

Ag Day: As part of a farm visit at Geers Farm, students from local schools were given presentations on various topics. 47 students were shown how to “Rethink Your Drink”. Participants were shown how many sugar cubes are in a typical soda, and then offered them a taste test of water infused with fruits. A majority of the students liked the option of a drink with less sugar and more nutrition.

Wexford Senior Expo: MSUE staff had a booth that featured information on portion distortion. The information was presented with an entertaining Jack and the Beanstalk theme.

Food Preservation & Food Safety
Michigan State University Extension food preservation and food safety workshops cover a variety of topics that include: freezing, water bath canning, pressure canning, dehydrating, and cottage food laws. MSUE food preservation workshops teach skills and techniques that provide participants with safe, high-quality canned products. Pictured, right, is a canning class held in Cadillac in the summer of 2015. MSUE also offers pressure canner gauge testing.

Nutrition Program Numbers—2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adult Participants in Series</th>
<th>Adults in</th>
<th>Youth Participants in Series</th>
<th>Youth in</th>
<th>Number of Presentations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>1146</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>117</td>
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In the process of identifying plants and pests, the public becomes aware of the range of services MSU Extension offers.

SUPPORTING FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Gardening Resources, Plant and Pest Identification
Each year we assist the public who are experiencing problems with plant and pest identification. Whether it is a plant disease in the garden, an invasive species or an army of ants, with help from MSU Extension, residents received proper identification and resources to help choose the best management practice for their situation. Many times, with proper identification we are able to help stakeholders determine control is not needed, or a pesticide is not needed to control the problem.

Farm Bill Education
The 2014 Farm Bill introduced major changes in risk management programs for corn, wheat, soybean, fruit, vegetable and dairy producers in Michigan. These new programs, combined with an anticipated decrease in commodity prices, created major risk management decisions that will affect the financial success of Michigan producers starting in 2015 until 2018 (the life of the Farm Bill). This irrevocable decision, combined with the complexity of these new programs and the uncertainty of the long-term commodity price outlook, created an urgency for programming on this topic. A Farm Bill educational session was provided in Cadillac and was well attended by farmers and ag producers from the region.

Safely Applying Pesticides
MSU Extension plays a critical role in ensuring agricultural producers are safely and effectively applying pesticides. MSU Extension’s educational resources and programming supports growers as they test to receive a pesticide applicators license and also provides opportunities for those licensees to receive the continuing education credits required by the state of Michigan for all applicators. In 2015, pesticide applicator review sessions were held around the state, including in Wexford County.

The Wexford MSU Extension staff hosted a booth at both the Cadillac Farmer’s Market and the Made in Michigan Markets in 2015. Information on “Smart Gardening,” preparing fruits and vegetables, safe food handling, etc. was shared through this venue. Additionally, the markets provided an additional opportunity for 4-H outreach.
**Christmas Tree Production**

Technical support for area Christmas Tree growers continued in 2015. Area research trials for early coning of Fraser Firs are investigating reasons for early coning and methods to eliminate early cone production. Trials are looking at several approaches—from irrigation management to using growth regulators to stop cone production. The goal is to help growers reduce input costs and increase yield and quality to effectively compete in the national market. The research trial evaluating several seed sources of Turkish and Trojan fir near Mesick continues. This is a multi-state project that should ultimately benefit Michigan growers by helping evaluate new species and developing new markets.

The Michigan Christmas Tree Association’s (MCTA) summer meeting was held at Getty Tree Farms, Manton, MI. MSU Extension partners with MCTA to provide educational programs for growers. One hundred and seventy two growers from the local area and across Michigan learned about improving soil quality, minimizing damage from birds, MSU up-to-date research, pesticide storage and much more.

**Assisting with IPM needs**

Wexford county growers have a multitude of integrated pest management (IPM) resources available to them through the University including weather models, pest management reports, and educational sessions. Growers with specific pest management needs are also assisted during on-site farm visits. This often includes monitoring, diagnosis and treatment recommendations. In the spring, Wexford County Extension held a pest management program for area Christmas growers as they prepared for the 2015 growing season. The program highlighted scouting and control strategies for many new as well as ongoing pest problem. Real-time pest related information helps growers with timely application which reduces costs and optimizes crop management.

Wexford County MSU Extension is looking forward to continuing Farmers’ Market outreach efforts in 2016.
Online resources available in 2015

Michigan citizens interested in engaging in new agricultural enterprises sometimes lack knowledge, experience and technical support to get started. Extension educators and specialists receive numerous contacts from such people seeking basic, start-up information. The Michigan State University Extension Beginning Farmer webinar series was developed in response to this need. The 2015 series included twenty webinars offered from January through April and included participants from Wexford County.

Additionally, MSU Extension offers a series of free, on-demand integrated pest management webinars that viewers can watch to improve their knowledge of IPM related topics. Viewers are also able to request up to five recertification credits toward their pesticide applicators license in the state of Michigan. Over time, a number of webinars have been added and there are currently 17 webinars available. During 2015, residents of Wexford County took advantage of this great resource.

Soil Health

MSU Extension provides education about the importance of soil health. Whether the agriculture producer has grain crops, or specializes in Christmas tree production, the health of the soil should be improved and maintained for future crops, while protecting the environment. Extension educators help farmers understand the value and benefit of adding cover crops to hold soils, provide excellent drainage, and return nutrients into the soil.

In 2015, a team from Michigan State University launched the “Eyes on the Forest” program targeting 3 major species that threaten Michigan forests.
Dairy producers, dairy farm employees, and industry professionals received timely updates about topics important to managing today’s dairy farms at the Focus on Dairy Production meetings offered across the state by the Michigan State University Extension Dairy Team. MSU Extension Educators and Specialists presented updates on management practices important to calf and cow health, feeding higher levels of corn silage to milking cows, ensuring proper animal handling skills for employees, and winter manure spreading.

People who completed the post-meeting survey indicated that they planned to modify newborn calf care protocols, implement practices to reduce disease transmission in their cattle, and increase animal handling training for their employees.

**Reproductive Management Strategies That Work**

Three dairy farms and their herd veterinarian participated in a panel discussion on April 1, 2015 to highlight the reproductive management programs used on their farms. The program was designed to encourage discussion about successful approaches to getting dairy cows pregnant in a timely manner. This is one key characteristic of profitable dairy farms.

Dr. Richard Pursley, MSU Extension Dairy Specialist, was actively involved in the informal question and answer period providing research-based information to support the successful management practices used by the producer panel members. In addition, Kathy Lee, Dairy Educator, made a presentation about genetic selection for fertility traits in dairy cattle. The program was co-sponsored by MSU Extension and Airport Animal Clinic of Cadillac.

**Rally for 4-H and MSU Extension**

The Wexford County Friends of Extension hosted an informational rally for 4-H and MSU Extension on a beautiful spring day in 2015 at Tractor Supply in Cadillac. Families and friends joined together to learn what Extension has to offer to area residents.
In addition to the Extension staff with an office in Wexford County (listed on page 2), the following MSU Extension staff and faculty provided programming and assistance to Wexford County residents in 2015:

Andy Northrup  
Barb Duvall  
Beverly Przystas  
Bindu Bhakta  
Brad Neuman  
Brandon Schroeder  
Christina Curell  
Curtis Talley  
Erwin Elsner  
Gail Innis  
Gerald May  
Janet Olson  
Jerry Lindquist  
John Amrhein  
Kara Lynch  
Kathy Lee  
Kurt Schindler  
Mary Wilson  
Merrill Gould  
Michelle Neff  
Pam Daniels  
Phillip Durst  
Rebecca Finneran  
Ron Kinnunen  
Shannon Lindquist  
Terry Gibb  
Wendy Weiland

Tourism  
Financial Literacy  
Work Force Preparation  
Natural Resources  
Place-making  
Fishes  
Cover Crops & Soil Health  
Farm Business Management  
Small Fruits  
Alternatives to Anger  
Nutrient Management  
Adolescent Emotional Health  
Forages & Grains  
Government & Public Policy  
Food Safety & Preservation  
Dairy  
Planning  
Master Gardener  
Bio-Energy  
Real Colors  
Disease Prevention & Mgmt  
Dairy Labor  
Consumer Horticulture  
Water Safety  
Social & Emotional Health  
Natural Resources  
Small Farm Conference

Lawn & Garden Questions:
Online: http://migarden.msu.edu/
Toll-Free: 1-888-678-3464
Soil test kits (homeowners) http://shop.msu.edu/category_s/345.htm Product Code: E3154
Information Bulletins:
http://shop.msu.edu/category_s/345.htm
MSUE Events and Programs: http://msue.anr.msu.edu/events

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. It is available both in a traditional format and in a mobile format. 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/