



Gratiot County 2018 ANNUAL REPORT

BY THE NUMBERS



\$5,881,274 total economic impact in Gratiot County



669 youth participated in 4-H, early childhood or after-school programs



190 adults and youth participated in health and nutrition programs



MSU Extension website received 5,001 visits from Gratiot County residents, 80% were first-time visitors



Gratiot County students received \$2,490,547 in financial aid from MSU



MSU Extension has served Gratiot County for more than 100 years



Over 8,000 gardening questions answered statewide

MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR

In 2018, Michigan State University Extension partnered with Gratiot County to continue strengthening youth, families, farmers, caregivers, homeowners, business owners, and communities. Your local MSU Extension staff and the statewide network of Educators worked through local partners to bring the university's research and resources directly to our county residents. This annual report gives examples of some of MSU Extension's accomplishments and the impact that we continue to have in the county – helping to improve the lives of its residents. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve our stakeholders and partners and we are especially grateful for the partnership that we have with Gratiot County.



Bill Hendrian
District 8 Director

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Michigan State University Extension



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Program Highlights



MSU Extension is here to assist farmers, families and individuals with issues such as succession & estate planning, budgets, and managing farm stress.

FARM MANAGEMENT

Roger Betz, Farm Business Educator with MSU Extension, serves Gratiot County farmers. His main area of focus is in farm management. In 2018 Roger worked with area farmers on issues such as new tax law, succession and estate planning, and budgets. MSU Extension recognizes that with farming comes emotional stress. Roger works with a team of educators who are working to provide information on managing farm stress and to reduce the stigma of mental health and to make sure that all farmers and farm families have access to the help they need. If you are dealing with thoughts of depression or anxiety, please talk to your physician. If you have suicidal thoughts, **please reach out for help**.

National Suicide Prevention - 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

www.canr.msu.edu/managing_farm_stress/



The MI EnviroImpact tool is a decision support tool for short-term manure application planning that shows daily runoff risk across Michigan.

MANURE MANAGEMENT

When farmers are looking for a low-cost fertilizer source, often it can be found in their livestock barns in the form of manure. Manure spreading in Michigan is a common practice and benefits the farmer by giving them a place to apply the nutrient-rich byproduct of many livestock operations. However, seasonal conditions in Michigan often lead to snow/water saturation levels in our fields. When runoff occurs in Michigan, it eventually ends up in one of our Great Lakes. The MI EnviroImpact tool can help farmers time their manure application and reduce that excess nutrient runoff that can cause negative outcomes. Educator, Erica Rogers, helps inform our Agricultural practitioners about the benefits of this tool.

Water Quality

MSU Extension works with community leaders to create water-protection strategies, landowners, and industry to reduce risks of water pollution, and state agencies to develop water quality information systems. Extension offers both in-person and online workshops, classes, and programs that help to make Michigan residents more effective stewards of one of our most precious natural resources. Michigan Lake & Stream Leaders Institute, Conservation Stewards Program, Michigan Water School: Essentials for Elected Officials, Introduction to Lakes Online, and Clean Boats Clean Waters are just a few examples of Extension offered programming.



Michigan is home to more than 11,000 inland lakes and 36,000 miles of rivers and streams.

Program Highlights

PORK QUALITY

Pork Quality Assurance® (PQA®) was started in 1989 and designed to assist pig farmers and their employees to use the best practices and to promote food safety. MSU Extension Educator, Casey Zangaro, is a certified PQA Plus Advisor and offers training to the residents of Gratiot County. This program relies on experts in agriculture and veterinary medicine to fulfill the needs to promote better animal care and treatment management with emphasis on producers keeping records and communications between veterinarians and animal care professionals' industry wide. Pork Quality Assurance Plus is an educational and certification program that demonstrates the commitment to improve pork production and keep standards high for all producers nationwide.



Producers renewing their certification can complete this process online by contacting Gratiot County MSU Extension Educator, Casey Zangaro.

FOOD ENTREPRENEURS

At the St. Louis City Hall, Gratiot County MSU Extension Educator Diane Longanbach and her colleague Joyce McGarry, Food Safety Educator, gave a 2- hour seminar titled “How To Start A Cottage Food Business”. The class covered basic Cottage Food Law allowances, labeling needs, food safety, marketing, pricing, business development resources, and related topics. Diane has also partnered with the St. Louis Farmers Market manager, Linda Bader, to deliver the “How to Start A Commercial Food Business” seminar. Attendees were budding entrepreneurs and others interested in turning some of their baking, cooking, and canning into a business opportunity.



MSU Extension offers in-person and online Cottage Food Law. Participants receive a certification of completion.

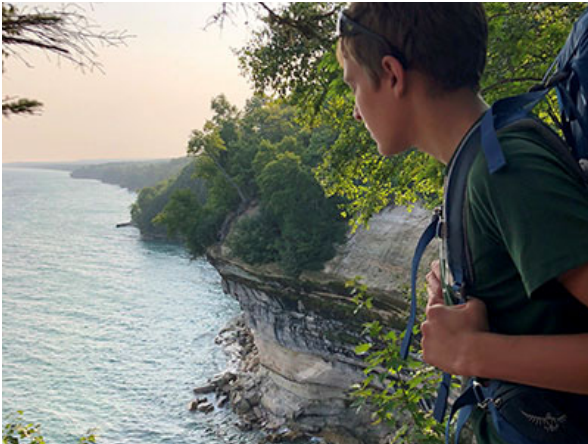
FOOD SAFETY

MSU Extension offers high-quality, affordable programs that help Michigan residents learn the importance of safe food and water in their everyday lives. In 2018, Extension Food Safety Educator, Joyce McGarry, offered ServSafe certification training and Food Preservation classes to Gratiot residents. Joyce is also part of a work team that responds to inquiries to our Food Safety Hotline and offers information on disaster preparedness through a collection of educational articles and resources that help families and communities deal with severe weather, power outages, localized flooding, food safety, and related issues



It is important to stay up to date on the latest research for home food preservation processes, as they are constantly under review and updated.

Program Highlights



Outdoor Adventure 4-H youth participant gazes on the view of Lake Superior from the cliffs in Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore.

Photo credit: Liz Wiener MSU Extension



Gratiot County 4-H teen leader, Nathan Laurenz, 2018 Environmental and Earth Science State Award recipient attends the 2018 Capital Experience at our State's capitol.



Members of the first official Gratiot 4-H SPIN club create different crafts out of duct tape.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Gratiot County 4-H helps to prepare youth for real life situations. From the local club experience to the statewide workshops and events, all youth have the chance to participate and develop skills that last a lifetime. In 2018, 4-H Program Coordinators, Chris Thompson and Liz Wiener, hosted a group of ten 4-H youth on a life-changing 42 mile backpack trip along the rugged trails of Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore. Not only was the scenery beautiful, but according to Thompson, "I saw youth develop the confidence to handle the stresses of undertaking the journeys needed to reach these beautiful spaces. They will be able to transfer the amazing skills they learned when they get back to their everyday life."

FUTURE LEADERS

In 2018, Gratiot youth attended the Agri-Science youth summit in Washington D.C., met with state legislators at the annual Capitol Experience, collaborated with leaders and experts to address food security issues at the World Food Prize held on campus, attended natural resource and renewable energy camps, and became leaders and mentors in their local clubs and communities. 4-H grows curious, confident and thriving youth from all backgrounds. Youth from farms, towns, cities, and suburbs are investing in their future and growing their hearts for civic engagement and giving back. Gratiot 4-H youth leaders are leading the way for positive change. After all, true leaders aren't born: they're grown!

AMERICORPS

In 2018, Michigan State University received a matching grant from the Gratiot County Community Foundation in order to fund an AmeriCorps position in the Gratiot County MSUE office for one year. Lance Fowler joined the team in late 2018 to bring STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) programming to Gratiot youth. The grant focuses on creating short-term SPIN (special interest) clubs in order to improve youth attitudes towards science. Lance will focus on family engagement events throughout the service year to further engage youth and families who were new to 4-H.

Program Highlights

MONEY MANAGEMENT

Financial & Homeownership Educator, Brenda Long, focuses on financial capacity, home buyer and foreclosure prevention education and serves the residents of Gratiot County. In June, 2018 a “Your Money, Your Goals” training was held in Alma. Twenty-five agency staff (social workers, case managers) who provide direct services to consumers received financial empowerment training to better help their clients who face difficult financial situations and decisions. Brenda also works with homeowners facing foreclosure and, in 2018, was able to help a single woman who faced a severely diminished income and had fallen behind on her mortgage and property tax payments. With Brenda’s help the Step Forward Michigan program approved \$6,362 to bring her property taxes current!



Brenda Long, Senior Extension Educator, offers many educational and counseling options related to financial services.

PRESCRIPTION FOR HEALTH

In June of 2018, with funding from the Gratiot Community Foundation, Extension partnered with several organizations to bring the Prescription for Health pilot program to the St. Louis Farmers Market. In order to enroll in this program, the client must receive a “prescription” for fresh fruits and vegetables from their health care provider, aimed at those who are lower-income and who suffer or are at risk for chronic illnesses. After each Eat Healthy, Be Active nutrition class, the participants received \$10.00 in coupons to be used on fresh produce at the Farmers Market. Both participants and vendors at the Market benefited from this program. With help from Extension Nutrition Instructor, Bonnie Havlicek, 93% of those enrolled completed the program!



Vendors at the St. Louis Farmers Market received \$2,463 through the Prescription for Health program in 2018.

CREATING HEALTHY HABITS

MSU Extension understands the importance of creating healthy eating habits early on. One way to do this is to make sure that children are exposed to a variety of fruits and vegetables. Bonnie Havlicek and Roxanne White, Extension Nutrition Instructors, provided this opportunity to approximately 400 Gratiot County youth by promoting physical activity and healthy eating at various community events including Kids Day at the Gratiot County Fair and the Cloverbud Day Camp. Cloverbud Day Camp is a day of fun, science, and health for youth aged 5-8. they attend sessions on healthy eating, horticulture, archery, and crafts.



A young 4-H member displays her fruit kabob at the Cloverbud Day Camp in 2018.

Featured County Story



Gratiot County MSU Extension is fortunate to have Educator Diane Longanbach on staff. Diane serves as an Innovation Counselor for local food and natural resource businesses. In this role, she provides unlimited guidance on product and business development. Entrepreneurs and budding entrepreneurs bring their ideas to Diane and the other counselors to get insight and information on where to go, who to ask, and what to do next with their business ideas.

One company Diane assisted this year was Superior Kettle Corn located in Middleton, Michigan. Diane provided guidance on licensing and state regulations for selling wholesale. The company developed a new label that helped it meet state guidelines and thus opened the door to greater opportunities. Currently, Kettle Corn sells its product in the Apple Barrel Cider Mill located in Ithaca, Michigan.



The [Michigan State University Product Center](#) helps entrepreneurs and businesses to develop and launch new product and service ideas into food, agriculture, bioenergy, and natural resources markets. This year in Gratiot County, 5 entrepreneurs were assisted through this program. A network of [Innovation Counselors](#) is available to counsel individuals interested in starting related business ventures.

In addition to individual product counseling, Diane works with the statewide team to put on the Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities conference each year in a different Michigan community. Last year's conference was held in Charlevoix. Entrepreneurs from across the state get together to learn from each other and create a network that increases a community's potential for entrepreneurship. The conference is for stakeholders, businesses, economic developers, local government, educators, and nonprofits.

Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities



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MSU Extension staff located in Gratiot County

Lance Fowler	AmeriCorps 4-H SPIN	989-449-4234	fowler37@msu.edu
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Joan Taylor	Office Manager County Support	989-875-5234	tayl1182@msu.edu
Chris Thompson	4-H Program Coordinator	989-875-5295	thom1367@msu.edu
Casey Zangaro	Swine Educator	989-875-5292	zangaroc@msu.edu

Additional MSU Extension staff serving Gratiot County

Laura Anderson	Disease Prevention Educator	269-945-1388	ander359@msu.edu
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Collaboration Across MSU Extension

MSU Extension is an organization comprised of individuals with broad knowledge of subject matters related to a particular discipline, such as field crops, nutrition, or youth development. Having four MSU Extension Institutes gives the ability to bring together cross-disciplinary expertise to address issues that are multifaceted and complex. For example, MSU Extension Educators and Program Instructors have worked together on physical and financial health issues, agricultural and stress issues, economic and community development and conservation issues, and issues that span generations.

Your local office is housed with experts in particular fields. Individuals may serve in the Agricultural and Agribusiness Institute, the Children and Youth Institute, the Health and Nutrition Institute or our Community, Food and Environment Institute. However, even if you do not have a local expert for the issue that you need addressed, MSU Extension has the unique functionality of drawing from a statewide pool of experts to make sure that you have the information that you need. In addition, the MSU Extension website www.msue.msu.edu is maintained and updated on a regular basis. We are always looking for ways to collaborate with each other to apply knowledge to the critical issues you face.

Through successful partnership and collaboration with Gratiot County, MSU Extension is able to continue its local presence and to provide vital educational resources and programming in such areas as community and economic development, agriculture, land use, health and nutrition, and youth development.

Thank you Gratiot County!

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MISSION:

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

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