



Isabella County

2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT

BY THE NUMBERS



Over 3,800 Isabella County adults and youth participated in MSU Extension programs



Almost 150 residents participated in gardening services and programs



Over 2,000 youth participated in 4-H and other youth enrichment programs



Almost 700 residents participated in agricultural programs and services



MSU spent almost \$500k with Isabella County businesses



6 Extension professionals based in Isabella County



564 residents participated in health, wellness and nutrition programs



Over 80 residents learned about early childhood, parenting and family development

MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR



Shari Spoelman

Greetings! I am pleased to bring to you another report of Michigan State University (MSU) Extension's work in Isabella County. We are pleased to continue to serve the residents here and help strengthen our communities. MSU Extension staff members, grounded in local relationships, bring the university's research and resources to provide outreach and education in Isabella County.

Under the leadership of MSU Extension Director Jeff Dwyer, we continue to grow as an organization and are challenged to continue to address the many issues facing Michigan residents. We do this by staying true to our many traditions and mission while stretching our reach through untraditional channels and new technologies.

We're passionate about serving Isabella County and are looking forward to a new year. Thank you for your continued support of MSU Extension and for partnering with us to make a difference.

MSU Extension District 6 Advisory Council

Ken Brown	Leonard Strouse	Rick Grove	Christine Hammond
Dick Metz	Jerry Jaloszynski	Bob Wachowski	Frank VanderWal
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MSU Extension District 6



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Program Highlights



Kara Lynch teaching adults how to can using up-to-date safe methods



4-H member Rhianna Armstrong with her poultry project



Youth learning the bee business

FOOD SAFETY

Food safety plays a vital role in the health and nutrition of Michigan families. There are over 48 million people each year that are sickened from foodborne illness, 128,000 are hospitalized and 3,000 die. Michigan State University Extension educates consumers on safe handling, preparing and storage of food. Kara Lynch provided ServSafe education, classes in home food preservation (canning, freezing), assistance to food pantries, and “Safe Food Healthy Kids” classes for childcare providers. Another highlight was the fourth annual Teen “Chopped” competition. Twenty nine youth participated, making a positive impact on their ability to prepare local, nutritious meals.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Isabella County 4-H prides itself on its rich tradition. Guided by adult volunteer mentors, youth “learn by doing,” which enables them to explore new interests and discover new passions. Isabella County has many traditional 4-H clubs, promotes life skills and leadership development, science, career exploration and financial literacy. The wide variety of project areas ranging from livestock and small animals, to a huge variety of “still exhibits” are showcased at the Isabella County Youth and Farm Fair in July. In 2019 4-H served 670 Isabella County youth in 34 different clubs with 139 adult volunteers.

“BEELEIVING” IN THE BUZZ

The buzz is the Isabella County BEElievers 4-H bee keeping club. The club came into existence with a generous grant from the Mt. Pleasant Area Community Foundation and a passionate leader who wanted to teach the art of bee keeping to youth. The club has a portable observation hive that they bring to classrooms and community events to develop youth interest and education. The successful club is self-sustaining and growing. They harvest and sell honey from the hives they maintain to promote the BEElievers Club and bring awareness of the critical part honeybees play in agriculture and pollination.

Program Highlights

NUTRITION EDUCATION

For the past three years MSU Extension and Mid-Michigan Industries (MMI) have been partnering to teach “Healthy Eating Adds Up.” This 6 week nutrition class teaches basic cooking skills and nutrition education. We use a photo cookbook for all the recipes that are made and the MMI clients all make the recipes. We also talk about what food groups each ingredient goes into. At the end of the series each client gets the photo cookbook to take home with them.



Sabrina McGee and MMI participant

FINANCE & HOME OWNERSHIP

MSU Extension’s financial and homeownership team offers several educational opportunities to community members. Financial capability education offers families and individuals tools and support to manage their personal finances and achieve financial goals. They learn to utilize a spending plan; paying their bills on-time and building a savings. As well as managing their debt and achieving their own financial goals. We offer educational programs regarding housing; Rental education, Home Buyer Education and Foreclosure prevention. These educational opportunities are offered in a group setting or individuals may meet with a Housing Counselor on a one-to-one basis.



MSU Extension provides education and services to help residents become homeowners

FARM STRESS

Taking care of crops and animals can be hard. Selfcare and wellness in this high-stress profession are often overlooked but are critical for effective farm operations. MSU Extension helps farmers adapt to the changing agricultural environment and address related stress. Outreach efforts including television, radio, newsletters, journals, social media, podcasts, and expanded farm stress staff have been implemented to help the at-risk population. Two programs, “Communicating with Farmers Under Stress” and “Weathering the Storm” provide further support to farming communities. We’re working together to promote awareness, reduce the stigma of mental illness, and save lives.



Eric Karbowski provides resources and education to help “weather the storm”

2019: A Farming Season to Remember



The “Delayed Planting” informational meeting provided farmers with the most current options to make better management decisions.

AGRICULTURE

Throughout Michigan, prolonged wet weather and flooding in spring 2019 put farmers in a difficult financial position. Many farmers delayed planting and greatly adjusted management practices. Some fields were not planted at all. Due to these conditions, farmers face a unique set of challenges this fall making harvest and related decisions.

MSU Extension's statewide network of agricultural educators have responded to this situation by tracking growing conditions, working individually with farmers, hosting crop update sessions and writing educational articles detailing how farmers could adjust to inhospitable conditions, make difficult choices and apply for crop damage assistance. Because this issue has the potential to greatly affect farm income, educational efforts included programming dedicated to assisting farmers under stressful conditions. A large group meeting was held in Isabella County as well as numerous individual consultations.

Michigan State University Extension in Isabella County partnered with local USDA Farm Service Agencies (FSA) to provide Farm Bill educational sessions and individual consultations. The 2018 Farm Bill provides a one-time opportunity for producers to update their yields based off 2013 through 2017 production and records. At these meetings, producers hear highlights of the 2018 Farm Bill and assessments of today's market compared to five years ago, learn about the process of updating their yields with FSA, work through case examples using the MSU Extension 2018 Farm Bill Calculator to help make better decisions on ARC versus PLC (each crop and FSA farm number may result in a different choice), and discuss specific program details with local FSA staff. There were four group meetings held to assist farmers in selecting the best options for their farms.

Isabella County MSU Extension provides programming dedicated to serving farmers under stress - whether it be physical, financial, emotional or some combination of pressures. If you're a farmer who is struggling, find an MSU Extension expert who can help you or ask a question online so we can connect you to proper resources.

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