



Mecosta County

2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT

BY THE NUMBERS



Over 2,400 Mecosta adults and youth participated in MSU Extension programs



1,366 youth participated in 4-H and school enrichment programs



Nearly 1,200 adults and youth benefited from health and nutrition programs



Over 150 residents received consumer horticulture services and education



250 residents participated in agricultural services and programs



Almost 50 residents participated in community, economic development and natural resources education



Over 25 residents were helped with financial, homeownership, and foreclosure prevention education



Over \$52,000 spent with Mecosta County businesses

MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR



Shari Spoelman

I am pleased to bring to you another report of Michigan State University (MSU) Extension's work in Mecosta 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 Mecosta 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 Mecosta 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

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Dick Metz	Jerry Jaloszynski	Bob Wachowski	Frank VanderWal
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Mecosta County MSU Extension



@MSUExtension

Program Highlights



4-H youth at the Mecosta County Fairgrounds

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Many people think 4-H is just for kids who live on farms or those interested in raising and selling animals – but that’s not true! Offering a diverse range of topics and interest areas, 4-H is the largest youth development organization in Michigan. Each year more than 200,000 young people ages 5-19 explore what interests and excites them as they grow. In areas ranging from science and technology to clothing and textiles, and so much more, 4-H provides fun, educational opportunities that empower young people with skills to lead for a lifetime and become the foundation for future success.

NUTRITION

MSU Extension Community Nutrition Instructors provide exemplary nutrition and physical activity education for limited resource participants where they eat, learn, live, work, play, and shop. Program and outreach efforts aim to increase the likelihood that youth, adults and seniors make healthy food choices within a limited budget and choose physically active lifestyles consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Staff draw from evidence-based curricula to build knowledge, confidence, and skills around healthy food and beverages and regular movement or exercise among residents throughout Mecosta County.



Cooking 101 Participants

FINANCE & HOMEOWNERSHIP

MSU Extension provides financial and home-ownership education 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, pay their bills on-time, build a savings, as well as manage their debt and achieve their own financial goals. MSU Extension also provides educational programs regarding housing: rental education, home-buyer education, and foreclosure prevention. These opportunities are offered in a group setting, or individuals may meet with a housing counselor staff member on a one-to-one basis.



MSU Extension offers Finance and Home Ownership Education

Program Highlights

DISEASE PREVENTION

Providing education for persons with chronic health conditions and pain is the foundation of MSU Extension's disease prevention program. Now two new initiatives are connecting the work we do in Mecosta County across the state and beyond. MSU Extension is linking efforts with food pantries to provide resources for clients with digestive diseases and diabetes. Starting in Mecosta county, this effort is now statewide, including the Upper Peninsula. Also starting in Mecosta County and expanding statewide is MSU Extension's partnership with the Lions Club International (LCI) & MSU Extension's "Dining with Diabetes" Program.



MSU Extension Educator Pam Daniels helping out at a food distribution event.

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.



There are many challenges farmers face that add to farm stress.

EMBRYOLOGY

Six different sessions in Mecosta County's second grade classrooms introduced students to Embryology through the Mecosta County 4-H program. As students learned about chick development and the parts of an egg, they watched the development of incubated eggs right in their own classroom. After watching and caring for the babies for a week, the chicks were off to their new homes. Many children were able to adopt the hatchlings, taking them home to their family and friends on farms in the area.



2nd Grade Embryology Classes

Agriculture and Natural Resource Day



ANRS Days exposes our youth to outdoor activities and experiential learning opportunities.



In addition to adult volunteers, MSUE staff, and Farm Bureau, many 4-H youth members help out during this event.

Agriculture and Natural Resource's Stewardship (ANRS) Day, organized by Mecosta County MSU Extension, annually provides Mecosta County 3rd graders with experiential education. In 2019, groups of students rotated through nine stations at CranHill Ranch where they:

- ◆ Observed different creatures during pond dipping
- ◆ Made butter and enjoyed it on a cracker
- ◆ Learned about “bugs” with an entomologist
- ◆ Became familiar with animal by-products
- ◆ Discussed animal feeding
- ◆ Worked with a local fisherman making fishing lures
- ◆ Enjoyed a petting zoo and horse-drawn wagon ride and
- ◆ Practiced milking a cow through the Mecosta County Farm Bureau.

It's important for kids to be educated about the value of natural resources and agriculture and how to care for the land.

ANRS Day has been offered locally for decades to help children connect with the land and agriculture. Today, many families live far away from farms and agriculture and kids don't get the experience of the wilderness and animals. Participation in this year's event included 200 students from eight different schools from the county. The youth really enjoy the day; they learn a lot and are exposed to information they may not otherwise experience. Students make connections to history, social studies, and science by learning about how people used to live, growing their own food, making butter, and taking care of animals. The opportunity to take the students out of the classroom and provide them with hands-on life experiences benefits them. This is the kind of experience most of our kids don't get on a daily basis and they enjoy coming together for an informative and fun day.

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