



# Alger County 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

## BY THE NUMBERS



6 Extension professionals based in the county, 50+ providing educational opportunities



\$1,980,190 total economic impact in Alger County



731 youth involved in 4-H, early childhood or after school enrichment



\$65,415 spending with local business



101 alumni (bachelor and graduate degree)



MSU disbursed \$163,295 in financial aid to county students



1,262 acres owned by MSU

100+

MSU Extension serving Alger County over 100 years

## MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR

Once again I am delighted to share the results of another successful year of partnership between Alger County and Michigan State University (MSU) Extension. Because of your continued support, we've been able to make a difference in the lives of youth, families, businesses, and communities.



MSU Extension offers a broad range of research-based educational services to County residents. Over this past year, we've empowered families and individuals to live healthier lives, supported new and local businesses, created opportunities for youth leadership development and career exploration, helped farmers with business management and mental health, and much more. Our staff live and work alongside County residents, are rooted in community relationships and are responsive to community needs.

Again this year, we've welcomed Alger County residents into our online community: we've offered online educational courses, answered questions on topics ranging from gardening to food safety, raised program awareness through social media, and provided a library of research-based resources they've browsed on our website.

Our partnership with you makes this all possible. On behalf of the MSU Extension team serving Alger County, thank you for another great year. We look forward to your continued support and hope you'll be able to join us during one of our upcoming programs.

Erin Daines, District 2 Director



# ALGER COUNTY

## **Additional MSU Extension Reach**

- Michigan State University Extension staff have been actively serving the residents of Alger County.
- Services from across all reaches of Extension are accessible because of the Gold Standard commitment Alger County has made with Michigan State University Extension.
- Alger County residents are able to access services in the areas of Agriculture and Agribusiness; Children and Youth; Community, Food and Environment; and Health and Nutrition.

**1564**

Alger County Residents Served

**115**

# of Programs Alger County Residents Attended



# ALGER COUNTY

## MSU Extension Reach Breakdown

**115**

Programs Alger County  
Residents Attended

**31**

Agriculture &  
Agribusiness  
Programs

**201**

Community, Food &  
Environment  
Programs

**498**

Children &  
Youth  
Programs

**834**

Health &  
Nutrition  
Programs

# Program Highlights

## NUTRITION EDUCATION

The **Munising Public Schools** hoop house, fruit orchard, and outdoor garden has grown with the help of a Policy, Systems, and Environmental Initiative from **Vicki Ballas Alger County Community Nutrition Instructor**.

The first priority of the gardens is to **provide the school with healthy produce** for all of their **food service programs**, then any **extra produce** is **shared with teachers, students, and the local pantries**. Students work all aspects of the garden and even utilize growing racks in the classroom for **seed starting**. Vicki is currently working on a **Produce Safety Policy** for the gardens to ensure the safest growing, handling, and harvesting conditions.



Above and Right. Some pictures from inside the hoop house at Munising High School

# Program Highlights

## AGRICULTURE (Pre-pandemic Jan—Mar)

**Beginning Farmer Webinar Series** and webpage: **The 2020 series included 13 new topics for beginning farmers. 263 people participated in 'live' on-line programs, with 22 U.P. residents included.** All webinars were recorded and archived on the MSUE Beginning Farmer Webinar Series webpage for free access by all interested people. **A total of 109 webinars** have been offered, recorded and archived since this program began in 2012.

**Pesticide applicator training:** Live review classes for new and re-certifying applicators were offered to help people gain state certification. Jim Isleib participated with a state-wide team of MSU Extension staff to prepare a recorded review class for on-line access.

Personal contacts by phone, email and personal visit to assist farmers and others with crop, garden and plant-based issues, including soil testing services were and are continuing support in Alger County.

The **annual 'Ag for Tomorrow' conference** was organized and held on March 11, 2020 at **Bay College in Escanaba with leadership from Alger County MSUE staff. 135 in attendance, including 15 from Alger County.**

**MSUE maintained involvement and support for recycling programs in Alger County.** Jim Isleib serves as secretary for the Alger Community Recycling Committee. A new state grant-funded electronic recycling program was funded and planned, but the pandemic interrupted its development. It will be re-started when possible.

The **"What's U.P. @ UPREC?" video series** was initiated in May, 2020. **31 short (3-9 minute) videos** were produced at the **MSU U.P. Research and Extension Center in Chatham** to keep the agricultural community and general public informed about activities there during the pandemic restrictions. All videos were posted on **You Tube and Facebook with 2,298 views and 103.4 hours of view time on You Tube and 'liked' by over 300 people on Facebook** with thousands of views.



2020 Agriculture for Tomorrow Conference

# Program Highlights

## AGRICULTURE (Pandemic Apr—Dec)

The monthly MSU Extension “**U.P. Ag Connections**” newsletter continued through the entire year, with approximately **1000 copies distributed monthly via mail and email, including 47 Alger County** recipients. The newsletter is supported by commercial advertisers.

Jim Isleib continued involvement in **state-wide corn nitrogen and soil health study, involving three Alger County farms.**

### State-wide programs:

Weekly 7-7:30am ‘virtual breakfast’ on-line programs during growing season. Feature MSU ag specialists on timely topics plus a weekly, state-wide ag weather report and forecast.

MSUE Grazing School. **Eight on-line sessions** for new livestock grazers offered October 6-29, 2020. Features several MSU presenters, including J Isleib on soil fertility.



## NATURAL RESOURCES

Despite facing significant challenges due to the coronavirus pandemic, there were still some interesting and active outdoor/environmental education activities created for students (and their families) to get involved with. The goal was that even through all these challenges and changes to our normal routines, we can still find opportunities to engage with and learn from the outdoors.

Working in conjunction with **several partners, educational videos were created on tree identification and orienteering (using a map and compass).** Both of these programs provided the necessary instruction for a family to explore on their own, even if only in their backyard, and also included resources to use in the field.

A typical programming year in **Alger County** offers opportunities for local students to be able to get outside to learn and explore, as part of their curriculum. This year, a number of natural resource related programs were able to be presented virtually to the classrooms instead. Topics included wildlife and logging history.



Rob Wiener. Still from an instructional video on orienteering.

# Investing Alger County Youth with 4-H



*According to research completed by the Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development at Tufts University, 4-H'ers are **4X** more likely to make contributions to their communities, **2X** more likely to be civically active, and **2X** more likely to make healthier choices.*

2020 was certainly a strange year for all things youth programming! The year started off strong with a Winter Adventure SPIN club which saw youth learn cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, winter hiking and ice climbing, and the Spa Relaxation Club which taught youth about lotions, body butters, face masks, and more. The 4-H program also brought mindfulness education into five different classrooms and reached 100 youth with the Walmart Healthy Habits grant. In March, when the schools shut down, Alger 4-H was on the forefront of pivoting to virtual learning, creating a program within two weeks of the shut down that had over 300 participants. This program was called "Home Alone Safely" and taught youth skills about first aid, home safety, what to do in an emergency, and more. Other virtual programs led by Alger County 4-H included: Virtual Slumber Party, Taming your Inner Dragon with Mindfulness, Photo Voice, and Teen Healthy Relationships. 65 youth and their families also participated in the Holidays Around the World take home kit project. Each week families received a story and craft about a different holiday tradition.

In total Alger County reached 750 youth in an unprecedented year through a combination of in person and virtual programs.



Zoom show and tell



Holidays around the world take home kit



Winter sports

Michigan State University Extension helps people improve their lives by bringing the vast knowledge resources of MSU directly to individuals, communities, and businesses. For more than 100 years, MSU Extension has helped grow Michigan’s economy by equipping Michigan residents with the information they need to do their jobs better, raise healthy and safe families, build their communities, and empower their children to dream of successful futures. For more information about the programs we offer please refer to the contact information below.

**ALGER COUNTY MSU EXTENSION STAFF**

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