

# GRATIOT COUNTY MSU EXTENSION ANNUAL REPORT 2024

219 N. State St., Alma, MI 48801 | (989)875-5233



## Message from the District Director

Gratiot County MSU Extension provides people with access to resources and expertise in areas of agriculture, agribusiness, health, nutrition, community, food, environment, and children and youth development. Staff located in Ingham, Clinton, Eaton, Gratiot, Ionia and Montcalm Counties all serve this area as a part of a statewide team of Extension professionals. Anyone is welcome to visit our office and meet with local professionals or get connected to the appropriate regional expert, purchase soil test kits for their fields or gardens, find pesticide manuals critical for certification, have their pressure canner lid tested or ask questions. People contact us via telephone, email, in person, or online. In fact, 29,264,562 contacts through social media, web activity, e-newsletters, and handouts were made with MSU Extension statewide in 2024.



**1,224** people from the County attended MSU Extensions programs.



People from the County attended **254** MSU Extension programs (across the state).



**613** people from the County participated in Agricultural and Agribusiness programs.



**145** youth and adults from the County participated in Children and Youth programs.



**116** people from the County participated in Community, Food, and Environment programs.



**367** people from the County participated in Health and Nutrition programs.

# Overall Impact



MSU Extension employees are members of **2** community coalitions within the County.



There were **3** Nutrition and Physical Activity Policy System and Environmental sites receiving PSE education within the County.



There were **23** answers provide to “Ask Extension” questions asked by people from the County.



There were **10** policy, systems, and environmental changes with those PSE sites, **impacting 166** people.



**4,470** people attended programs that were hosted in the County.



There were **192,784** contacts through e-newsletters and handouts.



**99** people from the County volunteered with MSU Extension



There were **406** direct client consultations.

## Economic Development, Environmental Conservation, and Agricultural Productivity



There were **67,320** participants in community, food, and environment programs from across Michigan.



There were **470** virtual programs related to Financial Education, Food Systems, Water and Environmental Quality, Government and Businesses.



There were **12** Commercial and Farm soil tests samples processed.



There is a **\$246.5 billion** annual impact of food and agriculture on Michigan's economy.



There were **36** homeowner soil tests samples processed.



There were **436** participants in county agriculture programs.

# Economic Development, Environmental Conservation, and Agricultural Productivity

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## MSU Product Center

- 7 clients served, including 5 women-owned small businesses
- 49 total employees serve the businesses represented
- 8 counseling hours were logged with the clients
- The client's businesses generated \$4,857,003.00 in annual sales, and retained, investments

The Michigan State University Product Center helps Michigan entrepreneurs and businesses to develop and launch new product and service ideas into the food, beverage, and agriculture markets. Whether you are a budding entrepreneur or operate a well-established company, the Product Center is your key to the front door of Michigan State University's vast and varied technical expertise, research and outreach services.



In May 2024, over 350 children attended the Rural Educational Day (R.E.D.) hosted by Gratiot County Farm Bureau and MSU Extension. The R.E.D. event was an opportunity to learn about agriculture and rural life. As part of the educational experience, MSU Extension's Gratiot County's 4-H Program Coordinator, Brianne Clark and Extension Educator, Casey Zangaro organized an interactive swine booth. The swine booth engaged children in various aspects of swine farming and husbandry. It featured interactive exhibits and hands on learning for all attending. A favorite was the interactive digestive tract activity, which taught participants the intricacies of digestion and its importance to digestive health. Additionally, the booth showcased replicas of swine barns, giving participants a glimpse into where pigs are housed and cared for. This visual representation enriched the understanding of pigs and their role in agriculture.

Kelly Becker, President of the Gratiot County Leaders' Council, played a supporting role to Casey Zangaro on the event day. Her logistic skills contributed to a smooth-running educational experience..

The event also addressed critical topics such as the spread of airborne viruses, emphasizing biosecurity measures and their significance in livestock management. The R.E.D. event was a testament of the strong collaborative spirit of the community. Joint efforts like Farm Bureau and MSU Extension create an invaluable opportunity for local youth to connect with agriculture firsthand, fostering a deep appreciation and awareness of the importance of the farming industry in their daily lives.



# Economic Development, Environmental Conservation, and Agricultural Productivity



In 2024, a ribbon-cutting ceremony was held for a new trailer in Gratiot County that would bolster our emergency response infrastructure in the state. The Emergency Response to Accidents Involving Livestock (ERAIL) trailer is designed to assist in livestock-related emergencies on roadways and public areas. The ceremony at the fairgrounds was organized by MSU Extension District 8 Director Bill Hendrian and Swine Educator Casey Zangaro. Joining them was Director of Gratiot County Animal Control Tom Clark. Clark was crucial in securing this trailer to the region and remarked on the benefit it would bring.

The ceremony drew farmers, county employees, MDARD representatives, fair board members and the district Farm Bureau coordinator. ERAIL team members Katie Ockert and Cora Okkema were also there and provided insight into the program and its impact.

This event exemplified advancement for local agriculture, an investment in protecting the statewide agriculture industry and MSU Extension’s role in community collaboration.

*“This is much needed in our community and surrounding areas”- local farmer attending the ceremony*



## Swine Workshop

The 4th annual youth swine workshop held at the Gratiot County MSU Extension office was a resounding success, drawing a vibrant community of 55 participants eager to prepare for the upcoming 2024 swine exhibition and fair season. This inclusive event welcomed both youth and parents from across Michigan, representing a total of eight counties.

The workshop, designed with a practical approach, provided comprehensive guidance and useful insights essential for successful swine projects. It commenced with discussions on the crucial aspects of selecting a fair or exhibition pig, emphasizing the criteria contributing to a competitive and healthy show animal. Participants delved into the intricacies of swine nutrition, learning how to tailor feeding strategies to achieve optimal exhibition weights and ensure peak performance during shows.

Overall, the 4th annual youth swine workshop fulfilled its educational objectives and fostered a sense of community among swine enthusiasts and their families across Michigan. It stands as a testament to MSU's commitment to agricultural education and support for future generations of livestock exhibitors.





## Public Health, Nutrition, and Youth Programming



There were **338** 4-H youth enrolled in **21** 4-H clubs.



# of MI Stronger Family total online participants



There were **88** 4-H volunteers



**4,002** people participated in nutrition and physical activity programs hosted in the County.



The 4-H volunteer hour value was **\$2,779.92**.



**367** people from the County participated in health and nutrition programs.



There were a total of **770** youth participants in MSU Extension programs.



Statewide, **9,808** people participated in Food Safety programs.



Holly Tiret, MSU Extension Health and Nutrition Educator, introduced A Walk with Ease program at a 'Lunch with Friends' site in Breckenridge. Participants were encouraged to walk independently for at least 10 minutes, 3 times a week for six weeks. Participants shared where to go for indoor walking, as some of the rural road could be challenging.

Throughout the six weeks, Holly checked in with the group leader. At the end of the six weeks, One participant said she has been walking one block, three times a week for the past six weeks. She walks the block from her apartment to the meal site. Prior to this program she was not walking at all. She shared that she has been working on her eating habits for and has lost 60 pounds so far. The walking was something she added, just because of the Walk with Ease program. Another participant said, she is still limited to walking outdoors due to living on a rural dirt road. But was inspired by the other participant. She said, 'You know, I could walk around this block when I come here Monday, Wednesday and Fridays!'

*" It is rewarding and inspiring to hear how these small groups of older adults meet not just to have lunch three times a week but have a strong sense of community. I am impressed with their group support and commitment to each other. " Holly Tiret*

# Partners

Gratiot Isabella RESD

Pine Avenue Mental Health Drop-in Center

Gratiot County Commission on Aging

Alma Senior Center

Breckenridge Senior Center

Fulton Senior Center

Masonic Pathways Alma

Gratiot County Community Gardens

MiRegistry

Forest Hill Nature Center

Alma College

AgBio Research Centers in the Saginaw Valley and in Montcalm County (see map below)

## Gratiot County Staff

Ashley Foster – 4-H Program Coordinator

[Foste342@msu.edu](mailto:Foste342@msu.edu)

Monica Jean – Field Crops Educator

[Atkinmon@msu.edu](mailto:Atkinmon@msu.edu)

Kami Yerrick – Support Staff

[Paski@msu.edu](mailto:Paski@msu.edu)

Casey Zangaro – Swine Educator

[Zangaroc@msu.edu](mailto:Zangaroc@msu.edu)

Holly Tired (retired)

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