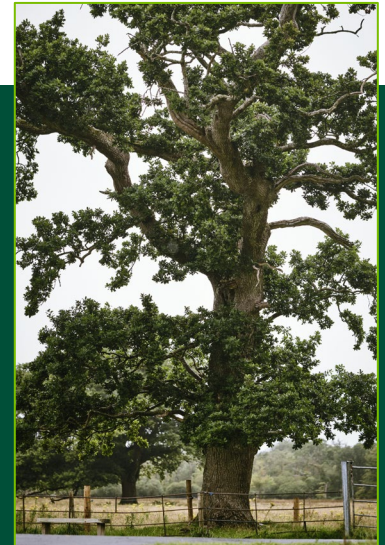


# HILLSDALE COUNTY ANNUAL REPORT 2025

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*Photo credit Valerie on Upsplash*



## Message from the District Director

The long-lived steadfast oak trees found throughout Michigan can live between 100 to 600 years. To thrive, the oak does more than endure change; the oak embraces it by making the necessary adjustments to maintain the lives it supports as well as prepare for new growth. Change is inevitable. Embracing it can lead to growth, resilience and transformation. MSU Extension is no exception.

Throughout our 153-year history, we've seen lots of changes to our programs and because of your support, we continue to bring you quality information whether we must alter the format, content, or the method in which we bring it to you. In 2025, the National SNAP-Ed Program ended. That meant that we had to say goodbye to nearly 100 colleagues and friends here in Michigan. MSUE and families across Michigan felt the loss of the SNAP-Ed Program deeply. But like the mighty oak, MSUE is adapting to the change and continuing to share researched-based information through a variety of other programs.

Our resilient staff are working hard to identify emerging issues and ways that we can provide value in the communities we serve. We are seeing individuals and families being strengthened by our health programs for chronic diseases, fall prevention, parenting and food safety. Adults in various stages of their lives are participating in homeownership and financial webinars such as **“Thriving on a Fixed Income”** and **“Mortgage Foreclosure Basics.”** Farmers and gardeners are benefitting from our programs on disease prevention, invasive species, and nutrient and waste management. Youth are participating in programs such as 4-H, financial literacy and special interests that make them **“Beyond Ready”** for their future.

Groups such as non-profits, corporations, and governmental agencies also benefit from Extension's various educational opportunities. Entire departments in non-profits have taken mental health first aid training. Municipalities are leveraging science-based data on housing, tourism, and data centers from community and economic development tools to assist them make decisions about how to shape their communities.

Whatever training or information you need to thrive in a changing world, whether you want virtual or in-person programming; it's very likely that, **Extension Does That!**

## Overall impact

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**646** participants from the county attending programs



**69** client consultations



**209** statewide programs attended by participants from this county



**31 Total Soil Tests Samples processed**  
**23** Commercial and Farm Soil Tests Sampled  
**8** Homeowner Soil Tests Sampled



**14** Ask Extension questions answered



**6,418** contacts through e-newsletters, and handouts



**72,517** participants in community, food, and environment programs from across Michigan



**476** virtual programs related to Financial Education, Food Systems, Water and Environmental Quality, Government and Businesses

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## Environmental Conservation and Agricultural Productivity

Increasing implementation of soil health practices is a statewide priority outlined in Michigan's Lake Erie Domestic Action Plan and the Governor's Michigan Healthy Climate Plan to address water quality concerns and promote on-farm climate adaptation by decreasing soil erosion and increasing soil water infiltration. Demonstration tools, like the Rainfall Simulator trailer, provide a key experiential learning opportunity about soil health and can be extremely helpful in educating groups on soil health. MSU Extension's Rainfall Simulator Trailer has been in use since 2012 and is presented at events across the state each year, reaching hundreds of people.



*Photo credit University of Michigan*

In 2025, the Rainfall Simulator trailer was presented at seven events with 322 participants to encourage discussion about the impact of pasture, crop, and land management on soil health and water quality.

Educators like Sarah Zeiler, Madelyn Celovsky, and Korede Olugynle present the simulator at events in Hillsdale County, including the event pictured above at the Litte Long Lake Field Day.

# Environmental Conservation and Agricultural Productivity



**157** participants in county agriculture programs



**\$246.5 billion** annual impact of food and agriculture on Michigan's economy (STATEWIDE)

No-till pumpkin production is an innovative practice that uses cover crops as a mulch for weed suppression, while also providing soil health benefits that result from reduced tillage and integrating cover crops. In September 2024, MSU Extension worked with an Amish pumpkin grower-collaborator in Hillsdale county to put in on-farm cover crop demonstration plots for a no-till pumpkin field day event to be held the following summer. The plots tested various seeding rates, planting methods, and combinations of cover crop species. Local MSU Extension educators worked with the grower to terminate the cover crops and plant the pumpkins, as well as monitored the plots that fall and following spring.



*Photo credit Madelyn Celovsky*

In late June of 2025, pumpkin growers braved the summer heat to attend the No-Till Pumpkin & Cover Crop Field Day at the farm of the Amish grower-collaborator. The event featured presentations on topics relevant to the pumpkin grower community in southeast Michigan, including weed management, pumpkin disease control, and considerations around cover crop mixtures and cover crop termination. The event concluded with a walk through the demonstration plots where attendees could see the results up close. The group then had lunch and learned about the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program before departing.



*Photo credit Laura Miller*

The program had 44 participants, 13 of which responded to the post-program evaluation. Of the 13 surveys, 12 indicated that their knowledge at least increased slightly. As well, 11 of 13 that completed surveys plan on making or recommending management changes to their or others' farming operation as a result of attending the field day. The event was an initial effort at connecting with the large Plain Community of pumpkin growers in the Hillsdale County area, of which future extension events will provide further programming and outreach.

# Youth Programming



**381** 4-H youth enrollments



**\$51,491.70** 4-H volunteer hour value



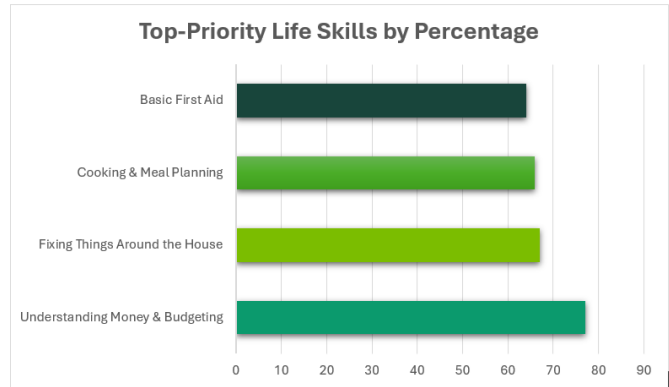
**452** total youth participants



**167** 4-H volunteers  
**43** 4-H Clubs & committees

## 2025 4-H Needs Assessment Survey

A total of 659 individuals participated in the statewide survey, including 295 parents/guardians, 231 volunteers, and 37 youth representing 61 counties. 96 youth participated in dot voting at events.



In 2025, Hillsdale County sent 28 youth to Michigan State University to attend a three-day pre-college experience called Exploration Days. Youth can select classes, stay in dorms, and eat in college dining halls. This program is designed to help youth increase responsibility, confidence, independence, accountability, problem-solving, decision-making, and time management skills. It also helps foster the ability to meet new people and make new friends from different places and backgrounds while developing and expanding career and personal interests.



Photo credit Kayela Gimenez

In 2025, we started *Hike With the Hounds*. This program was in collaboration with the Greater Hillsdale Humane Society and the North Country Trail (Baw Beese Chapter). This program allowed 4-H youth and adults to stop at the Greater Hillsdale Humane Society to check out an adoptable dog for a three-mile hike on the North Country Trail and return the dogs to the shelter when the hike was over. This not only got youth outside and enjoying nature, but it also allowed the shelter dogs some time outside. Because of this event, three dogs were adopted. One was adopted into a 4-H family and quickly became a "show dog". A Hillsdale County youth adopted "Navie" and decided she was going to show her at the Hillsdale County Fair. This team was impressive to watch this year as they won: 1<sup>st</sup> place Agility on Leash, Overall High Point Agility, 10–11-Year-Old Showmanship, Jr.



Photo credit Kayela Gimenez

## Improving Health and Nutrition

Michigan State University (MSU) Extension partnered with USDA and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) to provide Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed), a free nutrition education program to reduce hunger and food insecurity and promote healthy eating habits.

For 30 years, SNAP-Ed helped people build healthy eating habits and be more active on a limited budget. Following a federal decision to end funding, the program was discontinued after July 4, 2025.

Despite this loss, Michigan State University Extension continues to connect communities with research-based programs and resources that:

- Strengthen nutrition
- Support chronic disease and diabetes management
- Physical activity
- Promote food safety and preservation
- Social-emotional health
- Provide guidance for aging and caregiving



**20** nutrition and physical activity participants hosted in-county



**95** county residents who participated in health and nutrition programs



**11,944** people participating in Food Safety programs including ServSafe (Statewide)

During this last round of Cooking for One, MSUE SNAP-Ed Staff heard and saw the impact that the recipes we made in class were having. During the first class, two participants made Asian mango chicken wraps, which were a big hit (as they always are). As new participants joined the class over the next two weeks, the participants from week one kept raving about the wraps and were highly encouraging people to try them. Week two we made hummus.

The following week, one of the participants said she had made hummus for her friends who had never tried hummus before, and that her friends really liked it. Week three we made a BBQ chicken salad. One of the ladies in that class was so excited about the salad that she claimed that she was going to go home that night and make that salad for dinner. The next week we found out that sure enough, that is what she did.



Photo credit: pixabay.com/94eletphotography

## A Statewide Network of Resources to Help You

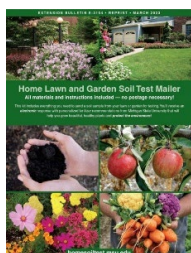
**MSU Extension** is the home of the latest in research, education and outreach covering a wide range of issues from agriculture & agribusiness, health and nutrition, youth education and outreach and community and economic vitality. If MSU Extension doesn't have an expert in your county to answer your questions, we can connect you to our statewide resources to connect you to the information you need.

**Ask Extension** offers one-to-one answers from MSU Extension experts and Extension Master Gardener volunteers on topics such as lawns, gardening, agriculture, nutrition and physical activity, food safety, food preservation, natural resources, community development, youth programming and more! **Ask Extension:** [www.canr.msu.edu/outreach/ask-an-expert](http://www.canr.msu.edu/outreach/ask-an-expert)

**Lawn and Garden Hotline:** 888-678-3464 (option 1)

Hours: M/W/F, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm (Year round)

Crabgrass, brown spots, or powdery mildew, the Lawn and Garden Hotline can give you information on all your home gardening questions.



**Soil Mailers:** MSU Extension home lawn and garden and commercial soil mailers provide access to personalized fertilizer recommendations for thousands of Michigan residents every year. The home lawn and garden mailer can be purchased in person at [MSU Extension offices](#) or online from the [MSU Extension bookstore](#). Commercial soil mailer are purchased in person at [MSU Extension offices](#). Questions about soil results can be sent to [MSUsoiltest@msu.edu](mailto:MSUsoiltest@msu.edu).

### **MSU Extension Master Gardener Program®**

The MSU Extension Master Gardener Program is a horticulture education and volunteer training program dedicated to enhancing Michigan communities. Volunteers are committed to improving the quality of life through horticulture-based service, environmental stewardship, food-security initiatives and community beautification efforts across the state. To become a Master Gardener volunteer:



# A Statewide Network of Resources to Help You

## *ServSafe*

Michigan State University Extension offers ServSafe, a national certification program for those working in food service, specifically managers and other leaders.

**D12 Food Safety Educator is Mary Donaldson and she can be reached at [morrism4@msu.edu](mailto:morrism4@msu.edu).**



## *Pressure Canner Gauge Check*

Call your local Extension office to schedule a free appointment and have your dial gauge checked. Hillsdale office (517) 439-9301

## *Food Safety Hotline*

**877-643-9882** Hours M/W/F, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

Do you have questions about food expiration dates, how long food will last or preserving foods at home? The Michigan State University Extension food safety hotline can help answer these types of questions and concerns.



## *MSU Extension Bookstore*

<https://shop.msu.edu/collections/msu-extension-bookstore>

Look for bulletins, publications and MSU Extension products at the Bookstore!



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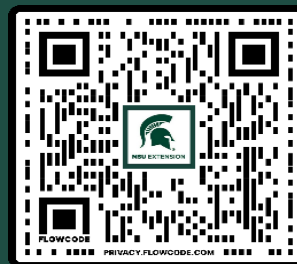


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## Partnerships and Coalitions

- 4-H Council
- C.A.P.A
- Dairy Leaders Committee
- Greater Hillsdale Humane Society
- Hillsdale Conservation District
- Hillsdale County Community Foundation
- Hillsdale County Fair/ Fair Board
- Hillsdale County Great Start Collaborative (Copied)
- Horse Leaders Committee
- Junior Livestock Committee
- Large Animal Committee
- Michigan Agricultural Advancement (MiAA)
- MOFFA
- Perennial Park Sr. Center
- Shooting Sports Committee
- Small Animal Committee
- Youth Department Fair Advisory Committee (YDFAC)

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