



Message from the District Director

Once again, it is my pleasure to share the results of another successful year of partnership between Isabella County and Michigan State University (MSU) Extension. With your continued support, our team at MSU Extension has made a difference in the lives of youth, families, businesses, and Isabella County residents through our broad range of research-based educational programs and services!

In 2023, our MSU Extension team worked to empower families and individuals to live healthier lives, supported new and local businesses, created opportunities for youth development and career exploration, helped farmers with business management and mental health awareness, and much more. Our staff live and work alongside Isabella County residents, are rooted in community relationships, and are responsive to community needs.

Our partnership with you makes this all possible. On behalf of the MSU Extension team serving Isabella 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.

Eric Karbowski
District Director



Isabella County Staff

- Sabrina McGee** - Community Nutrition Instructor
- Monica Jean** - Field Crops Educator
- Nonie Gross** - Office Manager
- Kara Lynch** - Food Safety Educator
- Misty Oebel** - Health & Farm Stress Extension Educator
- Danielle Schrock** - Master Gardener Instructor

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147

Extension Programs held in Isabella County

3,353

People attended programs held in Isabella County

3,719

Number of residents from Isabella County that attended MSU Extension programs

406

Programs with residents from Isabella County

31,100

4-H Facebook page reach

4-H Program 2023 Overview

As the largest youth development organization in Michigan, 4-H provides thousands of young people with experiential learning opportunities to explore new interests and discover their passion. The Isabella County 4-H program works with the community to enhance and empower youth through volunteer and participant recruitment, program development, partner engagement, and assessing program effectiveness.



552

Number of youth enrolled in 4-H

274

Number of adult volunteers

31

4-H clubs in Isabella County

Beginner Grazing School

Kable Thurlow

Beef & Grazing Educator

The Michigan State University Extension Beginner Grazing School and pasture walks are educational opportunities designed to teach graziers how to manage those pasture acres better.

According to the National Agricultural Statistics Service 2017 Census of Agriculture, there are 523,905 acres of pastureland in Michigan. These pasture acres are often on marginal ground, which is minimally managed. As part of this program, our team works with farmers to support improved watering systems, longer rest periods for their pastures, rotation of their stock, and improved diversity in their pastures.



Health & Farm Stress Update

Farming, ranching, and agricultural production are mentally and physically demanding occupations. MSU Extension's farm stress team is committed to providing education, tools, and resources to the agricultural community. Misty Oebel is a Health and Farm Stress Educator with MSU Extension who works alongside producers and key gatekeepers in Isabella County teaching them the skills & knowledge necessary to recognize the warning signs of stress, and indicators of suicidal ideation and connects them with resources like MSU Extension teletherapy program.

Misty Oebel

Health & Farm
Stress Extension
Educator



Michigan Vaccine Project Overview

To help residents of Isabella County make informed decisions about vaccinations, MSU Extension partnered with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services to create the Michigan Vaccine Project (MVP). MSU Extension's statewide network of county offices and community partners provided the residents of Isabella County with evidence-based information about the role vaccinations play in helping protect Michigan's children and adults from life-threatening diseases.

Through this initiative, Maribel Richards and the MVP team implemented a statewide campaign using digital media, radio, print materials, and in-person programming to help Michiganders make informed choices about vaccinations.



Health Educator Updates

Christi Demitz, Health Educator

MSU Extension offers the diabetes PATH (Personal Action Toward Health) program. This program is a six-week self-management workshop designed to help people take an active role in managing their diabetes. The PATH program meets the American Diabetes Association's Diabetes Support Initiative criteria, a measure of high-quality programming.

One participant shared, "Both classes changed my life for the better because I now know that to have the kind of life I want to live, I must eat healthy and exercise. The two are like yin and yang. You can't have one without the other. I feel like I have graduated from both classes. I feel confident going forward with how to live a healthy lifestyle."

Tai Chi for Arthritis and Falls Prevention helps people with or without arthritis to improve balance, both mentally and physically, which helps significantly reduce the rate of falls experienced by older adults. Other benefits include improving relaxation, vitality, posture, and improved immune system. Studies have shown that tai chi can reduce falls by nearly 70%. The program focuses on confidence building, which is linked closely to the reduced rate of falling.



Master Gardener Program

The MSU Extension Master Gardener Program is an adult horticulture and volunteer leader training program committed to improving science-based horticulture education to Isabella County residents. The Master Gardener Program trains, supports, and certifies MSU Extension Master Gardeners. The groups of Master Gardeners educate communities on research-based horticulture science and spearhead local community gardening projects.

"As a graduate of MSU and former intern with MSU Extension, I'm thrilled about the opportunity to serve our local community as the Master Gardener Program Instructor. My strong local relationships and vested commitment to support sound horticulture practices, gets me excited for the future of the Master Gardener program in Isabella County."



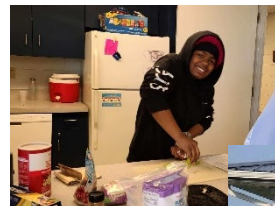
Danielle Schrock
Master Gardener
Instructor

SNAP-ED Updates

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Education Program (SNAP-Ed) teaches participants how to establish healthy eating habits and increase their time spent being physically active while staying within a limited food budget.

MSU Extension SNAP-Ed nutrition instructors teach youth, teens, adults, and seniors how to make health a priority through an instructional series. The goal of the SNAP-Ed program is to increase the likelihood that those eligible for SNAP benefits will establish healthy eating habits and increase their time spent involved in physical activity while staying within their limited food budget.

1,372
Residents Served in SNAP-Ed or EFNEP
Programming



"I just wanted to thank you for moderating this nutrition class. You made it fun! Your personality and energy makes it special – for old and young alike! I'm sure you've made an impact and helped improve the nutrition of many who truly need it."
– Program Participant

Dairy Educator & ERAIL

Accidents involving livestock occur throughout Michigan and preparing first responders to effectively respond to these accidents is a goal of MSU Extension's emergency response to accidents involving livestock (ERAIL) team. Cora Okkema is a member of the ERAIL team with MSU Extension which provides tools and resources to help animal control officers and first responders in Isabella County develop their skills in working with large animals. Often, first responders do not have experience working with large animals when responding to emergencies therefore, MSU Extension has assembled several tools and resources to help first responders during these unforeseen circumstances.



Cora Okkema
Dairy Educator

Field Crops Educator

Monica Jean

Field Crops Educator

Agricultural production is a leading industry in Michigan and MSU Extension provides research-based field crop production recommendations and resources to producers in Isabella County.

Monica Jean is a Field Crops Educator who assists farmers with a variety of commodity production expertise including corn, soybean, edible dry beans, potato, and integrated crop and livestock systems through educational programs, fact sheets, bulletins, articles, and individual contacts. Jean also supports the agricultural community with cover crop, soil health, nutrient management, and cropping system research projects.



Financial Educator

As a HUD-certified counseling agency, MSU Extension provides potential, current, and future home buyers with education about the obligations and responsibilities of purchasing a home. Teagen Lefere is a Financial Homeownership Instructor who works side-by-side with Isabella County residents to help them understand the complex home buying and renting process and teaches them the true costs of homeownership.



Teagen Lefere
Financial
Homeownership
Instructor

"Teagen, thank you so much for all of the help from the start and to the finish, with many phone calls and e-mails to you when needed, and keep up the wonderful work that you are doing because you are the very best at it! We need MIHAF, MSU and HUD all collectively CLONE YOU so that you can help so many other Homeowners in the same situation as I have been in for the last two years."

– program participant

Food Safety Educator

Kara Lynch

Food Safety Educator

ServSafe® is a nationally recognized certification program for those working in the food service industry that is provided by MSU Extension. Kara Lynch is a Food Safety Educator who is trained and credentialed to teach the ServSafe® curriculum.



As part of her role, Lynch teaches Isabella County residents about foodborne illness, forms of contamination, food safety management systems, safe facilities & pest management, cleaning & sanitizing, and how to train employees about the latest food safety issues.

"Thank you very much for a great class. Excellent presentation, well organized, great discussions, nicely paced, interesting real-life stories. You're a great ambassador for MSU and the Extension Service."

– program participant