

Jackson County Annual Report 2025

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Photo credit: Valerie on Unplash

A 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



5 community coalitions within the county that MSU Extension employees are members of



3,061 participants attending programs hosted in the county



171 client consultations from the county



2,624 contacts through social media, web activity, e-newsletters, and handouts in the county



21 partnerships in the county



Photo credit: Jackson County 4-H



Photo credit: MSU Extension AABI

From Classroom to Community



Photo credit: MSU Extension ER-AIL Team

Participant surveys show that MSUE ER-AIL (Emergency Response Accidents Involving Livestock) training is making a difference in communities across Michigan. 100% (13 of 13) of participants who reported responding to an incident involving livestock since participating in an MSU Extension ER-AIL training said they applied something they learned at the ER-AIL training to their response to the incident(s). Responses included animal handling (10 responses), animal behavior (9 responses), and animal containment (9 responses).

60% (18 of 30) of participants made a change in protocols, training, or resource securement to prepare for livestock transportation incidents since the ER-AIL training. Responses included “Discussed response plans for accidents involving livestock with team members” (17 responses), “Encouraged team members to participate in the ER-AIL training” (12 responses), “Shared information with others about how to respond to livestock transportation incidents” (11 responses), and “Identified response contacts (large wreckers, veterinarians, etc.)” (10 responses).

Public Health and Nutrition

When it comes to nutrition and physical activity, MSU Extension's team of experts brings evidence-based education into communities across the state. Our staff delivers educational programming to communities and helps create lasting healthy changes, from kitchen tables to school cafeterias.

MSU Extension offers high-quality, affordable programs that help Michigan residents learn the importance of safe food and water in their everyday lives. Our research-based programs help food handlers learn safe food preservation skills and techniques.

Pressure Canner Testing

"Thanks for taking the time to test my pressure cooker—I really appreciate it! It's a relief to know everything's working properly as I get ready for canning season. I also checked out the Food Safety hotline and found it super helpful—lots of good info and practical tips on preserving food safely. Thanks again for your help!"
- Jackson Resident



312 nutrition and physical activity participants hosted in county



11,944 people participating in Food Safety programs including ServSafe statewide



528 county residents who participated in health and nutrition programs

From Our Jackson County Produce Safety Team

When a southwest Michigan grower received feedback during an MDARD Produce Safety inspection, she turned to MSU Extension for guidance. Extension connected local growers facing the same issue, helped them explore solutions, and worked directly with MDARD to ensure those solutions met requirements. With this support, growers were able to confidently implement an effective fix—showing the value of MSU Extension as a trusted partner in navigating challenges.

[Food Safety Plans](#)

[Meet the Michigan On Farm Produce Safety Team -](#)

[Confessions from the Michigan On-Farm Produce Safety Team-](#)



Photo credit: MSU Extension FSMA Team

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension

ServSafe®

EARN SERVSAFE MANAGER CERTIFICATION WITH HELP FROM MSU EXTENSION.

This class is designed for anyone working in the food service industry, including non-profit organizations.

Contact your local MSU Extension Food Safety Educator for more information.

Overall Impact

Nearly 300 young learners reached—and growing!

Since October 2024, renewed partnerships with Head Start programs in both counties have brought engaging, age-appropriate nutrition education to nearly 300 preschoolers. Through the Show Me Nutrition curriculum, children explore healthy eating, build positive body image, stay active, and learn the basics of food safety—all while developing skills to make healthy choices that can last a lifetime.

The Journey of Food

Understanding where food comes from is more important than ever, yet many youth are disconnected from the origins of everyday items like chocolate. The 100% Cacao 4-H Plant Science Workshop addresses this gap by using a familiar favorite to teach horticulture and cultural awareness in a fun, hands-on way.

Here's what the kids said:

"I always thought chocolate just came from a store, but now I know it starts as a plant."

"My favorite part of the workshop was making the crazy milkshakes."

"I liked trying all the different cacao percentages. It was cool to taste how chocolate changes from really sweet to really bitter and gross"

Economic Development, Environmental Conservation, and Agricultural Productivity



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



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



281,068 acres protected, enhanced, restored, or managed sustainably with MSU Extension assistance in Southeast Michigan



1.636 participants in county agriculture programs



\$246.5 billion annual impact of food and agriculture on Michigan's economy statewide



Photo credit: Heather Borden

The [Michigan State University](https://www.maizecrop.com) (MSU) Extension Agriculture and Agribusiness Institute (AABI) provides science-based education, research, and technical support to Michigan’s agricultural industry. It helps producers improve profitability through programs like pesticide safety, nutrient management, farm business management, and livestock production, bridging the gap between university research and on-farm practices.

Hay for Horses, Pancakes for People, and Hands-On Learning at the 2025 Breakfast on the Farm Event



Photo credit: MSU Extension

On Saturday, August 2, the 43rd MSU Extension Breakfast on the Farm event took place at the MSU Horse Farm, located on 100 acres just south of the MSU main campus. The program was a free, fun-filled educational event for the entire family. A farm-cooked, pancake breakfast was provided to 1,154 attendees before they embarked on the self-guided walking tour of the farm.

“My family and I had a wonderful time at the Breakfast on the Farm event! My kids still talk about how much fun they had learning all about horses. Their favorite part was the horse obstacle course and the delicious pancakes!”

- Jackson County family



82 Ask Extension questions answered



417 programs (across the state) attended by participants from this county



37 farmers and agriculture professionals in this county receives nine editions of the Southeast Michigan Crop Update Newsletter.

MSU Extension and USDA Partner to Launch New Beginning Farmer Resource

“Thank you for putting together this excellent guide. It’s so helpful to have essential, science-based information all in one place, especially with so much misinformation out there. The sections on animal behavior, welfare, disease management, and farm business are especially valuable—this is truly a big step in the right direction.”

- Course Participant

Big or Small: 4-H Animal Showing for Everyone



Photo credit: Jessica Waldron

Showing dogs and pocket pets in 4-H gives kids a unique opportunity to grow in confidence, responsibility, and communication. Through training, handling, and presenting their animals, youth learn patience, goal-setting, and how to build strong bonds with the pets they care for. These projects also open the door for kids who may not have access to traditional farm animals—like cattle or horses—to still fully participate in 4-H. For families in towns or neighborhoods where livestock isn't practical, dogs and pocket pets provide an inclusive, accessible, and rewarding way to join the fun, develop valuable life skills, and feel like an important part of the 4-H community.

In The Weeds Podcast - Hosted by MSUE Field Crop Team



CJ Cockcroft, Jackson County 4-H'er, was featured on [an episode of In the Weeds](#), an MSU Extension podcast. Interviewed by Madelyn Celovsky, Conservation Agronomist educator, and Hayley Wineland, Jackson 4-H Program Coordinator. CJ talked about the crops he showed at fair in 2025 and shared lessons he learned from the season, including how fun and challenging it can be working on the farm with 3 generations.



Photo credit: Kylie Cockcroft

Canola Scouting

Driving around Jackson County, you may have seen some fields of bright yellow flowers this past June. Winter canola is an emerging crop that is helping Jackson County farmers diversify their crop rotation. As the number of acres of canola grown in the county increases, it is increasingly important to identify and monitor insect pests and diseases that may be impacting canola production.

Madelyn Celovsky, Conservation Agronomist educator, scouted farmers' fields weekly and published crop progress articles like [this one](#) to help farmers stay up-to-date on pest and disease problems as they emerged.



Photo credit: Madelyn Celovsky

Youth Programming

Parents and caregivers are the first to have influence on a child’s development and future academic success. To ensure the success of families across Michigan and to support children’s school readiness, MSU Extension has invested in research- and evidence-based programming for the parents, caregivers and early childhood success educators who have the first opportunity to enhance children’s skills and become their best resources and advocates.

This programming supports families while helping parents and caregivers increase early childhood science, math and preliteracy skills, as well as enhancing the social and emotional wellness of children and youth. By increasing parents’ and caregivers’ knowledge of child and youth development, Extension can help caring adults build a positive foundation for learning and lifelong success.



424 4-H youth enrollments in the county



182 total 4-H volunteers in the county



2,133 youth participants attending programs hosted in the county

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.

Top-Priority Life Skills by Percentage

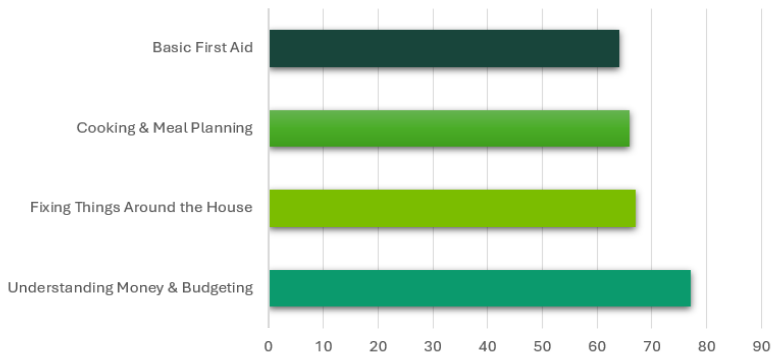


Photo credit: Jackson County 4-H

4-H Exploration Days



Photo credit: Maureen H

Pictured above are three first-year Jackson County 4-H members from one of our in-school programs who experienced 4-H Exploration Days as new 4-Hers. They stayed three days on the Michigan State University campus exploring new interests, building leadership skills, and forming friendships through 100+ session options with almost 1,000 other 4-Hers from across Michigan

“It was fun to bond with my friends while learning new skills and exploring”

- Jackson County 4-H'er

Product Center

The MSU Product Center supports innovation and growth for business, industry and entrepreneurs in food, agriculture and natural resource sectors.



• \$100,014,000 in Annual Sales



• \$50,000 Sales Increase

Services offered:

- Business planning: Writing business plans, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and developing marketing and pricing strategies
- Product development: Helping with packaging, labeling, and nutritional analysis
- Marketing: Helping with branding, distribution, and access to retailers
- Licensing and regulation: Helping with licensing and regulatory requirements
- Product testing: Working with the MSU Food Science and Packaging departments

Success Right in Jackson County!



Photo credit: Megan Hall

“Staff at the MSU Product Center have been extremely beneficial to our BBQ sauce company - especially in the early stage of our product development. They provided guidance for next steps, recommended multiple processing authority personnel, suggested grants (of which we did were a recipient of one!) and assisted with our HACCP plan. We are very thankful for MSUE’s support as we navigated the challenges of bottling and mass producing our BBQ sauce.”

- Megan Hall, owner of Old Dog Sauce and Spice

Old Dog Sauce & Spice, founded by military veterans Steve and Megan Hall, exemplifies how the MSU Extension Product Center supports local entrepreneurs in bringing high-quality, value-added food products to market. Their business highlights the importance of fostering small food enterprises that enhance community connections, contribute to the local economy, and celebrate shared experiences around food.



Photo credit: Megan Hall

Partnerships

- 22 Jackson County 4-H Clubs
- 670 4-H Sponsors & Auction Buyers
- Camp McGregor
- Countryside Animal Veterinary
- David's Promise
- Franks Shop Rite
- Jackson Area Career Center
- Jackson County 4-H Foundation
- Jackson County Conservation District
- Jackson County Department on Aging
- Jackson County Farm Bureau
- Jackson County Head Start
- Jackson County Parks & Rec - Fair Board
- Jackson County Health Department
- Jackson County Public Schools
- Jackson County Youth Center
- Jackson Great Start Collaborative
- Jackson Interfaith Shelter
- Jackson School of The Arts
- Jackson YMCA
- JCISD Central Campus
- Liberty Township Fire Department
- MDARD
- Michigan Center School District
- Michigan Sheep Producers Association
- Michigan Youth Opportunities Incitive - MDHS
- Napoleon Livestock Commission
- Pieces and Patches Quilt Guild of Jackson
- Project RED
- Rehmann
- Ridge Bollheimer of Lane View Farms
- The Workshop
- Townsend Elementary Reaching Higher
- Trinity Lutheran Church
- USDA
- Village of Spring Meadows
- Young People of Purpose (YPOP Explorers)

Jackson County AgBio Research Centers

MacCready Nature Reserve



Photo credit: Jessica Waldron



Rogers Reserve



Photo credit: Madelyn Celovsky

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

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.

Lawn and Garden Hotline: 888-678-3464 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.

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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Photo credit: MSU Extension Webpage

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Photo credit: Madelyn Celovsky

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