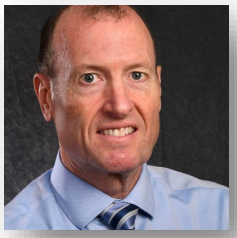
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension

KALAMAZOO COUNTY ANNUAL REPORT 2025



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https://www.canr.msu.edu/kalamazoo



Message from the Interim District Director

Thank you for another great year of partnership and community impact! We appreciate your support in helping MSU Extension serve the residents of Kalamazoo County. Sincerely, Bill Hendrian

Impact in Kalamazoo County

3,690 Participants from the County attended programs

413 4-H Enrolled Youth

1,647 County residents participated in health & nutrition programs

129 Answered Ask Extension Questions

Residents participated in **625** programs (across the State) and **132** programs (hosted in County)

386 MSU Extension Volunteers

323 Participants in County agriculture programs

373 Client Consultations

4-H & Youth Development:



***Veronica Bolhuis**, 4-H Program Coordinator*

Niñas del Corazón

Kalamazoo County 4-H partners with Niñas del Corazón, a youth and family development program that empowers young Latina women through afterschool programming focused on skill-building and confidence. Through this partnership, youth have explored engineering and budgeting, visited a dairy farm, and participated in other enriching experiences. In 2025, 4-H provided eight educational opportunities for Niñas del Corazón participants.

Zoo City Farms

Zoo City Farm & Food Network supports neighborhood-based urban farms and raised garden beds to increase access to fresh food. Through a partnership with Zoo City Farms, Kalamazoo County 4-H delivers 4-H Freedom School, a six-week summer program of the Children's Defense Fund that combines literacy, civic engagement, and positive youth development. In 2025, the program served 41 youth, providing educational experiences that fostered a love of reading, built leadership skills, and encouraged active community involvement.



***Will Barnwell**, 4-H Program Instructor*

Children's Defense Fund (CDF) Freedom Schools Summer Program

At the Urban Arts Exploratory and Mediation Center and Kalamazoo Nature Center, Heronwood Field Station, CDF (Children's Defense Fund) Freedom Schools® provides summer and after-school enrichment through a research-based, multicultural model that supports K–12 scholars and their families. Will Barnwell, 4-H program instructor, led the multi-week program which focuses on five key areas: academic and character development, family engagement, civic responsibility, servant leadership, and nutrition, health, and mental wellness.

In 2025, Freedom Schools helped 45 scholars build confidence, leadership skills, and social-emotional growth. Through daily community-building activities, reflection, and clear expectations, participants develop self-discipline, teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills. By creating a supportive environment where every child is valued, the program fosters resilience, responsibility, and a lasting sense of self-worth that extends well beyond the summer.

4-H GROWS HERE

4-H & Youth Development:

4-H Programs Making a Difference!

In 2025, children and families continued to benefit from a variety of 4-H programs, in partnership with dedicated 4-H volunteers and MSU Extension staff.
Topics discussed include:

- Career exploration and workforce development
- Child & family development
- Healthy living
- Leadership & civic engagement
- Science literacy

Beyond Ready

Over 3,921 Michigan youth completed the national Youth for the Quality Care of Animals (YQCA) certification, a program promoting food safety, animal well-being and character development. There were 98 in-person Instructor-led YQCA trainings offered, five of which were taught by Veronica Bolhuis to **74** Kalamazoo County youth.
This annual education initiative continues to strengthen youth knowledge and responsibility in animal agriculture.

YQCA YOUTH FOR THE QUALITY CARE OF ANIMALS

Kalamazoo County Youth Fair & Family Festival



The 2025 4-H showcase was put together by MSU Extension staff and volunteers in partnership with the Kalamazoo County Parks and Expo Department. Throughout the week, 4-H youth showcased their hard work and talents in a variety of shows, educational projects and competitions.

The 4-H Livestock Auction was a huge success, with 277 sales totaling $315,023.95! More than 100 pigs brought in $132,487.95 and 36 pens of poultry brought in $12,450.00. A small portion (just 1–3%) supports the Kalamazoo County Livestock Superintendents Association, ensuring that next year's auction is even better. The rest? It goes right back to the youth who raised the animals—fueling their future goals and agricultural dreams.

In a powerful act of generosity, 37 lots of animals were purchased and donated to Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes and the Kalamazoo Gospel Mission, providing fresh, nutritious food to those in need.

Agriculture & Agribusiness:

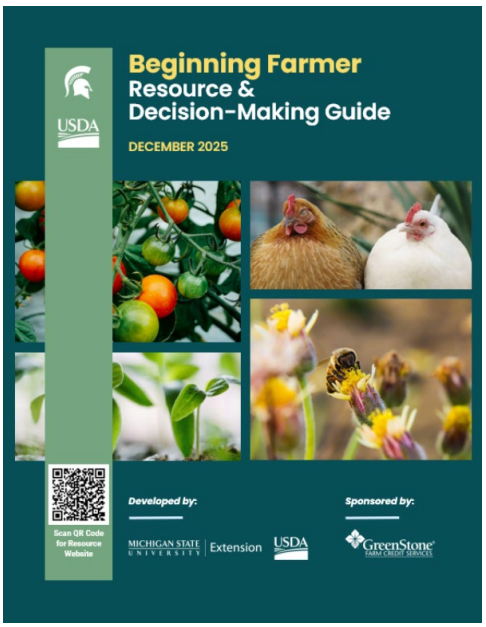
GLEXPO Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable & Farm Market EXPO

The Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable & Farm Market EXPO (GLEXPO) is an annual event that draws thousands of farmers from Michigan and beyond to Grand Rapids, Michigan, each December. Michigan State University Extension educators are heavily involved in coordinating the educational offerings for this event.

Producers connected with over 4,500 fruit, vegetable, farm market and greenhouse individuals and over 400 industry-leading companies. **Ninety** attendees from Kalamazoo County learned how to implement the newest innovations on their farms.

“Every one of these workshops was FANTASTIC! Y'all really outdid yourselves this year.” --Participant

In August, the W.K. Kellogg Experimental Forest Station hosted the **MSU Christmas Tree 2025 Field Day** where growers from Kalamazoo County and around the state gained insights from recent research including exotic tree species, weed management techniques, and best management practices to improve tree establishment.



Beginning Farmer Resource & Decision-Making Guide Launches

The *Beginning Farmer Resource and Decision-Making Guide* provides a pathway to resources a new farmer or decision-maker may need to get started and support their production journey. Starting with production in mind, resources give farmers an introduction to important farming topics and direct them to education and decision-making tools as well as how to connect with agricultural partners.

The Beginning Farmer Resource & Decision-Making Guide is a living document that will be updated as new content becomes available.

For more information about Extension Agriculture & Agribusiness in Michigan, explore https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/extension-agriculture-agribusiness-in-michigan-24

Agriculture & Agribusiness:



Second Annual Food-Grade Grains Field Day

On June 10, 2025, Michigan State University's Kellogg Biological Station in Hickory Corners hosted the second annual Food-Grade Grains Field Day. The event brought together stakeholders from across the food-grade grain supply chain to explore the production, processing, and marketing of food-grade grains while showcasing current crop research and field trials.

Presenters and attendees discussed agronomic practices, processing requirements, and end-user quality considerations for a variety of grains. The program highlighted wheat, rye, and barley, while also encouraging the exchange of experiences and insights related to other small-grain crops.

Third Annual Kellogg Biological Station Long-Term Agroecosystem Research (KBS LTAR) Field Day

On September 4, 2025, 141 participants attended the third annual KBS LTAR Field Day to learn about research comparing "Business-As-Usual" and "Aspirational" cropping systems. Presentations and demonstrations highlighted soil health, profitability, cover crops, precision agriculture, drone technology, and short-stature corn. Attendees especially valued the long-term research data, profitability comparisons, and networking opportunities, with many reporting increased knowledge and motivation to adopt new farming practices.



A beautiful day to hear about KBS LTAR agronomy updates from Brook Wilke. Photo by Katie Hepfinger.

kbs ltar
Kellogg Biological Station
Long-Term Agroecosystem Research

MSU Extension Improves Honey Bee Health for Kalamazoo Beekeepers

MSU Extension provides education for beekeepers, land managers, gardeners, and pesticide users to support honey bees and other beneficial insects. In February, **more than 40 Kalamazoo-area beekeepers** attended the Kalamazoo Bee School to learn brood frame evaluation. With honey bee colonies facing ongoing losses from disease and other stressors, the program helps equip beekeepers with the knowledge needed to maintain healthy hives.



Health & Nutrition:

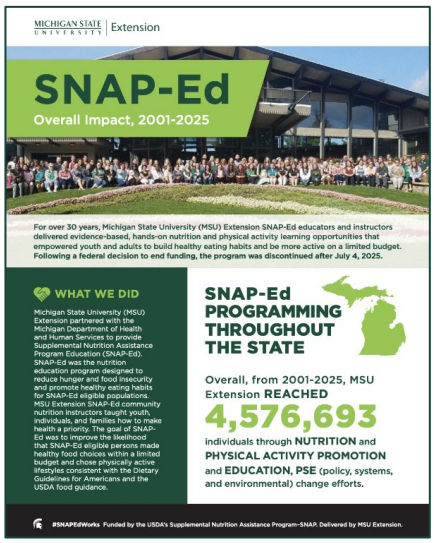


Kellie Jordan

ServSafe Training

Michigan State University Extension offers ServSafe, a national certification program for those working in food service, specifically managers and other leaders. ServSafe teaches about foodborne illness, how to prevent it and how to train employees about the latest food safety issues. The ServSafe Manager course uses proven techniques, provides new Food & Drug Administration food code rules and content related to the food industry.

Topics include providing safe food, forms of contamination, the safe food handler, the flow of food, food safety management systems, safe facilities & pest management, cleaning & sanitizing. This course provides participants education to successfully pass the ServSafe Food Protection Manager Certification exam. In 2025, Food Safety Educator, Kellie Jordan trained **48 Kalamazoo County** food service workers in ServSafe.



SNAP-Ed Reached Millions Throughout Michigan

For over 30 years, Michigan State University (MSU) Extension SNAP-Ed educators and instructors delivered evidence-based, hands-on nutrition and physical activity learning opportunities that empowered youth and adults to build healthy eating habits and be more active on a limited budget. Overall, from 2001-2025, MSU Extension reached 4,576,693 individuals through nutrition and physical activity promotion and education, PSE (policy, systems, and environmental) change efforts. Following a federal decision to end funding, the program was discontinued after July 4, 2025.

Scan the QR code to download the report

Promoting Health & Wellbeing

In 2025, MSU Extension Educators provided a variety of health and nutrition programs to **1,647 Kalamazoo County** residents, on topics including:

- *RELAX Alternatives to Anger*
- *Positive Discipline Online Series*
- *Tai Chi for Better Sleep*
- *Cooking for One*
- *Adult Immunization Update*
- *Building Resilience to Avoid Burnout*
- *Serving Up Food Safety – Various Topics*



Health & Nutrition:



Amanda Hulet, Community Nutrition Instructor

Dedicated to Delivering Nutrition and Physical Activity Education

For 26 years, Amanda Hulet, MSU Extension Community Nutrition Instructor for Kalamazoo County has delivered nutrition and physical activity education to eligible youth and adult audiences through in-person, virtual, or hybrid programs supported by federal grants such as EFNEP. In addition to teaching, Hulet provides policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) coaching, develops community partnerships, reduces barriers to participation, and collects and manages program data for evaluation and impact reporting.

Through an ongoing nutrition education class at K-PEP, Amanda has observed how food can bring people together despite difficult circumstances. Residents navigate the challenges of reentry, recovery, and living in a shared environment, which can sometimes create tension. During one class, as participants prepared a simple cereal mix and shared stories about food, family, and culture, the mood shifted to laughter and connection. One participant thanked Amanda for the class, saying it helped the women come together and learn from one another. Moments like this remind Amanda that food is a universal language that fosters learning, support, and community.

In 2025, Amanda's community partners were Tree of Life School, Women's K-Pep, North Glade Montessori, Arbor Academy, Eastside Strong, and Spring Valley Elementary. She graduated 40 adults, 400 youth, and worked with over 150 community members at the El Concilio's World Children's Day.

Sweet Can Mean Nutritious

Residents at City View in the Square in Kalamazoo discovered that healthy and sweet can go hand in hand during the Cooking for One series. In the first session, participants made and tasted pineapple-mango smoothies using just yogurt, frozen fruit, and orange juice, sparking discussion about ingredient substitutions and ways to customize flavors. The group also explored the nutritional benefits of the ingredients, including vitamin C, potassium and protein. One participant joked that the smoothie was much healthier than the ice cream waiting in his freezer, reinforcing the lesson that affordable, nutrient-rich snacks can satisfy cravings for sweet treats while supporting overall health.



For additional success stories, and access to classes, articles, health resources, and more, explore: **https://www.canr.msu.edu/food_health/**or scan the QR code:

Community, Food & Environment



Mariel Borgman,
Community Food Systems
Educator

Mariel Borgman, an MSU Extension Community Food Systems Educator serving Southwest Michigan since 2014, led a series of 2025 train-the-trainer workshops for beginning farmer educators. Through interactive modules, participants learned practical teaching strategies and content related to land access, soil health, produce safety, pest management, pollinators, farm finances, marketing, and urban agriculture policy. Mariel's educational background includes a B.S. in Sustainable Business from Aquinas College and a M.S. in Natural Resources from the University of Michigan. She is also a graduate of the MSU Organic Farmer Training Program.



MSU Product Center Statewide
Clients: **566**
Counseling Hours: **3,365**
Annual Sales of Clients
$84,677,879

Community Food Systems Programming in Kalamazoo County

In 2025, the MSU Extension Community Food Systems Team provided programming to **148** Kalamazoo County residents. Their work centers around the Michigan Good Food Charter, a statewide plan for creating and sustaining good food systems rooted in Michigan communities. Topics:

- *Organic Farmer Training Program*
- *On Farm Produce Safety*
- *Agritourism*
- *Beginning and Small Farmers*

Government and Community Vitality Programming in Kalamazoo County

In 2025, MSU Extension Educators provided a variety of government and community vitality programs to **91** Kalamazoo County residents, on topics including:

- *Understanding the Land Division Act*
- *Governing Essentials*
- *Redlining Michigan*
- *Fiscally Ready Communities Series*
- *Citizen Planner*
- *Local Government Budgeting in Uncertain Times*

The **MSU 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 MSU's vast and varied technical expertise, research and outreach services.

To access all Community, Food, and Environment programs and resources, go to **https://www.canr.msu.edu/community**

MSU Extension's Statewide Impact

Helping people improve their lives by bringing the vast knowledge and resources of Michigan State University directly to individuals, communities and businesses.

$244.2 billion annual impact of food and agriculture on Michigan's economy

133,301 total youth participants

11,944 people participated in Food Safety programs including ServSafe®

206,346,096 contacts through social media, web activity, e-newsletters, and handouts

13,660 total volunteers

72,517 Participants in Community, Food and Environment Programs

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

1,998 Extension Master Gardeners (EMG) spent 119,864 hours helping individuals and communities grow

KALAMAZOO COUNTY STAFF

- Amanda Hulet, Community Nutrition Instructor
- Cheyenne Sloan, Blueberry and Small Fruit Educator
- Christine Charles, Regenerative Agriculture Systems Educator
- Jeremy Jubenville, Commercial Horticulture Educator
- Julie Ford, Kalamazoo County and District 13 Support
- Mariel Borgman, Community Food Systems Educator
- Nancy Hostetler, Kalamazoo County Support
- Veronica Bolhuis, 4-H Program Coordinator
- William Barnwell, 4-H Program Instructor
- Wrifton Graham, Extension Master Gardener Coordinator



MSU Extension's 2025 Impact Report



In 2025 alone, almost 300,000 Michiganders participated in MSU Extension programs, and they had plenty of programs to pick from — we delivered more than 8,000 last year! Some people took classes to plan their retirement. Some took classes to learn how to can tomatoes. Others learned how to improve their farm's recordkeeping, start a mindfulness practice or support their children's development. And that's just the start of our impact across the state.

To learn more, go to: https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/michigan-state-university-extension-at-work-2025-impact-report or download the report from the QR code.

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