

# LAKE COUNTY ANNUAL REPORT 2025

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## Message from the District Director



I'm pleased to share the results of another successful year of collaboration between Lake County and Michigan State University (MSU) Extension. Your continued support has allowed us to make a meaningful impact on youth, families, businesses, and communities. This year, MSU Extension delivered a wide range of research-based educational services—helping individuals lead healthier lives, assisting new and local businesses, expanding youth leadership and career exploration opportunities, supporting farmers with business management and mental health resources, and more.

Our staff live and work alongside county residents, building strong community connections and responding directly to local needs. We maintained our online presence through virtual courses, timely responses to questions on topics from gardening to food safety, increased social media outreach, and a wealth of research-backed resources on our website.

Thank you for your ongoing partnership. On behalf of the MSU Extension team serving Lake County, we appreciate your support and look forward to another year of working together—and hope to see you at an upcoming program.

*James Kelly*  
District Director

## Staff

- Lori Cargill – 4-H Program Coordinator
- Christina Curell – Cover Crop and Soil Health Educator
- James Kelly – District Director
- Marge Manning– Office Manager

# Overall Impact



**717** people reached through activity in Lake County (programming, consultations, office visits, soil tests, hot-line calls)



**460** participants from the county attending programs.



**21** client consultations



**123** programs (across the state) attended by Lake County participants.



**24** programs hosted in Lake County



**15** answered Ask Extension questions



**4** volunteers



**25** community coalitions and partnerships within the county that MSU Extension employees are members of

# Communications Outreach



**73,725** contacts through social media, web activity, e-newsletters, articles, radio and handouts.



**37,200** Facebook views on the Lake County/4-H page



**105** books, soil tests, and other resources sold in Lake County.

## Mental Health and Wellness



The Teen Mental Health First Aid program in Baldwin has strengthened students' ability to recognize and respond to mental health challenges, giving sophomores practical tools to support their peers and connect them to help. Through MSU Extension's partnership with Baldwin Community Schools, the training is building a more informed, compassionate school culture, evidenced by students who continue to share how the program has positively influenced their confidence and well-being.

## Health and Nutrition Education



**170** county residents who participated in health and nutrition programs.



**6** sites received nutrition or physical activity policy, systems, or environmental education.



**470** people impacted through policy, systems, or environmental education (8 nutrition or physical education changes implemented at various sites).



**\$1,000** value of mini grant secured for community garden



## Nutrition Education

The Henrietta Summers Senior Center's community garden project has strengthened food access and revitalized local connection in Idlewild by bringing residents and partner organizations together to build six accessible raised beds. Supported by a mini grant, the effort transformed community interest into action—providing fresh produce, meaningful intergenerational engagement, and renewed pride in the area's agricultural heritage.



## Community Health Investment

The River Community Center's mini-grant project, financed by MSU Extension, expanded access to healthy, active play in Baldwin by transforming a denied proposal into an opportunity for greater community benefit. With new indoor and outdoor recreation equipment supporting weekly Open Gym Days, children and families now have safe, engaging spaces to stay active, build connections, and strengthen overall well-being. The project demonstrates how adaptability and collaboration can amplify local impact.

## Chronic Disease and Pain Management



MSU Extension offered two programs at the Hollister Senior Center in Baldwin to empower adults living with chronic disease and pain—and their caregivers. Both programs were offered in small-group learning formats, creating a supportive environment where participants gained confidence and tools to take an active role in managing conditions. The programs shared common themes, helping participants learn strategies and skills for enhanced decision making, goal setting, navigating difficult emotions, communicating effectively with family members and healthcare providers, and managing medications safely.

First, the Chronic Pain PATH workshop helped participants build practical skills for improving daily well-being. Over six weeks, participants learned strategies to improve sleep, reduce stress and fatigue, plan and pace activities, and make informed decisions about treatment options. MSU Extension offered this program at no cost.

Second, MSU Extension co-led a six-week Chronic Disease PATH workshop, which provided participants with practical tools to improve daily health and confidence in managing their conditions. Participants strengthened their ability to develop healthy eating and exercise plans and take a more active role in managing chronic diseases such as arthritis, heart disease, and lung conditions.

## Environmental Stewardship and Natural Resource Management



Educator Erick Elgin led a workshop titled “Aquatic Plants of Lake County” at the Sauble Township Hall in Irons. Twenty community members attended, receiving expert training on aquatic plant identification and the importance of recognizing aquatic invasive species. This training supports Lake County’s ongoing efforts to protect one of its most valuable natural resources—the many lakes that define the region.

# Youth Programming



223 youth participants



16 4-H Clubs



4 volunteers



37,200 Facebook reach



\$2,629 value of 4-H volunteer time



## Apple Community Education Initiative

The Apple-funded 4-H program gave hands-on access to creative technology, helped participants grow as leaders, and showed the power of community. From supporting young entrepreneurs to exploring local history through digital projects, the experience strengthened participants' skills, adaptability, and confidence to make a positive impact.



## Great Start Collaboration

STEM Adventures and Foodie Tales and Adventures have created meaningful learning opportunities for families across Mason, Lake, and Oceana counties by blending literacy, STEM exploration, and hands-on nutrition education. Supported by the Great Start Collaborative's investment in books and high-quality materials, these programs have helped parents and caregivers engage their children in creative problem-solving, science inquiry, and cooking skills that can be continued at home. With strong participation and successful launches at museums, libraries, schools, and community sites, the programs are strengthening family engagement, expanding 4-H Cloverbud opportunities, and making high-quality educational resources accessible to all.



## Pure Markette

Over a 12-week season MSU Extension assisted with family and youth programming at Pure Markette in Baldwin. Families and youth participated in programming, taking part in STEM activities, learning about health & nutrition concepts, and active lifestyles. Over 3,500 visitors attended the market. Many visitors were introduced to MSU Extension and 4-H through some creative youth activities.

## Government and Community Vitality



Four Lake County residents took the 2025 Citizen Planner training. It had a strong positive impact on participants, significantly increasing their planning knowledge, confidence, and ability to serve their communities effectively. Nearly all respondents reported substantial knowledge gains, over 93% felt more confident in their roles, and a similar share rated the program as valuable for their personal and professional growth. Participants also indicated they will apply what they learned by improving meeting preparation, fostering community involvement, and using planning concepts in real decision-making—showing how the program not only builds skills but also supports more informed, engaged local governance.



At the request of Lake County and Township officials Ryan Coffey Hoag provided Zoning Board Appeal training to 17 township officials in Webber Township. The training empowered zoning board members and supporting local government staff with the essential skills and legal understanding needed to make fair, defensible, and effective land-use decisions. By strengthening knowledge of due process, private property rights, and the purpose of zoning, the program enhances the integrity of local governance, supports community master plan implementation, builds public trust, and reduces the risk of costly mistakes or lawsuits—ultimately improving both community development outcomes and the quality of local decision-making.

### Product Center – Small Business Support

- 4 clients served
- 20 hours of consulting and research

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