

MASON COUNTY ANNUAL REPORT 2024

- West Shore Community College Rec Center
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Message from the District Director



I'm pleased to share the results of another successful year of collaboration between Mason County and Michigan State University (MSU) Extension. Your ongoing support has enabled us to positively impact the lives of youth, families, businesses, and communities. MSU Extension offers a diverse array of research-based educational services to county residents. Over the past year, we've helped families and individuals adopt healthier lifestyles, supported new and local businesses, provided opportunities for youth leadership development and career exploration, assisted farmers with business management and mental health, and much more.

Our staff, who live and work alongside county residents, are deeply embedded in community relationships and are responsive to community needs. We've embraced Mason County residents in our online community: offering virtual educational courses, answering questions on topics from gardening to food safety, increasing program awareness through social media, and providing a wealth of research-based resources on our website. Our partnership with you makes all of this possible. On behalf of the MSU Extension team serving Mason County, thank you for another remarkable year. We look forward to your continued support and hope you'll join us for one of our upcoming programs.

James Kelly
District Director

Staff

- Lori Cargill – 4-H Program Coordinator
- Julie Eriksen – Office Manager
- Kendra Gibson – Community Nutrition Instructor
- Brenden Kelley – Water Resource Educator

Overall Impact



2,614 Total reach of activity in Mason County (Programming, consultations, office visits, soil tests, tip-line calls)



1,744 participants from the county attending programs.



80 client consultations



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



51 programs hosted in Mason County



36 answered Ask Extension questions



31 volunteers



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

Communications Outreach



125,577 contacts through social media, web activity, e-newsletters, and handouts.



222 Plat books, soil tests, and other resources sold in Mason County.

Youth Programming



832 # of total youth participants



88 4-H youth enrollments



21 total volunteers



8 4-H Clubs



26,040 4-H volunteer hour
dollar value



4-H Teens Travel Nationally

Brandi Wells from Ludington High School and Madesyn Reynolds from Gateway 2 Success traveled to National Conferences through 4-H programs. Brandi's 2,000-word essay on "Venezuela, Water Scarcity and Malnutrition" was accepted into the Global Youth Institute in Des Moines, Iowa. Madesyn learned about Capitol Experience and Exploration Days through a school presentation and received scholarships from the Michigan 4-H Foundation to attend. She also applied for and received a scholarship to the national 4-H Ignite conference in Washington DC, where she will join the Community Accelerators track to develop solutions for real-world challenges.



4-H STEM Programming

The Mason County 4-H Youth Program has partnered with the Mason Lake Oceana Great Start Collaborative to provide STEM and Literacy themed programming on Tuesday mornings all summer long. Hosted by Sandcastles Children's Museum, participants of STEM Adventures hear a story that serves as a springboard to scientific inquiry and play. Topics include coding, engineering, physics and more. Each family takes home a copy of the week's book. The program is open to all but intended for youth ages 4-9.



646 nutrition and physical activity participants hosted in-county.



745 county residents who participated in health and nutrition programs.



Show Me Nutrition at Mason County Eastern

Students in Show Me Nutrition become very familiar with MyPlate and the importance of color when it comes to fruits and vegetables. They get excited as they work their way through the alphabet and identify a fruit or vegetable for each letter. Using their senses to smell, feel, touch, and hear the foods being sampled in class can provide new awareness. Some foods make them think of different seasons and when they get to eat those foods fresh from the garden or at the farm market. As students share, they smile. Food is fun. Some foods are familiar favorites. Some foods are amazing because they come in unique shapes like star fruit. When we get to explore foods in different ways even new can things be exciting to try.



Summer Gardens

A summer highlight was working with Dimensions Unlimited through WCMCH at the U Dig It Community Garden. This is the second year collaborating with this group on nutrition and garden skill building. They were successful in securing a MSU Extension mini grant that focused on increasing opportunities to be physically active, supported accessibility in gardening, and promoted independence in healthy food preparation. Students participating in the six-week series, Healthy Choices for Every Body, gained weekly reinforcement in making healthy choices and the benefits of moving their bodies more. This combined health and nutrition effort has impacted sixty-nine consumers with disabilities at Dimensions Unlimited.



Farm to School

Community Nutrition Instructor, Kendra Gibson worked closely with Mason County Eastern (MCE) as they moved forward with revitalizing their greenhouse. Harvested produce was used for student lunches in the cafeteria. Food Service Director Dana Kessel purchased locally sourced apples from Butler Orchards in Ludington for the Michigan Great Apple Crunch. The event took place in October and 150 elementary students participated. MCE continues to embrace Michigan farm to school efforts.



Chronic Disease Education

“I recently participated in the Chronic Disease PATH program at the Senior Center in Scottville, Michigan. I appreciated the variety of topics and the teaching style in the class. The 400+ page book is also a valuable reference. The topics covered were interesting and relevant to all students, regardless of their background or health status. The material was presented at a depth that made it accessible and meaningful for everyone. Detailed information was also provided in the class book for reference.” Participants learned several helpful tools, like creating action plans, weighing pros and cons for decision-making, and using "I" messages to improve communication.



Mental Health First Aid

Students at Mason County Eastern and West Shore Early College program participated in Mental Health First Aid training. This internationally recognized evidence-based mental health training helps develop youth to be better prepared to help others struggling with mental health challenges. A recent participant shared one very important learning from the class. “There is no normal, there’s just you!”

Product Center – Small Business Support

- 6 clients served
- 23 total employees with \$420,000 in sales
- 137 hours of consulting and research from MSU product Center
- 1 new product launched, and 1 new license obtained.

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