

OAKLAND COUNTY ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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Message from the District Director



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At Michigan State University Extension, we transform lives through education- supporting individuals, families, and communities across Michigan. From agriculture and economic development to health, youth and environmental education, our 600+ staff deliver trusted, research-based knowledge where it's needed most. In 2024, we empowered families, improved health, and nurtured youth through 4-H and Tollgate Farm programs. With strong partnerships and deep community roots, we're building a stronger Michigan- and a better Oakland. Thank you for being part of our journey.

Impact



18,978 reached through community events and fairs



819 answered Ask Extension questions



\$1,220,005.80 value of volunteer time



852 volunteers



9,829 youth reached through programming



14,569 participants from the county attended **1,130** programs



4,591 participants in health and nutrition classes



2,942 client consultations



367 Extension Master
Gardener Volunteers in
Oakland County



~14,212
volunteer hours in
2024

Oakland County welcomes its largest Extension Master Gardener trainee class since the introduction of Foundations of Gardening online course

Foundations of Gardening is a comprehensive 10-week online course for any adult who wants to learn the science behind great gardening and is also the first step toward becoming an MSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteer.

In 2024, Oakland County gained **47** new MSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteers.



Smart Gardening outreach efforts in Oakland County reach over 4,000 people

During the 2024 season, Oakland County MSU Extension Master Gardeners (EMGs) volunteered through a variety of educational opportunities:

- Participated in **6 area farmer's markets**
- Attended **9 community events**
- Reached **4,116 people**, nearly doubling those reached in 2023
- Collected valuable data on topics Oakland County residents are most interested in and issues of greatest concern to the community



Whether choosing plants, watering and maintaining a yard or using chemicals or fertilizers, Smart Gardening resources from MSU Extension help community members make environmentally friendly choices for their own backyards.

Find tip sheets online at:





Growing partnerships and programs

MSU Extension has partnered with **Friends of Royal Oak Township Community Garden** for eight years. Thanks to a new grant and support from Keep Growing Detroit, students and volunteers received protective gear, tools and seedlings to help the garden flourish. Lauren, the longest-serving student who joined in kindergarten, now mentors others and proudly shared:

"this is our best garden ever!"



GSRP preschoolers at the **Lake Orion Early Childhood Center** loved learning about nutrition so much that they created and recorded a "vegetable dance."

"Vegetables are good!"
—Preschool participant



Adults at the **City of Southfield Parks & Recreation Center** learned how to shop and prepare nutritious meals for one in a six-week course.



Strengthening Food Access & Community Health



The **Oak Park Farmers Market** launched a community garden to boost nutrition, food access and education. Led by Maralee and supported by MSU Extension SNAP-Ed, it engages 450–500 community members, including families and kids. With six raised beds, it supports SNAP users and health programs, tackling food insecurity and promoting wellness and connection across Oakland County.

"The gardens were surely a topic of discussion each week. Having them by our booth really started a lot of conversation regarding the gardens."

—Erin Foley, Market Manager Intern

2,031 Oakland County residents participated in approximately **3,100** hours of SNAP-Ed programs in **2024**.





1,051 Oakland County youth enrolled in 4-H



226, 4-H volunteers



10,606, 4-H youth participants in Oakland County



~24,408 volunteer hours



Hands-on learning

Walt Whitman Elementary received a 4-H Foundation Educational Garden mini-grant to grow a thriving vegetable garden. The grant funded essential supplies—including an irrigation system, soil, seeds and tools—enabling 150 students to engage in hands-on learning year-round. From seed starting to harvesting, students experienced the full cycle of plant growth, turning their garden into a vibrant living classroom.



Students at **University High School** began their community garden beautification project by gathering soil samples to send off for testing.



23 students and 3 teachers at **Athens High School** learned about food preservation in Chemistry Club by making strawberry jam in the student-run restaurant kitchen.

“This stuff is good!”
-Youth participant



4-year-olds at **St. Joseph Childcare Center** are introduced to science through activities every other week.



Meeting people where they are

4-H Pop Up in the Parks events reached youth and families in Pontiac with activities and games to engage youth and introduce them to 4-H at various parks.

“We were just coming to the park. We didn’t expect there to actually be something here for the kids to do and learn while we are here! This is great!”

-Local parent



Discover 4-H at **Catalpa Oaks County Park** introduced families to MSU Extension and 4-H with fun educational activities.



Teaching mindfulness and resiliency

October 10 is World Mental Health Day, and 4-H conducts our own statewide Day of Wellness on that date.

Students at **Einstein Elementary School** learned about mindfulness through archery, learning the importance of presence and focus for not only shooting arrows, but for any situation that they’ll encounter.





MSU Extension Tollgate Farm & Education Center



MSU’s Dairy Store ice cream makes for the perfect farm-fresh experience.



In partnership with Japanese cultural groups, the **Hanami Spring Picnic** event attracted more than 450 people to the **Sakura Cherry Blossom Garden**.

The 160-acre farmstead provides non-formal learning for children, families and adults, offering the unique opportunity to experience agriculture hands-on in an urban environment.



Summer Farm Camp engages campers in all aspects of farm life including helping to care for goats, sheep, rabbits, chickens, ducks and ponies; growing a variety of vegetables, fruits and herbs; and preparing daily snacks in the Garden Kitchen, using produce harvested from the farm.



Agriculture Education

Two public livestock programs connected communities with local farming:

- **Milk and Meet:** Engaged 500+ visitors in hands-on dairy and livestock education.
- **Lamb and Learn:** Lessons on sheep care, farming practices and Michigan’s sheep industry

“We grew up in the inner city, so it was such a special and interesting experience!”
-Janice and Milton, Lamb and Learn attendees



More than an outing...

To celebrate completing an MSU Extension nutrition program, refugees from eight countries visited Tollgate Farm. They explored maple syrup production, pollinators and farming's importance—ending the day with meditation under the maples. The visit blended education, community and a deeper connection to sustainable agriculture.



New Extension Master Gardeners learn hands-on

Extension Master Gardener trainees attended an onboarding session at the Farm, where they gained skills to help them in volunteering and impacting their communities.



"Tollgate seems like an amazing place to get hands-on experience with a variety of gardens, tasks and settings."

-Extension Master Gardener trainee



Tollgate's historic barn comes to life during a fun-filled **Community Square Dancing** event.



Produce grown on the farm is enjoyed during one of **Tollgate's Friday Farmstands**, offering fresh vegetables, flowers and more to the community.

Thank you to all our partners who share our mission of helping people improve lives through education.

ACCESS	Hispanic Outreach La Casa Amiga
Affirmations Community Center	Holly Calvary Church
Ascension Eastwood	Japanese Society of Detroit
Berkley School District	Kiwanis Club of Pontiac
Baldwin Center	Lake Orion Community Schools
Birmingham Next	Lions Club International
Blake Farms	Lyon Township
Bloomfield Hills Schools	Macomb County Public Works Commission
Bloomfield Township Public Library	Madison District Public Schools
Bosch Community Fund	Main Street Pontiac
Bound Together	Master Gardener Society of Oakland County
Centro Multicultural La Familia	Meadow Brook Hall
City of Hazel Park	Michigan Garden Clubs, Inc.
City of Novi	Michigan State Fair
City of Southfield	National Church Residences
City of Walled Lake Farmers Market	National Heritage Academies
CNS Healthcare	Novi Public Library
Commerce Township Library	Oakland County Fairground
Communities in Schools	Oakland County Farmers Market
Costick Activities Center	Oakland County: Health Division; Parks & Recreation; Office of Sustainability
Deaf Community Advocacy Network	Oakland County Youth in Government
Easterseals Disability & Community Services	Oak Park Farmers Market
Elyton Missionary Baptist Church	Oak Park Schools
The Farm at Trinity Health Oakland	Pontiac Public Library
Farmington Community Library	Pontiac School District
Farmington Farmers & Artisans Market	Renee Lewandowski Daycare
Ferndale Public Schools	Rochester Farmers Market
Friends of Royal Oak Township	Royal Oak Farmers Market
Geniuses On-Board Child-Development Learning Center	Royal Oak Leprechauns
Growing Pontiac	Royal Oak Manor
Hardy Plant Society	Ruth Peterson Senior Activity Center
Healthy Oakland	Samaritas
Highland Township Library	

A special thank you to Oakland County and their continued support!

Senthamil International Learning Association for Maximizing the Biliteracy Urge (SILAMBU)

Southfield Public Library

Southfield Public Schools

South Oakland Family YMCA

Spirit of Christ Church

Sterling Place

St. Joseph Child Care Center

Sylvan Lake Garden Club

Troy Farmers Market

Troy Garden Club

Walled Lake Consolidated Schools

Walled Lake Farmers Market

Walled Lake Head Start

Walled Lake Villas

Warren Consolidated Schools

Welcome Missionary Baptist Church

West Bloomfield Township Public Library

Wild Ones North Oakland Chapter

Wixom Community Center

The Village of Oakland Woods

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.

Ask an Expert:

[Ask2.extension.org](https://ask2.extension.org)

Food Safety Hotline:

1-877-643-9882

Gardening Hotline:

1-888-678-3464

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