

OTSEGO COUNTY ANNUAL REPORT 2025-2026

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District Director
Office Manager
4-H Program Coordinator



Message from the District Director

I am pleased to share highlights from another successful year of partnership between Otsego County and Michigan State University Extension. Through your continued support, we have helped residents improve their health and well-being, strengthened local businesses and agricultural operations, and provided valuable opportunities for youth to learn, grow, and succeed.

MSU Extension continues to expand access to trusted, research-based programs through in-person, virtual, and hybrid learning opportunities. Because our staff live and work in the communities they serve, we can build strong local partnerships and respond to emerging needs with relevant programs and resources.

Thank you for your continued partnership and support. Together, we are creating positive impacts across Otsego County and helping individuals, families, businesses, and communities thrive. We look forward to another successful year and hope to connect with you at an upcoming MSU Extension program or event.

- Adam Koivisto, District 14 Director



Impact



173

Programs accessed by residents



59,300

Reached by social media



726

Reached through programming

4-H PROGRAM

The Otsego County 4-H Program had another successful year! Liv Fox, the new 4-H Program Coordinator led several new programs as well as the popular annual Spring Break Extravaganza. Otsego County 4-H also sent four youth to Michigan 4-H Exploration Days, a premier pre-college experience held on the MSU campus in East Lansing.



4-H youth learned valuable leadership, teamwork and life skills by participating in clubs, summer camps, the county fair and other events throughout the year.



Fiber Arts Program

Twelve youth from Otsego County participated in a Needle Felting and Intro to Knitting program designed to introduce participants to a variety of fiber arts while building new skills and confidence in working with wool. Throughout the hands-on sessions, youth learned fundamental techniques and explored the creativity and craftsmanship involved in fiber-based projects. The program highlights how hands-on learning can spark curiosity, strengthen practical skills, and inspire youth to explore the full cycle of a product from farm to finished project.



Embryology Program

More than 70 Otsego County youth participated in the 4-H embryology program. Students learned about the science of life cycles, animal development, and responsible animal care through experiential learning.

In addition, youth were introduced to the many career opportunities available within the poultry industry. By engaging directly in the hatching process, participants developed critical thinking, responsibility, observation skills, and a deeper appreciation for agriculture and food systems.



Beyond Ready

4-H PROGRAM

SPRING BREAK EXTRAVAGANZA provided local youth with engaging educational experiences during their school break. Designed to offer meaningful learning opportunities close to home, the program helped youth explore new interests, develop life skills, and build confidence through hands-on activities.

Cookie Decorating: youth explored the creative and scientific aspects of food preparation



FISH: Get Hooked: youth learned the fundamentals of fishing through a variety of interactive activities



Making Wind Chimes and Flowers: youth learned about nature through arts and crafts activities





MSU Extension provides high-quality, research-based health and wellness education that helps Michigan residents build healthier lives at every age and stage. Through locally delivered programs, participants gain practical knowledge and skills related to safe food handling and preservation, food and water safety, chronic disease prevention and management, healthy aging, fall prevention, sleep health, and overall well-being. Whether learning safe techniques for canning, freezing, and dehydrating foods, managing conditions such as diabetes and heart disease, or finding ways to remain active, independent, and healthy as they age, community members benefit from trusted, university-based information that supports lifelong health and improved quality of life.

2025 full year statewide stats



Health & Nutrition

66,592

program participants

3,085

programs offered by health
and nutrition educators and
program instructors

1 MILLION+

content views across our MI Health
Matters and Think Food Safety
social media channels



Some of the classes attended by local Residents this year.

- Everything Apples Sauce and Cider Processing
- Serve Safe
- SLEEP Education for everyone
- Tai Chi for Better Sleep
- Michigan Cottage Food Law
- Food preservation
- Matter of Balance
- Diabetes
- Chronic Pain Toolkit

FORESTRY/EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER



Logging Professional Training,
April 22nd, 2026, Gaylord

EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

The Extension Master Gardener program is led by volunteers who share science-based, environmentally-sound gardening knowledge with their communities. Benefits of this program include increasing environmentally responsible gardening practices, improving food security, enhancing community and quality of life, and fostering youth development through gardening. The Friendship Garden (pictured below) is maintained by local Extension Master Gardeners. To explore this garden, visit the Otsego County Conservation District Demonstration Garden located near the Alpine Center.

FORESTRY PROGRAMMING 24 participants

Annually, The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) holds both 8-hour Core training sessions to certify new loggers and 4-hour Continuing Education classes for Qualified Logging Professionals (QLPs) around the state. Given the area's rich history in forestry, SFI regularly hosts trainings at the Otsego Extension office, attracting loggers from across the Northern Lower. These trainings are critical to maintaining certified wood fiber heading to the mills and increase global demand for certified forest management and wood products. Participants learn Global SFI standards, Best Management Practices to maintain water quality, threatened and endangered species, climate change impacts, invasive species ID and more.

 **6** Master Gardeners
in Otsego County,
with **5,758** total
hours of volunteer
service

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION



Local Events

AGRICULTURE

Farm Safety Day March 28th, 2026 CharlevoixField Days: Climate Resiliency project - June 18th, 2026 and Soybean August 4th, 2026 Hillman

Local Summer research: results shared at field days and published.

- Climate resiliency: 5 Farms. Greenhouse gas testing, soil samples. Research provides recommendations for sustainable farming methods.
- Rye Plots: Metz. Testing different nitrogen rates applied and effect on yield.
- Oat and Barley plots: Johannesburg. Effectiveness of 4 oat and 3 barley varieties.
- Soybean trials: 4 on-farm trials in Alpena and Montmorency County examining different results of micronutrient, fungicide, deer repellent techniques, and herbicides along with control plots.

Local research studies provide growers in our counties with data about what works best and leads to the healthiest crop yield in our Counties. This can be very different from what works further south in the state.

Agriculture and Agribusiness

66,154
participants in MSU Extension agriculture and agribusiness programs

748
agriculture and agribusiness news articles, as well as 126 bulletins and fact sheets, published on the MSU Extension website

1,587
programs provided by MSU Extension agriculture and agribusiness educators

179,785
subscribers to agriculture- and agribusiness-related MSU Extension News Digests

AG PROGRAMMING

Michigan is agriculturally diverse both in what we produce and who produces it. MSU Extension goes beyond traditional methods of working with farmers with a strategy to reach farms at every level and size of production. We understand that some farmers may not be able to meet in person due to distance or timing of an educational offering, so we incorporate a vast array of online learning and digital outreach. We meet people where they are at, so they have the tools at the appropriate time, which is integral to farming success. In the past year, we have reached audiences in a variety of ways. 70% were in-person events, 19% were webinars, 6% were hybrid, and the remaining 5% were online courses.



Citizen planner is a longstanding program continuously well attended by our area residents.

PROGRAMMING

Michigan's Great Lakes and coasts support diverse wildlife, fisheries, and recreation, but face challenges from fluctuating water levels, development and use. Michigan Sea Grant—a collaboration between MSU, University of Michigan, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)—works to protect these resources through research, education and outreach.

4-H Great Lakes and Natural Resources (GLNR) Camp is a week-long statewide natural resources leadership camp for teens. Camp was held July 26-August 1, 2026 (Presque Isle, Mich.), involving: 79 Youth (69 campers and 10 youth counselors) from across 26 counties; and 20+ professional staff and volunteers. Camp goals are largely to Foster youth leadership through Michigan's Great Lakes and Natural Resources. Camp program objectives, as outlined in camp planning and reporting documents, include hands-on learning through Great Lakes and natural resource-based experiences designed to teach:

Science and Technology, Ecology and Management
Free-choice learning through Exploration, Recreation
Experiencing Careers (and mentors)
Youth Leadership Development
Community Service & Stewardship Action

Partners contributing to camp programming included: 4-H Youth Development, Michigan 4-H Foundation donors, Michigan Sea Grant, MSU Dept of Fisheries and Wildlife, UoM School for Environment and Sustainability (SEAS), US Fish and Wildlife Service, NOAA Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary, USGS/GLFC Hammond Bay Biological Station, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan, and Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative.

Citizen Planner Classroom Curriculum

Understanding the Planning and Zoning Context— Learn the legal sources and limitations of planning and zoning authority, and explore your understanding of ethical decision-making.

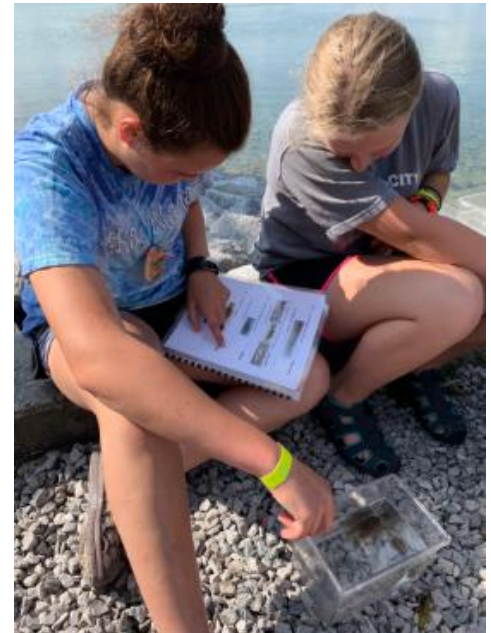
Planning for the Future of Your Community— Recognize the function and importance of a master plan, know the process for developing one and its relationship to zoning.

Implementing the Plan with Zoning— Discover the importance of zoning, learn how zoning is administered and gain confidence in your zoning reviews, including site plans.

Making Zoning Decisions— Learn how to adopt and amend a zoning ordinance, understand the role of the zoning board of appeals and obtain skills in basic property development methods.

Using Innovative Planning and Zoning— Strategize with placemaking and design-based solutions for local and regional success in the New Economy.

Successfully Fulfilling Your Role— Strengthen your ethical decision-making skills, apply standards to your decision-making and know when to ask for help.



4-H students learning about the Great Lakes.

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This past year Otsego County MSU Extension has helped community members through phone, email, Facebook and office walk-ins.

As MSU Extension continues to bring research and education to citizens across the state, three wonderful resources help reach every community member in our county:

MSU Extension Lawn and Garden Hotline

(888) 678-3464

Calls answered by Extension Master Gardeners with the knowledge and resources to help with gardening and lawn questions.

Ask Extension

canr.msu.edu/outreach/ask-an-expert

One-to-one answers from MSU Extension experts on topics such as lawns, agriculture, food preservation, natural resources, and more!

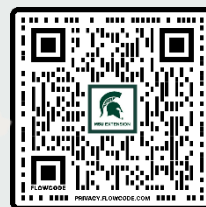
Soil Testing

homesoiltest.msu.edu

Don't guess - soil test! Learn what vital nutrient your soil is missing for healthy growth in gardens, lawns, and crops. Purchase soil tests in our office or online.

Stay Connected!

Scan the QR code to sign up for monthly emails highlighting local MSU Extension events and information you can use



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