

# BARRY COUNTY ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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## Message from the District Director

The MSU Extension mission statement states, “Michigan State University helps people improve their lives through an educational process that applies knowledge to critical issues, needs and opportunities.” The Barry County – MSU Extension Annual Report brings this mission to life for county commissioners and residents. The data and stories within show how education is impacting lives in Barry County. As you will see in this report, Barry County and MSU Extension form an integrated partnership serving the needs of students, farmers, senior citizens, veterans, and anyone else seeking to better their lives through learning.



**1,516** participants from the county attending programs



**314** programs (across the state) attended by participants from this county



**45** answered Ask Extension questions



**278** total volunteers



**22** community partnerships



**893** youth enrolled in 4-H

## Overall Impact

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**29,264,562** contacts  
through social media, web activity, e-  
newsletters, and handouts statewide



**42** programs hosted in the county



**1,014** participants attending  
programs hosted in the county



**196** client consultations



**6** Nutrition and Physical Activity Policy  
System and Environmental sites receiving  
PSE education within the county



**9** policy, systems, and environmental  
changes with those PSE sites



**1,910** residents were positively  
impacted with the nine policy, systems,  
and environmental changes with those  
PSE sites



**59,188** contacts through county  
e-newsletters, web activity, social media  
and handouts

## Economic Development, Environmental Conservation, and Agricultural Productivity

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**\$246.5 Billion** annual  
impact of food and agriculture on  
Michigan's economy



**470** # of virtual programs related to  
Financial Education, Food Systems, Water  
and Environmental Quality, Government  
and Businesses State Wide.



**22** # of participants in  
Beekeeping or Pollinator  
programs



**49** # of soil test samples  
processed for Barry County



**245** # of participants in  
county agriculture programs.



**44** residents that utilized  
Pesticide Applicator trainings



**1,445** # of youth participants in 4-H



**45** county 4-H clubs



**\$8,087.04**  
4-H volunteer hourly total value



**256** total 4-H volunteers



### Michigan 4-H State Horse Show 2024

The 4-H State Horse Show is an annual event that brings together 4-H members from counties across Michigan. In 2024, the show took place at the MSU Pavillion, August 16-18. During the three-day show, members competed in classes such as English, dressage, Western, trail, jumping and gymkhana. Youth are selected by their county 4-H programs to participate in this event. This year, 22 Barry County youth attended the State Horse Show.



### Exploration Days 2024

In 2024, eight Barry County youth attended MSU Extension's 4-H Exploration Days Event. Each year approximately 2,000 youth (ages 12-19) and chaperones from across Michigan attend. This fun, MSU pre-college program is designed to: increase responsibility, confidence, independence, accountability, problem-solving, decision-making and time management skills. It is also designed to increase communication, teamwork, citizenship, leadership skills, foster ability to meet new people and make new friends, develop and expand career and personal interests, increase college exploration and access to MSU campus and its resources and develop social and academic skills needed for a successful transition to college and life as an adult. Exploration Days also gives youth opportunities to try new things that may not be available in their county.



### Successful Eclipse Library Program

Barry County 4-H and the Hastings Public Library hosted a special event on April 3 to celebrate the upcoming near-total eclipse. Attended by 30 participants, the program featured twelve hands-on activities focused on space and lunar science. At the end, attendees received free eclipse glasses to safely view this rare astronomical event.



## Nashville Community Garden

The garden began when six families near each other in Nashville could not grow gardens due to space and trees. Barry County Commissioner Matt Callton spoke to another county commissioner, Catherine Getty, about the issues. Catherine leveraged her connections through Blue Zones to get the community garden off the ground. The village of Nashville offered the space to the community. Catherine also recruited 4-H Program Coordinator Lily Arriaga, due to her horticulture background, to be a part of the garden. Together, they received a grant to build the garden. Approximately \$7,600 was invested into the garden, including a \$6,000 shed to hold the equipment necessary to properly care for the garden.

This particular garden is for everyone in the community. Community members are invited to come and help themselves to the fruits and vegetables. Extra produce is sometimes donated to the local food pantry to help boost the fresh foods available to patrons.

At an event held in the garden, 4-H staff and health and nutrition staff discussed how they utilized the garden to support their programming. 4-H staff provided learning opportunities to youth by teaching them about the science of growing food and how kids can do it at home.

The desire is for the garden to continue growing as there is space to expand.

## Cultivating Future Gardeners

At Delton Kellogg School, the summer of 2024 blossomed with an inspiring initiative that transformed a simple community garden into a vibrant classroom. The school's garden became a hub of learning and growth for 103 enthusiastic students across seven classes, thanks to a dedicated weekly program designed to engage youth with the joys and responsibilities of gardening.

Our weekly sessions were a blend of education and fun. The program not only introduced students to a diverse range of vegetables, but also provided them with hands-on experience tending to the garden. Among the participants was a particularly enthusiastic student who stood by Lily Arriaga's side throughout the program, showing an interest in garden maintenance. This student especially enjoyed cutting down weeds and eagerly absorbed the lessons on effective weeding techniques.

On the final day, a particularly touching moment occurred when the student presented Lily with a hand-written letter expressing their thanks for teaching them how to cut weeds.



# Barry County Board of Commissioners Committee of the Whole Workshop on Solar and Alternative Energy

MSU Extension's Charles Gould was invited to serve on a four-member panel and give a presentation on solar and agriculture. He answered questions that had been submitted before the committee's meeting and addressed many of the questions in his presentation. During the last 20 minutes of the meeting, he had the opportunity to answer questions about solar and agriculture. Based on the questions he was asked and comments made, many in the audience had never considered the possibility of growing crops and grazing livestock in solar projects.

## Solar Summit: Connecting People and Power

A big solar project in Barry County spawned a lot of talk about solar farms. "Stop Solar Farms" signs sprung up along county roads. In April, the Pierce Cedar Creek Institute sponsored a program designed to help people feel comfortable asking and getting answers about solar energy. MSU Extension's Charles Gould gave a 40-minute presentation to 67 residents about the use of solar energy projects to diversify landowners' income, land management and conservation practices (e.g., integrating pollinator habitat and native plantings with solar panels).



## Dairy Education

In 2024, 21 farmers from Barry County utilized Dairy Education programs held by MSU Extension Dairy Educator Martin Mangual. These programs included Parlor Performance Evaluation, Milker Training at Prairie View Farm and the West Michigan Dairy Educational Dinner. The Dairy Education Dinner had 34 attendees representing over 12,000 dairy animals; plus, another 60,000 in 53 additional herds served by those in attendance. Topics covered were how to get more from your parlor and the more things change, the more they stay the same. All participants surveyed stated they increased their knowledge and planned on implementing changes based on what they learned. In addition, Martin also published numerous articles and podcast episodes. Martin also gave interviews and assisted farms with updated HPAI (highly pathogenic avian influenza) information as it was available.



## TelFarm – Farm Financial Analysis

Farm Business Educator Jonathan LaPorte, worked with producers in Barry County to analyze their farm business. The TelFarm program provides accounting and financial analysis support to farmers across Michigan. These "Whole Farm" and "Enterprise" analysis reports outline the farm's financial situation and cost of production. It requires an updated year-end balance sheet and farm records for all cash transactions in the year. The analysis reconciles their cash transactions with balance sheet information to provide a "production year" viewpoint to make management decisions for their farm business. Part of this process includes check-in meetings and tax estimation. In Barry County, 16 farm operations took advantage of these services offered by MSU Extension.



**405** Nutrition and physical activity participants hosted in Barry County



**290** Youth & Adults in Barry County who utilized SNAP-ED programs



**518** Barry County residents who participated in health and nutrition programs



**89** Barry County residents participating in Food Safety programs including ServSafe®.

## Health & Mindfulness



In a continued effort to manage our physical and mental health in 2024, residents found resources by taking part in several sessions. These sessions explored mindfulness basics such as breathing, moving, eating, walking, taming your busy mind and more. Research has shown that people who are more mindful are generally happier and report less anxiety, symptoms of depression, anger and worries. Some of the topics were:

- Walk With Ease
- Stress Less with Mindfulness
- Diabetes PATH
- ACE’s
- Brief Practices in Mindfulness
- Keys to Embracing Aging
- Tai Chi
- Building Resilience
- Matter of Balance
- RELAX: Alternatives to Anger
- Teaching Kids Mindful Eating
- Mental Health First Aid
- Wits Workout
- Maintaining Health in Difficult Times

## Food Safety



In 2024, 89 Barry County residents took classes and accessed resources from MSU Extension’s Food Safety Team. These classes covered a variety of topics that helped residents gain the knowledge and training to prevent food borne illnesses. Some examples of the classes attended are:

- ServSafe®
- Preserving Michigan’s Harvest – Several Topics
- Michigan Cottage Food Law
- Safe Food = Healthy Kids
- MDARD Everyday Food Safety Workshop



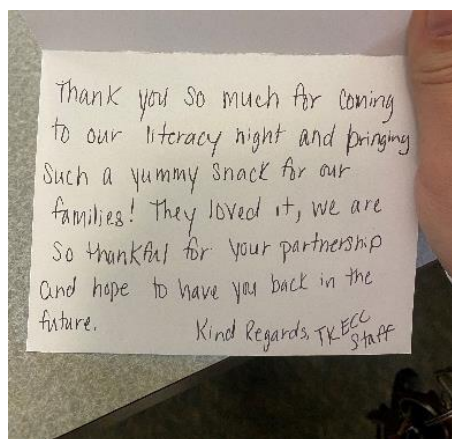
### Harvest Day at the Delton Community Garden

During our very last class of the series, students have a harvest day. This usually aligns with the last few weeks of summer before school starts. Students are welcome to harvest all that is available in the garden. The produce is collected in a wheel-barrow so that at the end of the harvest day students can pick a few items to take home (pictured left). Then the remaining food gets taken down to The Shack. The Shack is a clothing bank in Delton. While they don't serve as a food pantry or regularly give away food, they do accept the excess produce from the garden. This benefits Delton residents and those in the surrounding area and also the garden volunteers and day care students.

### BHFC Strategic Planning

Earlier this year, Community Nutrition Instructor Sydney Miller was asked to serve as co-lead for the B. Healthy Food Council and agreed to do so on a temporary basis. The B. Healthy Food Council was in its first few years as a council and has had some change in leadership during that time, so they are still working to establish not only the structure, but also the goals and an action plan. Overall, the B. Healthy Food Council is looking to assist local farmers and producers to increase access to local foods creating a healthier, more sustainable community.

Sydney was tasked with leading one of the strategic planning meetings focused on two of the three main goals; grow our next generation of farmers and increase access to healthy food. With personal experience and watching other MSU Extension educators conduct similar meetings, she was able to successfully facilitate the meeting. Sydney created flip charts with goals and potential action items on them and led discussion on each option weighing the pros and cons. She then had members vote to narrow down our top choices, upon which they adjusted them to be more realistic and attainable for the group. Many members not only congratulated Sydney on her facilitation skills, but more importantly said they felt as though a lot was accomplished. This excited them and made them eager to do the work to achieve the goals. The greatest success through this process was moving the council forward while uniting members on common goals.



### Thank You from Thornapple Kellogg ECC

Thornapple Kellogg Early Childhood Center hosted their first family night, February 1. They specifically reached out to MSU Extension asking for us to provide a nutritious snack and activity. Sydney Miller paired up with 4-H Program Coordinator Arin Bowen to provide the recipe/food and plan the activity. They made hummus and prepped veggies for students to make snowmen. Approximately 50 students each made a snowman.

This event was beneficial in many ways. Thornapple Kellogg ECC was grateful for the snack and activity we provided. MSU Extension/4-H was able to promote our programs and form a relationship with the staff at Thornapple Kellogg ECC.

# Programs

## 4-H & Youth

- 4-H Clubs
- 4-H Spin Clubs
- 4-H Capitol Experience
- Leadership Education
- 4-H Exploration Days
- 4-H Shooting Sports
- International Exchanges
- Adulting 101
- Career Preparation/Exploration/Development
- Cash Composition Contest & 4-H Money Smart Contests
- Skillathon
- Wild Spartans
- Summer Garden Programs

## Food & Health

- Changing Negative Self-Talk
- Cottage Food Law
- Food Preservation
- Food Safety Hotline
- Mindfulness Sessions
- Personal Action Toward Health (PATH)
- Powerful Tools for Caregivers
- ServSafe
- Sleep Education
- Tai Chi, Matter of Balance for Arthritis & Falls Prevention
- Walk With Ease
- Keys to Embracing Aging
- Wits Workouts
- Safe Food = Healthy Kids
- Cooking Matters
- Mental Health First Aid (Adult, Teen, Youth)
- Teen Cuisine
- Show Me Nutrition
- Grow It, Try It, Like It

## Family

- Homeownership Education
- Money Management
- Parenting Education
- RELAX: Alternatives to Anger
- Social & Emotional Health of Young Children

## Agriculture Related

- TelFarm
- Agritourism Education
- Beginning Farmer
- Beekeeping Programs & Education
- Cropland & Building Leasing
- Cultivating Local Farm Economics
- Estate & Farm Succession Planning
- Farm Business Organization & Structure
- Farm Financial Performance
- Farm Stress Management
- Field Crop Webinar Series
- Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable & Farm Market Expo (GLEXP0)
- Heroes to Hives
- Integrated Crop & Pest Management
- Grain Bin & Manure Pit Safety
- MI Ag Ideas to Grow With Conference
- Michigan CSA Network
- Michigan Manure Summit
- On-Farm Educator Visits
- Renewable Energy & Energy Conservation Education
- Virtual Breakfasts
- Christmas Tree Production Education

## Business & Community

- MSU Extension Product Center
- Making It In Michigan
- MSU Extension Citizen Planner Program
- New Commissioner Training
- Veterans Services

## Lawn & Garden

- Ask Extension
- Lawn & Garden Hotline
- Foundations of Gardening/MSU Extension Master Gardener Program
- Smart Gardening
- Soil Testing

## Natural Resources

- Clean Boats, Clean Waters
- Introduction to Lakes Online
- Michigan Birding
- Algae 101
- Michigan Master Naturalist
- Michigan Paddle Stewards
- Wild About: Conservation Webinar Series



## Partnerships

- Barry County Commission on Aging
- Central Elementary School
- Corewell Health Pennock
- Delton District Library
- Delton Kellogg Community Garden
- Delton Kellogg Schools
- Grand Ravine Senior Housing
- Hastings Public Library
- Lighthouse on the Lake
- Northeastern Elementary School
- Pierce Cedar Creek Institute
- Putnam District Library
- Southeastern Elementary School
- Station Creek Retirement Community
- YMCA

## Coalitions

- Barry County 4-H Advisory Council
- Barry County Activate Blue Zones
- Barry County Great Start Collaborative
- Barry Community Resource Network (BCRN)
- Barry County Resource Network (BCRN)
- B Healthy Food Council
- Goat Developmental Committee
- Great Start Collaborative
- Horse Developmental Committee
- Poultry Developmental Committee
- Rabbit and Cavy Developmental Committee

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