



Calhoun County 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR



Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) brings the science, programs and resources of Michigan's land grant university to organizations, communities and individuals throughout the state. Our outreach and engagement is built on a local basis, thanks to our county partnerships and more than 600 faculty and staff in offices across all 83 counties.

Historically, most of our relationships have been maintained through in-person meetings and programs. Over the last few years we have built up the breadth and quality of our website at extension.msu.edu, which now averages 1.25 million visitors per month. In 2020, we expanded our capacity to provide high-quality virtual education.

2020 will be a year to remember for many reasons (several of which we will want to forget). The creativity, dedication, teamwork, and resilience that our MSUE professionals exhibited during this global pandemic will be something I will always remember. This has been a difficult time for communities, families and staff, and I am proud of the work we have done to continue to provide high-quality educational programs throughout Michigan.

Forced to focus on online programming, MSUE staff were given an opportunity to do something they have wanted to do for a long time - convert their in-person programming to a digital format. Digital formats don't work for everybody or every program, but to expand our reach and help more people incorporate the evidence-based learning from a major university into their homes, families, businesses and communities has always been a goal worth pursuing. Many were moving in that direction already; the

pandemic required others to move there faster.

Working from home with the tools and support needed to help them succeed in a remote environment, MSUE educators have continued to assist farmers through the growing season, elected officials and decision makers, parents, families and youth by meeting with them on virtual platforms through online meetings and webinars. With the work they have accomplished over the last months, staff reported to me that they have learned that:

- Programs that are produced for a live audience and recorded allow more people to view the meetings in a time convenient for them;
- We are reaching audiences that would not be able to attend our programs in the past because of time, travel and disability;
- We are reaching local, regional, state, national and global audiences;
- We are able to share our expertise, ideas and best practices more efficiently across the state;
- A digital divide still exists, not all programs work in an on-line format, and nothing will replace our local, face to face, relationship-based work.

In the end, I believe the experience in on-line program development and investment in capacity will not only augment but strengthen our face to face work (once that resumes). Our programs will have greater reach than ever before and MSUE will be a leader in virtual education.

Please contact me for more information and thank you for your continued support!

Julie Pioch, District Director

Michigan State University Extension helps people improve their lives through an educational process that applies knowledge to critical issues, needs and opportunities.

CALHOUN COUNTY MSU EXTENSION

www.msue.msu.edu

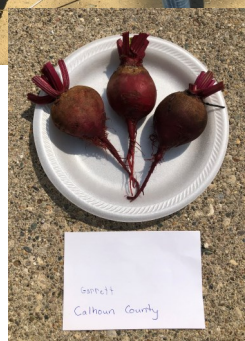
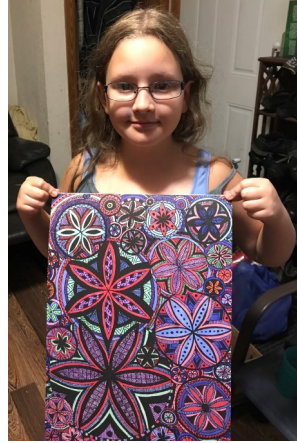


msue.calhoun@county.msu.edu

- Kathy Fischer—4-H Program Coordinator
- Ali Parker—Community Nutrition Instructor
- Marquette Frost—4-H Americorp Volunteer
- Amber Herman & Pat Dadow—Support Staff

Calhoun General Fund Budget Expenditure 2020—\$137,570

Program Highlights



AREA 51

The Final Adventure



Written by: Elizabeth R. Castro
Age: 16
8th Year - Short Story
9th Year - 4-H



4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT HIGHLIGHTS

In 2019, MSU Extension's 4-H youth development program reached 5% of the county youth population in Calhoun County. A total of 1740 young people participated, 789 enrolled in community clubs, 641 in short-term interest groups and 245 in school enrichment programs. 130 adult volunteers participated in programs teaching and mentoring our youth. The Calhoun County 4-H Council provides leadership and advice to Calhoun 4-H Program Coordinator Kathy Fischer.

Highlights of "pre-pandemic" programs include:

- Welding workshops held at Stealy Farms where youth learned different methods of welding, safety, and technique. This was a two-session class, which filled up within a week. The first series was so successful that a second series was offered and filled up quickly as well. 25 youth learned basics of welding and completed a welding project made with horseshoes.
- The Science of Chocolate was a popular 4-H program offered this year. Several local workshops were held prior to March, and then offered virtually. Participants studied the history and cultural aspects of chocolate, the chocolate and the fair-trade industry, and were able to create chocolate treats and recipes that were easy to make at home. One parent said, *"On Sunday, my daughter, her friend and I took the Chocolate class you offered to our 4-H community at the Fredonia Community Center. I would like to recognize you and Dixie for the exceptional training you delivered. The content was a perfect mix of the technical aspects of growing/processing chocolate, storytelling, experiential learning and experimenting. You kept me (a seasoned Food Scientist) and the young children in the audience engaged. My daughter and her friend loved the experience of tasting a variety of chocolate styles and watching you make the chocolate with three ingredients (I would like your ratio for darker chocolate now). I've shared with others that this is a "must do" class if it is offered again."*

With no face-to-face 4-H interactions since March, Kathy has worked tirelessly to keep 4-H volunteers and youth connected and engaged during these difficult times. She helped leaders with technology to engage clubs in virtual activities, offered her own online programs and marketed the many virtual special interest programs and workshops made available by colleagues around the state. Calhoun 4-Hers joined with other youth around the state to take programs such as the Adulting 101 series where youth received training in budgeting, cooking and household tasks; A National Park Tour Series that engaged youth virtually exploring our national parks; Junk

A highlight of Summer 2020 was the Tri-County Virtual Showcase, which gave youth an option to display their projects and receive feedback from judges. Many of our local youth also displayed their projects in the 2020 Michigan State Fair 4-H & Youth Virtual Showcase. This is something many youth don't get a chance to do because of distance and school obligations.

Drawer Robotics and Ocean Explorers, both emphasizing important STEM skills in a fun and interactive way.

To provide an alternative to screen time, Kathy offered activity kits free of charge to 4-H members that included a variety of topics from arts and crafts to planting fall bulbs. These project kits gave young people something to work on to learn new skills and provided a way for leaders to engage with their clubs. One leader said, "I want to send an amazing shout out to Calhoun County MSU Extension/4-H for not only coming up with these activity bags for younger 4-Hers, known around here as Clover Buds, but for getting them out days before originally planned! I can tell you each one I have delivered tonight to kids in our club has brought a smile to someone's face!"



Calhoun 4-Her's pride themselves in completing community service projects throughout the year.

Program Highlights

NUTRITION & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ED

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) is an evidence-based program that helps people lead healthier lives, teaches people eligible for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits about good nutrition, how to make their food dollars stretch further and learn to be physically active. Classes are held in a series so participants can work towards practicing healthy lifestyle habits. One-time presentations introduce concepts to larger groups. In addition to classes, Community Nutrition Instructors (CNIs) work with program site leaders to assess capacity for change and coach them through improving policies, systems, and their physical environment (PSE). This PSE work is critical to supporting long-term behavior change addressed during classes.

Over the last program year, Calhoun CNI Ali Parker has strengthened partnerships with schools and community organizations such as the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi, Battle Creek Public Schools and The Haven. 445 Calhoun youth and adults completed series, and 447 participated in one time presentations. SNAP-Ed programs have always been face-to-face, but with Ali's creativity and tenacity, she has been successful in modifying her programs for partners to bring the education to them virtually. Noteworthy, since October 2020 (2021 program year), 81 youth have already completed a series as teachers have found the additional education helpful to their students during this time.

Four series of classes with 6th to 12th grade youth at the Calhoun County Juvenile Home (CCJH) were completed. Each series met once a week for 6 weeks. According to the CCJH Director comments about the classes were favorable and he could see that the kids were more conscious of what they ate and change has also spread to the staff.

The teens were great active participants. They had great questions and participated in discussion. Each week, the

lesson started by asking what was remembered from last week, and if they tried any of the healthy behaviors discussed. Someone would always have a story of how they put into practice what they learned. At the last lesson, the teens were



asked what was one thing they learned from the series and what healthy behaviors they were going to continue. Responses included: reduce their fast food intake to decrease their fat, salt, and sugar consumption; be more conscious of portion sizes; and practice moderation when it came to eating foods that were high in fat, salt, or sugar. For many of these teens, with being at the juvenile home, they didn't always feel that they had much control, but they felt that making healthy food and physical activity choices was something in their control and of which they could be proud.

A common "complaint" across classes was that students shared about how they made good decisions during lunch and dinner, but didn't think about what they were eating when they went to the Jay Hawk Snack Shack. The Snack Shack is a closet filled with sodas, candy, snacks, and other items that students can purchase with tickets earned through CCJH's token economy system. Some reported that they would buy a 2 liter of soda and a few candy bars and eat them all at night in their room. Students said if they had better options, like flavored water or whole grain granola bars, they would choose those instead. A site assessment revealed capacity for a successful systems change activity so a student-driven PSE effort was launched to change the Snack Shack and create a healthier environment. One goal of the PSE was to allow students to make purchasing decisions. Further, the exercise provided a chance for the youth to take on some responsibility in the project that they could put on a resume after release.

Agriculture Program Highlights

Prior to the 2020 health crisis, MSU Extension agriculture and agribusiness educators were already providing “non-traditional” options for growers to meet their educational needs through webinars, blogs, podcasts, email newsletters, and texting. Therefore, when the pandemic stopped face-to-face programs in March, our Southwest Michigan Ag team was prepared for the challenge.

MSUE’s Rapid Response For Agriculture Website was a resource developed in 2019 in response to several weather-related emergencies (freeze, flood then drought!) The site provided a single point of entry for farmers to access resources to help them navigate those disasters. In March 2020, the site was quickly populated with resources and management tools to aid producers through the pandemic emergency. As needs emerged across the various commodities, webinars, articles and on-line tools were developed to help farms keep employees safe, while still meeting consumer demands for a fresh, safe food supply during the emergency conditions created by COVID-19.

Market disruptions caused by the pandemic had great potential to devastate the farm economy and the food supply. MSUE provided leadership in convening partners and information to assist during those first critical weeks and months of the pandemic. For example:

- In partnership with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and Michigan Pork Producers Association, MSUE hosted informational webinars for pork producers. The sessions enabled industry experts to update producers on markets, options for animal overcrowding, euthanasia recommendations, disposal options and capacity, financial assistance and mental health resources.
- The greenhouse industry was hit hard when the first Stay at Home order forced large retail outlets to close garden centers. MSUE educators quickly stepped in to provide a series of workshops on alternative marketing strategies to help garden centers quickly shift to sell their plants through curbside pick-up, delivery, and online orders. Over 300 people participated.

After intensive work with campus specialists and state partners, the **COVID-19 Hazard Assessment and Mitigation Program tool** was launched in July, to help ag operations reduce the risk of worker exposure to COVID-19 and mitigate disease spread. The tool is available to all ag related businesses to aid them in designing a pandemic preparedness plan, identifying risks for exposure, and developing mitigation practices supporting worker safety and health. The tool and supporting education materials align with federal, state and local guidance and thus has required several updates to reflect changes in rules and the science related to the virus.

Despite the pivot to COVID-19 related demands, MSUE continued to work on educational and research initiatives critical to producers in Calhoun County:

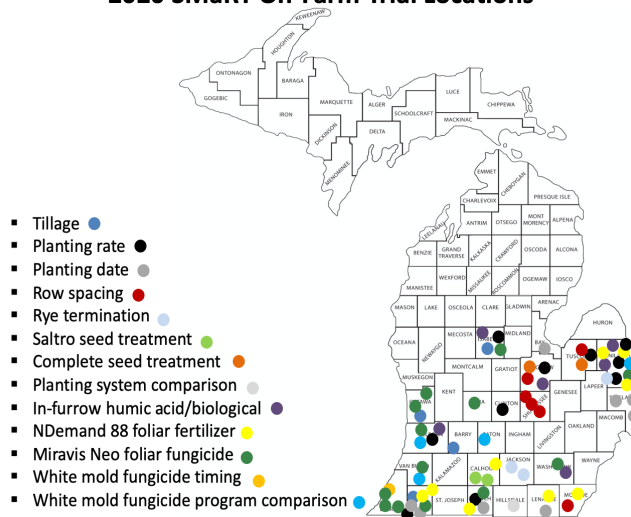
MSUE’s Pork Team is responsible for the development of a Secure Pork Supply (SPS) plan at the state level and for individual pork operations. SPS planning is an effort of the pork industry to protect itself from loss if a highly contagious foreign animal disease (FAD) with severe consequences were to occur in the United States. The goal is a business continuity strategy for pork operations with no FAD infections. \$1.4 Million is generated every day that the Michigan swine industry continues business, and to date, 80% of the 2691 pig farms are better prepared for business continuity in the case of FAD because of SPS planning efforts.

Research projects and demonstration field days highlight on-farm research collaborations between MSU Extension, local growers and grantors. In 2020, research continued as usual with field day events moved to a digital format. Ag Educators working in and around Calhoun counties, managed local research plots and used their expertise to highlight results at Virtual Field Days focused on wheat, cover crops, corn and precision livestock farming. Highlights focused on critical issues being faced by producers in the county.



Day long annual events such as Farmers Day in Coldwater, Ag Action Day in Kalamazoo and the 2018 Farm Bill update held in Marshall took place on schedule in early 2020.

2020 SMaRT On-Farm Trial Locations



Partnership with the Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee and local growers makes soybean research in Calhoun County possible. Soybean research trials will be summarized in a report mailed directly to 12,000 Michigan soybean producers.

Program Highlights

STRESS LESS WITH MINDFULNESS

Community Behavioral Health Educators were able to adapt the Stress Less with Mindfulness (SLWM) series to a web-based program to work with Calhoun partners such as the Defense Logistic Agency in Battle Creek. 28 participants were introduced to the experience and practice of mindfulness. Over 7000 people in Michigan have participated in this program to date.

Research has shown that practicing mindfulness is effective in reducing stress-related symptoms such as worry, depression and physical tension, and may be helpful in managing chronic conditions such as cardiac disease and diabetes. Mindfulness is a skill much needed in 2020. Over 30 other Calhoun residents participated in SLWM sessions made available on the web to the general public.

FOOD SAFETY & PRESERVATION

MSUE'S Food Safety Team worked quickly in March to modify their face-to-face curricula into web-based offerings and expanded their programs to offer weekly on-line interactive education. The goal was to reach as many people as possible—taking advantage of their team's expertise and while having to travel to provide quality, research based education. Programs were focused to engage food service workers, homemakers, families and youth on topics such as food preservation, the cottage food law, food pantry safety, and seasonally-themed cooking workshops. From March 2020 through November 2020, over 2000 people have logged into these programs (more than 45 from Calhoun County). The expansion of this team's efforts and the capacity they have built around food safety education is a shining example of success for MSUE's response to the pandemic.

PRODUCT CENTER IMPACT

The MSU Product Center provided business counseling to 12 food/ag businesses in Calhoun County from Jan - Dec 2020. A total of 46 hours was spent providing counseling from MSU staff. The 12 businesses have a combined total of 11 full-time employees and 20 part-time employees. One of these businesses was launched in 2020. The demographic breakdown of business owners is: three African American/Black, eight White, and one Hispanic. Seven business owners are female and five are male.

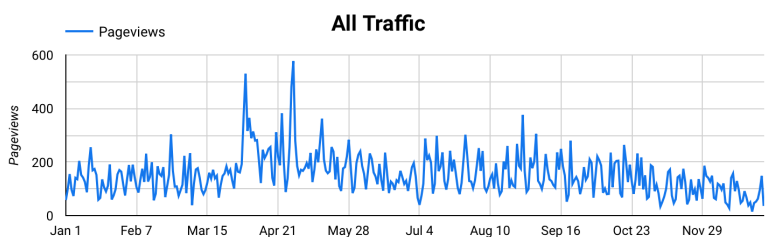
A new project led by the MSU Center for Regional Food Systems and the MSU Product Center will build upon existing partnerships to better connect food and farm entrepreneurs with the resources they need to help their businesses thrive. "Strengthening Public and Private Partnership for a More Resilient and Just Food System in Rural & Urban Communities Across Michigan" was awarded \$746,480 from the United States Department of Agriculture's Regional Food System Partnership program.

A major goal of the project is to help create jobs and improve access to locally grown foods in Battle Creek and Michigan's Upper Peninsula by developing lasting partnerships between farmers, food businesses and food system support organizations. More to come in 2021!

Calhoun 2020 By the Numbers

# of programs hosted in Calhoun	76
# of participants that attended programs hosted in Calhoun	887
# of programs offered statewide attended by Calhoun residents	290
# of Calhoun residents who attended statewide programs	1514
# of MSUE staff reporting Calhoun programs	71
# Direct consultations reported	49
# Soil Samples processed for homeowners & Commercial growers	192
# of youth participating in 4-H programs	1740

2020 Calhoun County Web Stats



Users
15,327

Sessions
23,635

Pageviews
55,933

Pages / Session
2.37

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