

ALGER COUNTY ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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Vicki Ballas, Community Nutrition Instructor (retired)

Tyreen Prunick, 4-H Program Coordinator

Mary Ellen Pond, Support Staff District 2



Message from the District Director



MSU Extension continues to make a lasting impact across Alger, Chippewa, Luce, Mackinac, Marquette and Schoolcraft Counties. In 2024, we provided critical support to farmers, engaged over 1,500 youth in 4-H and delivered nutrition education to more than 1,000 residents. We expanded leadership training for local officials, helped small businesses thrive and partnered on conservation efforts to protect our natural resources. This year, we also secured new office space in Mackinac County, strengthening our ability to serve the region. Our success is made possible through dedicated staff, volunteers and community partnerships. Thank you for your support—we look forward to another year of growth and impact!

Erin Daines

District 2 Director, MSU Extension

Impact



8 community coalitions within the county that MSU Extension employees are members of



1,508 participants from the county attending programs.



243 youth enrolled in 4-H



9 answered Ask Extension questions



101 total volunteers serving in the county



37 client consultations

Overall Impact



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



29,264,562 contacts through social media, web activity, e-newsletters, and handouts. (STATEWIDE)



4 Nutrition and Physical Activity Policy System and Environmental sites receiving PSE education within Alger County.



37,520 e-newsletters and handouts in the county



12 policy, systems, and environmental changes with those PSE sites.



8 community partnerships within the county that MSU Extension employees are members of



1,407 people impacted by sites receiving nutrition or physical activity Policy. Systems or Environmental education within the county.



2,132 participants attending programs hosted in the county

Economic Development, Environmental Conservation, and Agricultural Productivity



67,320 participants in community, food, and environment programs from across Michigan



470 virtual programs related to Financial Education, Food Systems, Water and Environmental Quality, Government and Businesses.



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



5 participants in county agriculture programs.



22 commercial/farm and **15** homeowner soil test samples processed

Community Programming Impact



41 programs hosted in the county



1,783 youth participants in programs from the county



466 participants in CFEI programs from the county



121 participants in HNI programs from the county

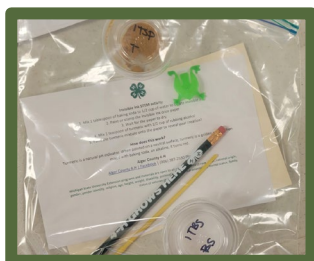


889 participants in CYI programs from the county

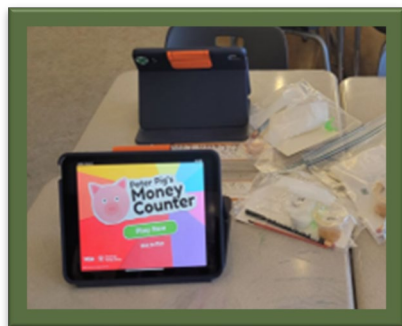


62 participants in AABI programs from the county.

Mather Elementary Family Math and Science Night- Apple CEI Partner



4-H participated in the Family Math & Science Night at **William G. Mather Elementary** as an Apple CEI Partner. This school serves students in grades **PK, K-5th** and shared that **232 youth, and their families**, attended the event. Being an Apple CEI Partner means Apple has given us Apple iPads to teach students on a variety of life skills. Our iPads were used for math and an introductory to coding gamified programs, Peter Pig's Money Counter & Getting Started with Code, often led by two of our 7th grade youth leaders. Multiple families have asked if they could download these apps on their devices!



In addition to hands-on programming for young people, support from Apple has helped Michigan 4-H bridge the connectivity gap in communities. Young people and adult volunteers can use 4-H Clovers CODE iPads at county 4-H meetings to enroll in 4-H and complete online training modules. This provides access to those without the technology at home and support to older volunteers who may not be comfortable using the tools and systems on their own. Our 20 new iPads and accessories are unpacked and labeled as are our two MacBook Airs and Apple TV. MSU's Campus connected us to the Apple Coding Academy and our lock n' charge is now set up for the community of Alger County.

In Alger County, over 200 youth engaged with 4-H at Munising Middle/High Schools Health Fair where 4-H participated as an Apple CEI Partner with well-being activities on the iPads - 'emojify wellness' was a big hit! This school serves students in grades 6th-12th.



Alger County Success Story by Vicki Ballas



Vicki Ballas (retired)

Vicki Ballas (pictured above) has worked as a community nutrition instructor in Alger and Marquette Counties for over 15 years. She retired in October 2024. We thank her for making a difference in the lives of so many of our residents and wish her well in her next chapter!

*Photo Courtesy
Munising Beacon
Facebook Page.*

I was participating in a coalition event put on by the Alger County Communities That Care and partnering with the Upper Peninsula Research and Extension Center (UPREC). It was a free community barn dance held at U.P.R.E.C; to provide the community with a fun, pros-social interaction.

I live in a small town with only one reporter and when I have programs I think are newsworthy I can call, email, or text the reporter and invite them to come. While at the event a past reporter from about 6 years ago approached me to say "hi" and told me that he still tries to eat healthy and uses the information he learned from me through reporting on my programs. I was so surprised to hear that he was absorbing information over all those years just being a bystander and not an actual class participant. I think repetition of our nutrition messages really matters, and reporters are probably good note takers and listeners. Just goes to show you, you never know who is listening to our message. Now I wonder how his reporting influenced readers about nutrition?

Reporter: "I am still eating healthy!"

Vicki: "You picked up info from reporting on my stories and actually applied it?"

Reporter: "Ya, of course!"





243 4-H youth enrollments



\$2,874.69 4-H volunteer hour value



133,306 total youth participants Statewide



12,861 of total volunteers Statewide



92 of nutrition and physical activity participants hosted in-county.



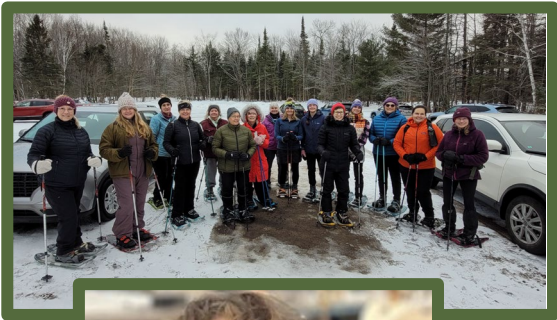
121 county residents who participated in health and nutrition programs.



9,808 of people participating in Food Safety programs including ServSafe Statewide

Women in the Woods Snowshoe Hikes

Alger County, had 15 participants for this free program. They made frequent stops during the hikes to explain forest ecology concepts, identify tree and plant species, and describe how forests support different wildlife species. Participants were enthusiastic and excited to better understand their own woodlands.



Anna Ellis, educator

One participant shared that she had been struggling for years to get active again after suffering a leg injury, and that the snowshoe hikes were the perfect opportunity to get back out in a supportive environment. As a result of the events, she decided to buy cross-country skis and has taken it up as a new hobby, which she says is bringing her great joy! Many of the women commented that they have had snowshoes for many years, but never had the confidence to take them out on their own. The hikes helped them realize how capable they are, and introduced them to new friends to hike with in the future!



James DeDecker, Director, MSU
UP Research & Extension Center



125th Anniversary Celebration

On August 10th, we had the opportunity to host over 175 people at UPREC for an open house style event celebrating our 125th anniversary of service to U.P. agriculture. The event included presentations, a display of historic photos and artifacts, facility tours and a lunch featuring grass-fed beef and produce from UPREC and other local farms. Many notable partners and stakeholders attended to commemorate our quasiquicentennial (125th anniversary) milestone, including those representing MSU AgBioResearch and Extension leadership, MI commodity groups, MI Farm Bureau, the Growing UP Ag Association, other Land Grant Universities and local legislators. One of the highlights was a special tribute from the State of Michigan commemorating our anniversary, presented by the office of Senator Ed McBroom and signed by Senator McBroom, State Representative Jenn Hill, Lieutenant Governor Garlin Gilchrist and Governor Gretchen Whitmer. Although he was not able to attend our open house, MDARD Director Tim Boring and his staff stopped by for a conversation and tour of the facility on Aug 14th, which was a unique pleasure. We are honored to be part of this deep and meaningful history and are especially thankful for all of the partners and community members that make our work possible!



Abbey Palmer, Community Foods
System Educator

UPREC Spreading the Wealth Across Alger

Work to manage grants - A full proposal for Michigan Health Endowment Fund's Healthy Lifestyles grant, LIFT-UP: Locally Integrated Food Teams in the UP was funded to Marquette-Alger RESA and extended through 2025. The kickoff meeting for community partners and teachers built new relationships that will support student-led changes to the school food environment. A team has been convened to plan for the Farm to School Institute for teacher training in 2025.

Life of Lake Superior

Life of Lake Superior, at Grand Island in Munising, July 24-25, had an adventurous group of **21 curious youth explorers** attend this year's programming. The youth learned how Grand Island and Echo Lake are connected to Lake Superior through various hands-on activities. We took the ferry to the island, learned the history & management of black bears on the island, pulled non-native invasive plants and planted native plant plugs to make better pollinator habitats, caught, sampled and sorted macroinvertebrate (crayfish & frogs too), experienced a flint knapping demo, learned history of the cemetery, snorkeled the marsh in Murray Bay, did some wetland investigation and took in wildlife ecology. We also enjoyed a picnic lunch packed with education about our local fish – including a fish fry (local white fish fried by volunteers). *Partners: Grand Island National Recreation Area, Grand Island Ferry Services, Michigan Sea Grant, MSU Extension co-workers, Munising Lions, Seaberg Pontoon Rentals, South Bay Outfitters, Vanlandshoots & Sons Fish Market, our volunteers, and the U.S. Forest Service*



Tyreen Prunick
4-H Program Coordinator

4-H Exploration Days on MSU's campus

Nine youth, three volunteers, and the county program coordinator attended 4-H Exploration days. They joined about 1,000 youth, ages 12-19, and chaperones from across Michigan on MSU's campus to explore what their future in college might look like. They lived as college students would and learned about careers during this three-day, pre-college program (plus a day early arrival due to travel time) designed to help youth build skills, explore careers, and envision their future. They selected from more than 100 fun learning sessions on a variety of topics that are led by MSU faculty, 4-H staff and volunteers and other experts. They stayed in and ate at MSU residence halls, attended sessions in buildings throughout campus, and of course enjoyed free-time activities across the university. **American Sign Language, Animal Science Skillathon, Archers to the Line, Cookies & Cupcakes, Basic Home Repairs & Maintenance, Beginning Rabbit Showmanship, Pickleball, Slam Dunk Your Way to Better Basketball Skills, Surviving the Zombie Apocalypse, Veterinary Nurse for a Day, and Writing** are a few examples of our youths' selections for sessions.





Munising 4-H Baseball/Softball Club

Inaugural Munising 4-H Baseball and Softball Club (formerly Little League with Alger Parks and Recreation) chose teams and ordered gear! **We had 132 youth participate of all ability levels** participate in 2 t-ball, 3 baseball, and 3 softball teams during the season.

Thank you to our coaches and board! We had 37 adults able to assist with this club. Thank you to all the players and their parents or guardians! Alger County 4-H announced a Family cap of \$55 (so families will only need to pay the fees for the first two players from a household)

Thank you again to our sponsors for the 2024 Munising 4-H Baseball and Softball Club!



Alger County Fair

New in 2024, all Upper Peninsula State Fair junior market livestock exhibitors in the areas of beef, swine, lamb, goat, poultry and chicken eggs were required to become Youth for the Quality Care of Animals (YQCA) certified before submitting DNA samples.

This training was offered in-person for ages 8-18 in Alger County. The training is the same regardless of the species, meaning there is not a curriculum specific to beef, then one for chicken eggs, etc. but rather it is overarching.

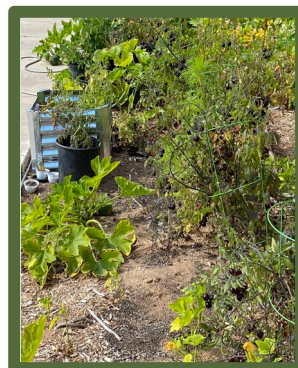


Superior Central- Teen Mental First Aid

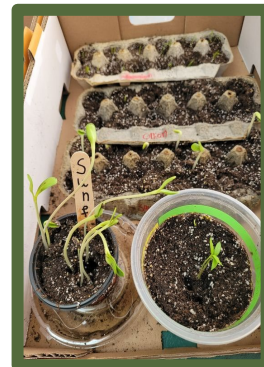
Brian Wibby, MSU Extension Educator along with Tyreen Prunick, taught **6 sessions of Teen Mental Health First Aid to Superior Central 10th graders. Just over 30 Cougars participated** in the program and were awarded certificates for the same. MSU Extension was able to provide our local school community with this training and resources to help youth dealing with issues of anger, depression, substance use and other mental health challenges thanks to the support of the STOP Grant from the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs.



**UP 4-H Camp Group Photo-
22 Alger County youth participated**



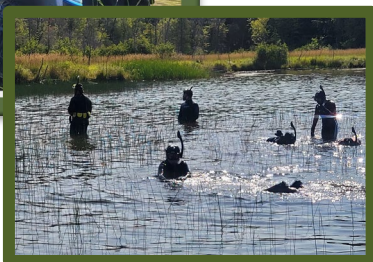
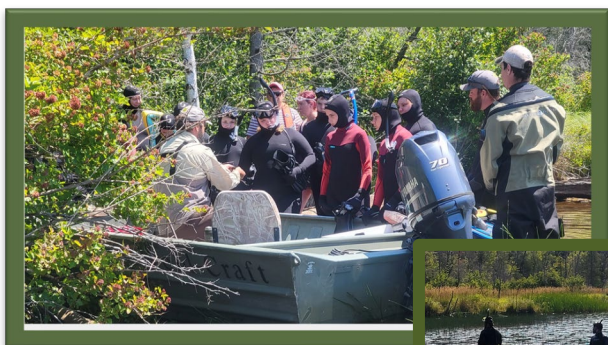
Garden Club



**Mather Elementary
Math and Science Night**



**Ainsley Karvinen from Alger
County was awarded the Michigan
4-H youth development Mark of
Excellence Award**



Life of Lake Superior

Partnerships

Munising Public Schools, Sault Tribe, Farms for Folks, Munising Farmer's and Artisan's Market, Alger Regional Community Foundation, Hillside Party Store, Alger Parks & Recreation, Trenary Community Center, Feeding America Food Distribution, Burt Township School, Alger County Commission on Aging, Alger County Communities that Care, Altran, Alger Conservation District, Grand Marais Historical Society, Superior Central School



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