



Genesee County

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



\$98,633,420

Total Economic Impact



\$9,118,844

Spending with Local Businesses



\$17,311,413

Financial Aid Disbursed



\$1,051

Enrolled Michigan Students



6,988

MSU Alumni in Genesee County



3,095

Youth Participating in
4-H

Message from the District Director

MSU Extension offers a broad range of research-based education outreach to county residents.

Over this past year, we've continued to innovate and have empowered families and individuals to live healthier lives, supported new and local businesses, created opportunities for youth leadership development and career exploration helped farmers with business management and mental health, and much more.

Our staff live and work alongside county residents, are rooted in community relationships, and are responsive to community needs. Our partnership with you makes all this possible. On behalf of the MSU Extension team serving Genesee County, thank you for another great year. We look forward to your continued support and hope you will be able to join us during one of our upcoming programs.

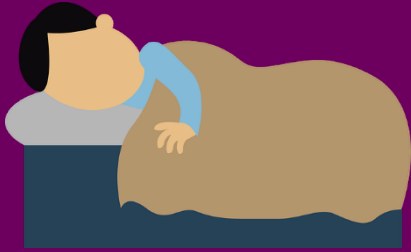


Mark J. Rankin, District 9 Director

Serving Bay, Genesee, Midland, Saginaw, and Shiawassee Counties



Program



SLEEP Program Success Story:

"Liz, I am so glad you mentioned the sleep class during the Tai Chi class. The sleep class was extremely helpful in both the information you provided and the tools we learned. The class helped me identify bad habits that were preventing me from getting restful sleep. I also learned knowledge and actions I can apply to create better sleep habits. Lastly, I learned not to get frustrated if I can't fall asleep or if I wake up during the night....instead, I stay calm pull out my "toolbox" and take action. I am getting better quality sleep and feeling more energized during the day. Thank you for having a passion for this subject and inspiring me to continue learning about sleep."



MiSUPER Reimagining Recovery Webinar Series Success Story:

"Several articles you mentioned in the training are ones I've referenced for this paper, so the whole training was very relevant and a great fit with some things I'm working on. And it was just very interesting in general, it broadened my perspective on what harm reduction is." - Participant

"This quote, "The opposite of addiction isn't recovery, it's connection." Powerful reminder to continue to engage and meaningfully connect with folks in my family and community who are dealing with substance use issues." - Participant

"The way concepts have been explained within the first two webinars have made me feel like I am strengthening my own understanding, so I can better serve the communities I work with." - Participant

Powerful Tools for Caregivers Success Story:

Our virtual Powerful Tools for Caregivers of Children with Special Health and Behavioral Needs program included a lot of childcare workers who often needed to attend to children while participating in class. This group not only benefitted from the information shared from the program's curriculum, but also bonded over shared struggles and successes that come from being a caregiver of children with special needs. One participant shared, "I've been sent to many seminars to learn how to communicate, and this has by far been the best one. I'm so glad I took this class!"

Highlights

Health Team

MSU Extension Health Team programming promotes health and well-being, including understanding important connections between physical, mental, social and emotional health. Extension Educators continue to provide evidence-based health programs such as Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention, Walk with Ease, Personal Action Towards Health (PATH), Sleep Education for Everyone Program (SLEEP), and Stress Less with Mindfulness throughout the community.

Program Highlights:

The Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention program continues to thrive at local senior centers, with over 200 older adults participating in an 18-session weekly program. Recognizing its success, a weekly class has been established at a nearby senior center to allow participants to continue their practice. People from across the county come together each week to focus on physical activity, balance improvement, and socializing.

The Michigan Substance Use Prevention, Education and Recovery (MiSUPER) team continues to evolve and expand its content, developing a 3-part educational webinar series titled "Reimagining Recovery: A Systems Approach to Addressing Substance Use Disorder." The series explores the research behind structural, social, and root determinants of addiction, limitations of the brain disease model of addiction, and how criminalizing and punitive approaches to substance use are both normalized and exacerbating the overdose crisis. This webinar series emphasized non-punitive strategies to support people who use drugs and/or are living in recovery, including harm reduction.

The Arthritis Foundation Walk with Ease exercise program is now being offered in the community. This self-paced program is designed to alleviate pain and enhance overall health for individuals with arthritis. Participants gradually increase their walking duration to 30 minutes at least three days a week. The program focuses on improving balance, boosting confidence in walking ability, and reducing limitations associated with arthritis.

Mindfulness Lunch and Learn Programs

MSU Extension health educators provided 40 virtual mindfulness lunch and learn sessions on Mondays and Wednesdays throughout the year, reaching around 2,000 audience members. These sessions cycled through our mindfulness menu of programs, with topics ranging from mindful walking and eating to building resilience to avoid burnout. Participants who registered for these programs through MiRegistry were able to receive continuing education credits by attending these sessions.

Program Highlights



Earn ServSafe certification with help from MSU Extension.

MSU Extension offers 8-hour ServSafe training, which is a national certification program.

This class is designed for anyone working in the foodservice industry, including non-profit organizations.

MSU Extension will be offering proctoring of the ServSafe Manager Certification Exam by appointment.



Contact your local MSU Extension Food Safety Educator for more information.
<https://www.canr.msu.edu/servsafe/events>

Follow our [Think Food Safety Facebook](#) page.

View upcoming events, food safety tips, and recordings of our *Food Safety Q&A* and *Investigating Food with Science* Programs.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY Extension
FOOD SAFETY HOTLINE
Operating Monday through Friday,
9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Call 877-643-9882

Ask Extension <https://www.canr.msu.edu/outreach/ask-an-expert>

Food Safety in Genesee County

MSU Extension Food Safety Team programming works to provide educational programs for food workers, cottage food entrepreneurs, childcare providers, food pantry volunteers, and consumers, providing information about the five risk factors that contribute most to foodborne illness – personal hygiene and health, cooking temperatures, holding temperatures and cleaning of food contact surfaces. In 2023 the Food Safety team continued to reach multi-counties in Michigan and out of state with virtual programming and the return to live programming as well.

Food safety for childcare providers provides food safety education for staff who care for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. The curriculum used is Safe Food = Healthy Kids, developed by MSU Extension educators. Learn what the best practices are for food safety to help keep kids safe.

Cooking for Crowds is a three-hour food safety training for volunteers working in a non-profit venue. Cooking for Crowds classes educate volunteers who offer fundraisers and events such as dinners and bake sales. This program aligns with the 2009 Michigan Food Code.

Michigan Cottage Food Law workshop classes offer an unique feature with a combination of presentations offered in this program with the Food Safety Team, teaching safe food handling concepts and the MSU Product Center sharing tips on building a solid business and marketing plan to sell the Cottage Food items. The program ends with a Q & A session featuring an inspector from Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) to answer questions pertaining to food products.

Pantry Food Safety – It's Your Job! is another three-hour training offered for volunteers working in food pantries and food banks. After completing the Pantry Food Safety training, participants will receive a certificate of completion.

Preserving MI Harvest

[Learn the latest methods and research for preserving foods at home. Let us help you fill your pantry and freezer by preserving food safely at home.](#)

To learn more and to register, visit: [Preserving MI Harvest](#)

Several other online programs are offered statewide, Emergency Preparedness Series, Food Safety for Food Service Workers (a D2L self-study course).

Program

Highlights



MSU Extension Genesee County Health and Nutrition provides nutrition education to children, youth, adults, and families with limited financial resources.



Swartz Creek Summer Camp



Children at Linda's Daycare planted fruits and vegetables that they harvested and ate later that year.

Health and Nutrition

Programs and Partnerships

22 youth programs (series) provided nutrition education to over 350 3rd to 12th graders- 65% of those being middle schoolers attending a Teen Cuisine series. New partnerships included Kuehn-Haven Middle School in Montrose and Grand Blanc West Middle School. Linden Charter Academy and Swartz Creek Summer School Camp were continuing partnerships.

Teen Cuisine Supplements Nutrition Unit at Grand Blanc West Middle School

Approximately 85 students at Grand Blanc West Middle School participated in the Teen Cuisine nutrition education program as a supplement to the nutrition unit in their Family and Independent Living Class.

At the end of the program, the students presented Tara with a booklet of thank-you notes they had made that shared their favorite experiences and what they learned.

Here are some of Tara's favorite quotes:

".... It was healthy and a good substitute for what I usually eat. The yogurt was good and so was the quesadilla."

"I loved learning about how each food group affects our bodies."

"I have learned... the difference between saturated and unsaturated fats and the different food they are found in."

Policy, Systems, and Environmental Impact

5 childcare homes participated in the Growing Healthy Eaters program. This program, funded by the Allen Foundation, provided at-home daycare providers with a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) box, funds to purchase equipment and supplies to grow and prepare fruits and vegetables, and coaching to make nutrition-related systems and environmental changes. These changes included improving menu/recipe variety and quality, initiating edible gardens, initiating the use of fresh or local produce, using onsite garden produce for meals/ snacks provided to children, and using the garden for nutrition education. One childcare provider received the Grow More Award from the Farm to Early Childcare and Educational Network for her outstanding efforts.

WIC Project FRESH

This program provides healthy and nutritious produce to Michigan WIC participants. The program encourages participants to shop at their local farmer's markets for fresh produce and instructs participants on how to use their food assistance benefits to purchase fruits and vegetables. Over 450 participants in Genesee County received \$30 in coupons from WIC to purchase MI-grown fresh fruits and veggies at farmers' markets or roadside stands.

82% of families reported learning new ways to incorporate fruits and vegetables into their meals and snacks, and 89% of families planned to buy fresh fruits and vegetables at their local farmer's market.

Program



Michigan Apple Crunch

The Michigan Apple Crunch is an annual event to promote National Farm to School Month and celebrate the iconic Michigan Apple. Thousands of participants from K-12 schools, Early Care and Education sites and other institutions and organizations across the state and Great Lakes Region register to crunch into a local Michigan apple on Crunch Day. Apples provide a great way to get local schools and institutions excited about supporting local farmers

and they are a nutritious snack that is available in Michigan eleven months of the year. In 2023, 2,007 sites in Michigan participated, with a total of 255,834 crunchers!



Genesee County Twilight Grower Gatherings

In partnership with the Genesee Conservation District and local farmers, MSU Extension supported a series of Twilight Grower Gatherings in Genesee County. These gatherings brought together food growers of all scales for

networking and informal education. The monthly events have highlighted organic vegetable production, livestock production, and food processing businesses in Genesee County. These gatherings have helped support increased collaboration and peer-to-peer learning among growers in Genesee County.

Partner Highlight - Edible Flint - The mission of Edible Flint is to support community residents in growing and accessing healthy food to reconnect with the land and each other. Edible Flint grew out of efforts in Flint to address issues of food insecurity and challenged access to healthy food, increasing rates of health problems resulting from inadequate nutrition, and increasing amounts of abandoned property and vacant land. Edible Flint is a non-profit organization with community work groups and a Leadership Board that are responsible for carrying out the work of the organization by addressing specific issues and opportunities in the local food system. MSU Extension is a key partner for Edible Flint by providing a point of contact, office space, and other programming collaborations.



Edible Flint Educational Farm - The purpose of the Edible Flint Educational Farm is to inspire and support healthy food production for the community by sharing information in a learn-and-do environment. The

food grown at the farm is donated to neighbors and local food pantries.

In 2023, the Educational Farm produced and donated 4,153.5 lbs of food

In 2023 the farm hosted grower meetings, a lunch and learn at Applewood, and three children's days.

Highlights

Community Food Systems Team Goal and Program Areas

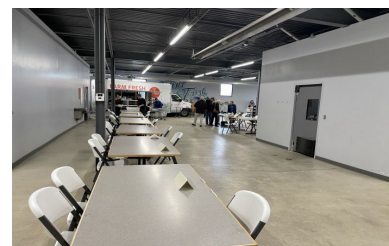
The MSU Extension Community Food Systems team works to make the Michigan food system accessible, equitable, fair, healthy, diverse, and sustainable by focusing on the people who shape food systems through education, connection, networking, research, assistance, and consultations. The Community Food Systems team leads programming that: supports community food value chains, supports food and farming business sustainability, enhances land and ecosystem quality, cultivates networks, and increases community engagement in agrifood systems.

Statewide Highlights:

Michigan CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) Network - The goal of the Michigan CSA network is to help farms increase overall participation in Michigan CSAs by connecting CSA growers to facilitate collaboration, educating consumers about the benefits of CSA membership, and expanding access to CSAs through alternative payment methods. The Michigan CSA Network convenes statewide network meetings and distributes marketing and education materials that benefit both CSA farmers and consumers.

Michigan Farm to Institution Network - The Michigan Farm to Institution Network helps people across the farm-to-institution supply chain learn, connect, and collaborate. Since 2014, the network has provided a space for learning, sharing, and working together to help farm-to-institution programs grow in Michigan.

Cultivate Michigan Marketplace - In March 2023, MSU Extension and Flint Fresh served as local co-hosts for a Cultivate Michigan Marketplace event in Flint. Coordinated by the Michigan Farm to Institution Network (MFIN) and the Michigan Department of Education, Cultivate Michigan Marketplace events are unique events that focus on meeting the needs of institutional food buyers. The event attracted both institutional food buyers interested in purchasing local food products and farmers and local food suppliers interested in selling local foods to institutional food buyers. The event was a mix between a trade show and a matchmaking event, with buyers stationed at tables around the room and suppliers being able to meet with buyers of their choice.



Program



Foundations of GARDENING

[Foundations of Gardening](#) is a ten-week online certificate course that covers the fundamentals of gardening. It includes weekly webinars delivered by MSU Extension horticulture experts and learning modules with readings, videos, and interactive activities. This course is the prerequisite for applying to become an MSU Extension Master Gardener but is open to anyone regardless of interest. Scholarships are available for those who wish to apply.



The [MSU Extension Master Gardener Program](#) is an adult horticulture education and volunteer leader training program committed to improving science-based horticulture information in communities throughout the state of Michigan.



Highlights

Consumer Horticulture/ Master Gardener Program

The **Consumer Horticulture team** serves Michigan through its educational lawn and garden programming. We provide research-based information and training to our communities. In addition, we answer questions from the public through Ask Extension and our MSUE Lawn and Garden Hotline. [Ask Extension](#) is an online tool that allows Michigan State University Extension experts to answer questions submitted by the public. In 2023, 6,471 Ask Extension questions were responded to statewide, along with 1,652 hotline questions. Alongside these tools, our ["Gardening in Michigan" Facebook](#) page and website house ornamental and vegetable gardening resources and hosts free educational videos.

In 2023, Genesee County residents participated in MSUE Consumer Horticulture programs such as home vegetable gardening, indoor plant propagation, native plant selection for pollinators, and tree pruning. This included virtual programs such as Dig In!, a continuing education program for [Extension Master Gardener Volunteers](#) that prepares them to work with and educate the public. Genesee County residents also participated in the ten-week Foundations of Gardening course. The Consumer Horticulture team works with local organizations such as Edible Flint, libraries, and local schools to improve access to horticultural education in the community.

The **Consumer Horticulture team** trains and supervises Extension Master Gardener Volunteers. These passionate volunteers work with community partners across the state, focusing on public education and helping maintain educational gardens such as the [Edible Flint Education Farm](#), [Rust Park in Grand Blanc](#), and [Crossroads Village](#). They also work with organizations that provide fresh vegetables to those in need through food donation gardens.



Being in the [Extension Master Gardener Program](#) requires only an enthusiasm for gardening and a willingness and commitment to volunteer, and sharing science-based education.

Program Highlights

Michigan Sea Grant Extension

Michigan Sea Grant (MISG) Extension promotes research, education, and outreach to enhance the responsible and sustainable use of our diverse Great Lakes resources. Through MSU Extension, MISG works with Michigan residents, industries, and coastal communities to encourage their use, benefits, and enjoyment of Great Lakes resources that positively influences our state's economy, environment, and quality of life.

Saginaw Bay Sturgeon Restoration - MISG Extension works with local, state, and federal partners to facilitate Lake Sturgeon release events throughout the Saginaw River system. At these events, community members learn about and help restore this iconic native fish species. This year's release events marked an important milestone – **over 5,000 Lake Sturgeon released into the Saginaw River system**. Learn more at www.saginawbaysturgeon.org

Center for Great Lakes Literacy - MISG Extension provides leadership for the Center for Great Lakes Literacy (CGLL), a collaborative effort led by Sea Grant educators throughout the Great Lakes watershed. CGLL engages and inspires teachers, scientists, and students to promote improved stewardship of our shared freshwater treasure. A Great Lakes literate person is someone who understands, appreciates, shares about, and helps to protect the Great Lakes resources and the watersheds that feed them.

Twenty educators from across Michigan participated in the 2023 Lake Huron Place-Based Education Summer Teacher Institute hosted in Au Gres. The 2023 institute focused on climate change and green infrastructure in the Great Lakes as both an issue and a student stewardship opportunity.

To support their implementation of a place-based education project, each educator – including one from Midland County – received a \$500 project stipend with support from CGLL and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative network and its leadership partners also supported the Summer Institute.



Over 60 people helped release +270 juvenile Lake Sturgeon into the Flint River. These release events take place each year in August and September at the Mott Park Recreation Area in Flint.



Lake Huron Regional Fisheries Workshops

In the spring of 2023, MISG Extension hosted three hybrid Lake Huron Regional Fisheries Workshops – focused on the open water fisheries and nearshore fisheries, including Saginaw Bay. These workshops engaged over 150 anglers, charter captains, and others with fisheries researchers and managers from across Michigan – close to **60 participants** learned about the Saginaw Bay fishery. Participants gained a better understanding of Lake Huron fisheries ecosystem changes, and these stakeholders learned about research and management activities relating to Lake Huron and local communities.

Program Highlights



A [homeownership seminar](#) from MSU Extension will equip you with valuable information about the home-buying process that will help you navigate the technicalities and avoid costly mistakes.



[Foreclosure](#) - Michigan has been one of the hardest-hit states during the housing crisis and many homeowners still face foreclosure in the wake of the economic recession. To save your home, you must prepare yourself with the most reliable and accurate information. The more you know about the foreclosure process and your options, the more likely you'll be able to save your home. Refer to our [mortgage foreclosure fact sheet](#) or our [tax foreclosure fact sheet](#) to get started. For additional resources click [here](#).



As of December 2023, [Teresa Crook](#) is one of the newest members of the [Michigan State University Extension](#) team. She will serve as a field crops agronomy educator serving the Saginaw Valley and Thumb re-

gion. Crook's office is located at the Saginaw Valley Research and Extension Center in Frankenmuth, Michigan.

Money Management

MSU Extension has an important role to play in addressing issues of the financial health of individuals and families through live online educational programs. The overarching goal of these efforts is for Michigan consumers to become aware of their financial profile, and to adopt sound financial practices, including managing spending and savings plans and beneficially using financial products and services.

MSU Extension's goal is that every Michigan resident has the opportunity to participate in personal finance and homeownership education. We educate a diverse audience regardless of their financial status. MSU Extension has certified housing and money management counselors who deliver trusted, unbiased education that is easy to understand and can demystify common money and home ownership best practices. Our university programs and resources help Michigan residents navigate the financial lives of themselves and their families.

More Information

[MSU Extension MI Money Health](#)

Field Crops Agronomy Educator

Originally from southern Illinois, Teresa Crook attended the University of Illinois: Champaign-Urbana for her bachelor's degree in agricultural economics with additional classes in agronomy. Her formal education was completed by her master's degree from Michigan State University in weed science under the direction of Karen Renner. As a result of her research, her love of plants became firmly cemented.

After graduation, Crook was an MSU Extension agricultural agent before moving to the Thumb to become an agronomist for Michigan Sugar Company where she conducted research trials and supervised the research and grower laboratory.

"I understand crop growth and physiology, soils and nutrient management," said Crook. "My goal as a field crops agronomy educator is to ensure MSU Extension remains relevant for those utilizing us. I look forward to helping producers with agronomic concerns or questions. I recognize farmers have many options to acquire information, and MSU Extension is a provider of unbiased scientific data. While I cannot promise to accommodate every request, I can do my best to help supply balanced information."

If you have any questions concerning field crops or nutrient management or have ideas for how MSU Extension can better serve you, please feel free to contact Crook at 989-652-3552. Crook said, "I'm looking forward to this next career chapter and helping to serve producers in my new role."

Program



Free Rural Resilience Online Course

Recognizing the high levels of stress affecting America's farmers and ranchers, Michigan State University Extension has partnered with others from the USDA's Cooperative Extension System, Farm Credit, American Farm Bureau Federation, and National Farmers Union to create a [free online course](#) that is now available and open to the public. This Rural Resilience: Farm Stress Training course covers topics such as managing stress, communicating with distressed farmers, and suicide awareness. You can register for this course on our website:

canr.msu.edu/managing_farm_stress



Saltanat Mambetova

I am honored and excited to join Michigan State University Extension (MSU Extension) as a Vegetable Extension Educator. My assigned area covers eastern Michigan (Thumb area). I will be based at the Saginaw Valley Research and Extension Center in Frankenmuth, Michigan.

The below information of growers that I met via Twilight Grower Gatherings, at GLEXPO or other events.

Name	Affiliation	County
Robert Powers	Pumpkin grower	Genesee
Rob Malcomson	Marsh Haven Farm	Genesee
Lee and Linda Purdy	Westwind Farm and Milling	Genesee
Jenn and her husband Spaniola	Spaniola Farm of Clio	Genesee
Raymond	The Raymond Family Farm	Genesee

Highlights

Managing Farm Stress

MSU Extension Managing Farm Stress Team

Collectively, the MSU Extension Farm Stress team conducted a record number of programs, reaching a record number of participants in 2023. Across all staff reporting program activities in PEARS on behalf of the MSUE Farm Stress team, there were 68 unique direct program activities in 2023, which spanned 169 distinct sessions with 5,657 participants. We also had 103 individuals enroll in the Rural Resilience online D2L training course. Furthermore, 33 farmers and farm family members were referred through our teletherapy partnership to Pine Rest for behavioral health support, with another 2 farmers to Easterseals for counseling; this is a 52.17% increase compared to 2022.

Saltanat Mambetova Vegetable Extension Educator

"I am originally from Kyrgyzstan and grew up in a post-Soviet time when every citizen who had land became a farmer.

"During my graduate and postdoctoral studies at MSU, I had the opportunity to participate in and organize field days, grower meetings, and conferences as well as collaborate with potato and vegetable growers. Along with my Ph.D. advisor Noah Rosenzweig, MSU Extension Educators, and the ANR Communication team we published a series of YouTube videos about the [importance](#) and management of soft rot diseases during [planting](#), [growing](#), [harvest](#), and [storage](#).

"I am excited to return to Michigan for the opportunity to serve vegetable growers in the eastern region of the state. I aim to develop an Extension program based on the needs of the industry and continue the legacy of a strong partnership between growers and stakeholders and MSU.

"My office is located at the Saginaw Valley Research and Extension Center in Frankenmuth, Michigan. I encourage you to stop by, call, or send an [email](#) if you want to talk about your production challenges, invite me to your operation, or discuss how MSU Extension can best assist you.

"I visited the Applewood-Ruth Mott Foundation with other educators to provide information about MSU Extension and our role. I am hoping to collaborate and assist them with their vegetable garden in 2024.

"Since November I joined the Twilight Grower Gathering that is organized by Genesee Conservation District and MSU Extension (Kelly McClelland). This event usually meets once in a month and a grower will host the event at the farm. This event has been great for me to attend and introduce myself and meet other growers in Genesee County."



Program

Highlights

4-H Youth Development

The 4-H program is growing current and future leaders: growing kids who are confident and strong, curious enough to question and capable enough to find the answers; growing youth who stick to a job until the job gets done and know how to work with others, as well as lead.

4-H grows from the farms to the towns, and from the suburbs to the cities. Anywhere curiosity roams and confidence thrives. Anywhere technology can be advanced and achievement is valued. Anywhere positive change is possible and giving back moves communities forward. After all, true leaders aren't born; they're grown!

Michigan's largest youth development organization is 4-H. Livestock horse and community service projects provide a great opportunity for youth to learn about animal husbandry, veterinary science, and giving back to the community. Youths learn valuable life skills like responsibility, record-keeping and budgeting. 4-H also offers opportunities for youth to gain knowledge about dogs, cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, poultry, snakes, turtles, and more. Youth get the experience of working with companion animals, during their experience they get to learn about what to feed them, how to train them, and how to enhance their environment.

Children and Youth

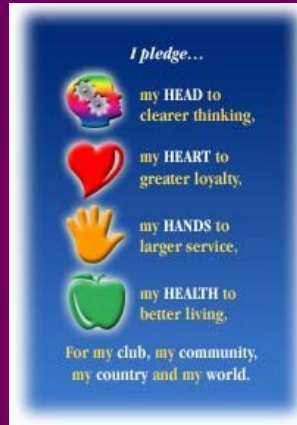
Genesee Youth Commission

The Genesee County Youth Commission recruited a diverse group of nine youth, one from each county commissioner's district. The program began with an introduction to many functions carried out by the county government. After gathering that information, Youth Commissioners went through an issues identification process where they selected a topic that they felt was critical for action in Genesee County. The topic they chose was Food Insecurity. The Youth Commission met with experts from MSU Extension, the Greater Flint Health Coalition, and the Genesee County Community Action Resource Department to learn more about their chosen issue. Based on the expert testimony and additional research, they developed a presentation for the Board of Commissioners. One student said, "I didn't know a thing about local government as opposed to state or federal, and now it appears to be far more important than I had ever realized."

Flint River Environmental Stewardship

The Flint River Watershed Coalition and MSU Extension join with many other partners to test the Flint River and its tributaries. Students take science learning from the classroom and connect it to real-world applications as part of this place-based education program. Classroom mentors include environmental professionals from Genesee County Parks, the Drain Commissioner's Office, and General Motors who make career connections. This program helps the Drain Commissioner's Office meet federal permitting requirements for stormwater regulation by both providing data and public education. After gathering their data at the stream, students present their data to peers and professionals during a student summit. In 2023, the program reached almost 1,000 students.

New to the program in 2023 was the Flint River Environmental Leaders. A group of young people emerged as leaders in the program. These dedicated students helped lead a professional development opportunity for their teachers on how to better connect with students. The students carried out an environmental action project, which involved teaching their fellow students on how to reduce plastic pollution in our environment.



In 2023 Genesee County 4-H was pleased to offer programming in the following topic areas in Genesee County:

- Nutrition Education, -Science, - Horticulture, -Creative Arts, -Music, Junk Drawer Robotics, -Literacy, Mental Health, -Leadership



This group of youth served in an advisory role to the Flint River Watershed Coalition and the students presented at the Michigan Place-Based Education Conference at Grand Valley State University.

Program Highlights

Child and Family Development

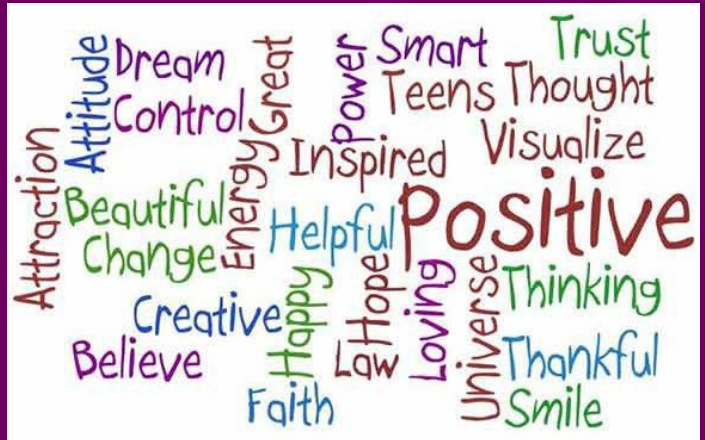
Early Childhood

The MSU Extension Child and Family Development Team offers programs and services that support families in a variety of ways. From helping parents and caregivers increase early childhood science, math, preliteracy, and social and emotional skills in young children to developing critical life skills and healthy behaviors in youth of all ages, MSU Extension works to ensure Michigan's families are stronger and children are prepared to excel in school and life.

With the Family Enrichment Program (FES), Extension Staff from the Children and Youth Institute and the Healthy Nutrition Institute come together to offer a six-week parent and family series combining "Guiding Principles for Highly Successful Parenting" with "Healthy Foods, Healthy Families". The "Guiding Principles for Highly Successful Parenting" curriculum focuses on key parenting strategies such as: creating family routines, developing emotional control in children, becoming calm and assertive parents, establishing consistent rules and relationships, helping children learn from their mistakes, and developing empathy. The "Healthy Foods, Healthy Families" curriculum teaches parents how to prepare and shop sensibly for healthy meals on a budget, how to identify different food groups and why our bodies need a variety of foods, and discuss the importance of proper nutrition on a young child's development, body, and mind. A major aspect of the FES program is emphasizing habits, routines, and traditions by helping parents and caregivers create a secure and safe foundation for their children in this ever-changing world.

Music and movement playgroups are part of a child's healthy appreciation for sound identification, physical coordination, and social/emotional development. Skills gained during a structured class help with later math, reading, and overall learning success. Families attend weekly sessions consisting of hour-long learning to listen to culturally interesting music while dancing and playing a variety of child-sized instruments. Participation in experiences like this helps young children gain exposure to, and knowledge of, basic principles in rhythm/rhyme, patterns, and gross motor coordination which all contribute to healthy development and foundational building blocks to reading and math.

Parents, caregivers, and early childcare professionals have access to virtual series/classes and one-time presentations on topics such as parent communication, building early emotional skills, positive discipline, developing early literacy skills, math and early childhood, promoting social-emotional health, building tools for the resilient child, and preparing young children to start school. The virtual classes are held on Tuesday and Thursday evenings with professional development classes held on Friday afternoons. Virtual series are held no less than twice a month rotating evenings, afternoons, and mornings throughout the year.



In Genesee County, 9 music and movement playgroups were held (with partners such as the Grand Blanc Library, and the Zeta Phi Beta Stork's Nest Project), serving 113 parents and caregivers and their children. There were 10 Family Enrichment Program series (with partners such as The International Academy of Flint, Durant-Turri-Mott Elementary, and Flint Odyssey House), which served 102 parents and caregivers. Residents also had access to 36 separate virtual one-time Extension Extras presentations/classes for parents, caregivers, and child-care professionals with roughly 1,100 total participants.

MSU Extension

Children and Youth Institute

Through the *Bringing Mental Health First Aid to Students, Teachers, and Officers Preventing (STOP) School Violence* grant, MSU Extension will partner with the National Center for School Safety (NCSS) to build a statewide, community-based infrastructure of Mental Health First Aid responders to help combat the challenges of stress, anxiety, depression and other mental health challenges young people face.

Entering Michigan State University Extension, the STOP (Schools, Teachers, and Officers Preventing school violence) grant operates as a funding source to raise awareness of youth mental health challenges (anxiety, depression, self-harm, etc) by offering mental health education within the state of Michigan. The settings that services are offered include (but are not limited to) the following: high schools, youth organizations, and local businesses. By doing this, the STOP grant can play a vital role in reducing risk factors within mental health challenges and school violence prevention.

Programming underneath the STOP grant includes various national trainings and workshops. [Youth Mental Health First Aid \(YMHFA\)](#) is a national training that teaches adults who interact with adolescents the signs/symptoms of mental health challenges and ways to support them during crisis and non-crisis situations. Additionally, [Teen Mental Health First Aid \(tMHFA\)](#) targets 10th-11th graders to be trained in mental health education, to support their peers who are experiencing mental health challenges. Furthermore, workshops such as [Mindful Mechanics and Your Thoughts Matter](#) operate as curricula to teach mindfulness-based practices and emotional wellness. Within Genesee County, STOP grant efforts have been implemented within the following partnerships: Flex High School, International Academy of Flint, Dye Elementary, Clio High School, Whaley's Childrens, Peckham Youth Services, Boys and Girls Club of Flint, Sylvester Broome Village, and Genessee District Libraries. Overall, nearly 30 programming sessions were provided, stretching over 100 participants within this reporting cycle.



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