

OAKLAND COUNTY ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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Message from the District Director



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At Michigan State University Extension, we transform lives through education- supporting individuals, families, and communities across Michigan. From agriculture and economic development to health, youth and environmental education, our 600+ staff deliver trusted, research-based knowledge where it's needed most. In 2024, we empowered families, improved health, and nurtured youth through 4-H and Tollgate Farm programs. With strong partnerships and deep community roots, we're building a stronger Michigan- and a better Oakland. Thank you for being part of our journey.

Impact



18,978 reached through community events and fairs



819 answered Ask Extension questions



\$1,220,005.80 value of volunteer time



852 volunteers



9,829 youth reached through programming



14,569 participants from the county attended **1,130** programs



4,591 participants in health and nutrition classes



2,942 client consultations



367 Extension Master Gardener Volunteers in Oakland County



~14,212 volunteer hours in 2024

Oakland County welcomes its largest Extension Master Gardener trainee class since the introduction of Foundations of Gardening online course

Foundations of Gardening is a comprehensive 10-week online course for any adult who wants to learn the science behind great gardening and is also the first step toward becoming an MSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteer.

In 2024, Oakland County gained **47** new MSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteers.

Smart Gardening outreach efforts in Oakland County reach over 4,000 people

During the 2024 season, Oakland County MSU Extension Master Gardeners (EMGs) volunteered through a variety of educational opportunities:

- Participated in **6 area farmer's markets**
- Attended **9 community events**
- Reached **4,116 people**, nearly doubling those reached in 2023
- Collected valuable data on topics Oakland County residents are most interested in and issues of greatest concern to the community



Whether choosing plants, watering and maintaining a yard or using chemicals or fertilizers, Smart Gardening resources from MSU Extension help community members make environmentally friendly choices for their own backyards.



Find tip sheets online at:



Growing partnerships and programs

MSU Extension has partnered with **Friends of Royal Oak Township Community Garden** for eight years. Thanks to a new grant and support from Keep Growing Detroit, students and volunteers received protective gear, tools and seedlings to help the garden flourish. Lauren, the longest-serving student who joined in kindergarten, now mentors others and proudly shared:

“this is our best garden ever!”



GSRP preschoolers at the **Lake Orion Early Childhood Center** loved learning about nutrition so much that they created and recorded a “vegetable dance.”

“Vegetables are good!”

—Preschool participant



Adults at the **City of Southfield Parks & Recreation Center** learned how to shop and prepare nutritious meals for one in a six-week course.



Strengthening Food Access & Community Health

2,031 Oakland County residents participated in approximately **3,100** hours of SNAP-Ed programs in **2024**.



The **Oak Park Farmers Market** launched a community garden to boost nutrition, food access and education. Led by Maralee and supported by MSU Extension SNAP-Ed, it engages 450–500 community members, including families and kids. With six raised beds, it supports SNAP users and health programs, tackling food insecurity and promoting wellness and connection across Oakland County.

“The gardens were surely a topic of discussion each week. Having them by our booth really started a lot of conversation regarding the gardens.”

—Erin Foley, Market Manager Intern





1,051 Oakland County youth enrolled in 4-H



226, 4-H volunteers



10,606, 4-H youth participants in Oakland County



~24,408 volunteer hours



Hands-on learning

Walt Whitman Elementary received a 4-H Foundation Educational Garden mini-grant to grow a thriving vegetable garden. The grant funded essential supplies—including an irrigation system, soil, seeds and tools—enabling 150 students to engage in hands-on learning year-round. From seed starting to harvesting, students experienced the full cycle of plant growth, turning their garden into a vibrant living classroom.



Students at University High School began their community garden beautification project by gathering soil samples to send off for testing.



23 students and 3 teachers at Athens High School learned about food preservation in Chemistry Club by making strawberry jam in the student-run restaurant kitchen.

“This stuff is good!”
-Youth participant



4-year-olds at St. Joseph Childcare Center are introduced to science through activities every other week.

Meeting people where they are

4-H Pop Up in the Parks events reached youth and families in Pontiac with activities and games to engage youth and introduce them to 4-H at various parks.

“We were just coming to the park. We didn’t expect there to actually be something here for the kids to do and learn while we are here! This is great!”

-Local parent



Discover 4-H at **Catalpa Oaks County Park** introduced families to MSU Extension and 4-H with fun educational activities.



Teaching mindfulness and resiliency

October 10 is World Mental Health Day, and 4-H conducts our own statewide Day of Wellness on that date. Students at **Einstein Elementary School** learned about mindfulness through archery, learning the importance of presence and focus for not only shooting arrows, but for any situation that they'll encounter.



MSU Extension Tollgate Farm & Education Center



MSU's Dairy Store ice cream makes for the perfect farm-fresh experience.



In partnership with Japanese cultural groups, the **Hanami Spring Picnic** event attracted more than 450 people to the **Sakura Cherry Blossom Garden**.

The 160-acre farmstead provides non-formal learning for children, families and adults, offering the unique opportunity to experience agriculture hands-on in an urban environment.



Summer Farm Camp engages campers in all aspects of farm life including helping to care for goats, sheep, rabbits, chickens, ducks and ponies; growing a variety of vegetables, fruits and herbs; and preparing daily snacks in the Garden Kitchen, using produce harvested from the farm.

Agriculture Education

Two public livestock programs connected communities with local farming:

- **Milk and Meet:** Engaged 500+ visitors in hands-on dairy and livestock education.
- **Lamb and Learn:** Lessons on sheep care, farming practices and Michigan's sheep industry

"We grew up in the inner city, so it was such a special and interesting experience!"

-Janice and Milton, Lamb and Learn attendees





More than an outing...

To celebrate completing an MSU Extension nutrition program, refugees from eight countries visited Tollgate Farm. They explored maple syrup production, pollinators and farming’s importance—ending the day with meditation under the maples. The visit blended education, community and a deeper connection to sustainable agriculture.



Tollgate’s historic barn comes to life during a fun-filled **Community Square Dancing** event.



New Extension Master Gardeners learn hands-on

Extension Master Gardener trainees attended an onboarding session at the Farm, where they gained skills to help them in volunteering and impacting their communities.



“Tollgate seems like an amazing place to get hands-on experience with a variety of gardens, tasks and settings.”

-Extension Master Gardener trainee



Produce grown on the farm is enjoyed during one of **Tollgate’s Friday Farmstands**, offering fresh vegetables, flowers and more to the community.

Thank you to all our partners who share our mission of helping people improve lives through education.

- ACCESS
- Affirmations Community Center
- Ascension Eastwood
- Berkley School District
- Baldwin Center
- Birmingham Next
- Blake Farms
- Bloomfield Hills Schools
- Bloomfield Township Public Library
- Bosch Community Fund
- Bound Together
- Centro Multicultural La Familia
- City of Hazel Park
- City of Novi
- City of Southfield
- City of Walled Lake Farmers Market
- CNS Healthcare
- Commerce Township Library
- Communities in Schools
- Costick Activities Center
- Deaf Community Advocacy Network
- Easterseals Disability & Community Services
- Elyton Missionary Baptist Church
- The Farm at Trinity Health Oakland
- Farmington Community Library
- Farmington Farmers & Artisans Market
- Ferndale Public Schools
- Friends of Royal Oak Township
- Geniuses On-Board Child-Development Learning Center
- Growing Pontiac
- Hardy Plant Society
- Healthy Oakland
- Highland Township Library
- Hispanic Outreach La Casa Amiga
- Holly Calvary Church
- Japanese Society of Detroit
- Kiwanis Club of Pontiac
- Lake Orion Community Schools
- Lions Club International
- Lyon Township
- Macomb County Public Works Commission
- Madison District Public Schools
- Main Street Pontiac
- Master Gardener Society of Oakland County
- Meadow Brook Hall
- Michigan Garden Clubs, Inc.
- Michigan State Fair
- National Church Residences
- National Heritage Academies
- Novi Public Library
- Oakland County Fairground
- Oakland County Farmers Market
- Oakland County: Health Division; Parks & Recreation; Office of Sustainability
- Oakland County Youth in Government
- Oak Park Farmers Market
- Oak Park Schools
- Pontiac Public Library
- Pontiac School District
- Renee Lewandowski Daycare
- Rochester Farmers Market
- Royal Oak Farmers Market
- Royal Oak Leprechauns
- Royal Oak Manor
- Ruth Peterson Senior Activity Center
- Samaritas

A special thank you to Oakland County and their continued support!

- Senthamil International Learning Association for Maximizing the Biliteracy Urge (SILAMBU)
- Southfield Public Library
- Southfield Public Schools
- South Oakland Family YMCA
- Spirit of Christ Church
- Sterling Place
- St. Joseph Child Care Center
- Sylvan Lake Garden Club
- Troy Farmers Market
- Troy Garden Club
- Walled Lake Consolidated Schools
- Walled Lake Farmers Market
- Walled Lake Head Start
- Walled Lake Villas
- Warren Consolidated Schools
- Welcome Missionary Baptist Church
- West Bloomfield Township Public Library
- Wild Ones North Oakland Chapter
- Wixom Community Center
- The Village of Oakland Woods
- Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.

Ask an Expert:
[Ask2.extension.org](https://ask2.extension.org)
Food Safety Hotline:
 1-877-643-9882
Gardening Hotline:
 1-888-678-3464



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