

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024

## Washtenaw County

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### Message from the District Director

Photo Credit: [Facebook](#)

Thank you for another great programming year of partnership between Washtenaw County and Michigan State University (MSU) Extension! Because of your continued support, we've been able to make a difference in the lives of youth, families, businesses and communities. MSU Extension offers a broad range of research-based educational outreach to county residents. Our programs reach all audiences and age groups. From youth learning essential life skills and farmers exploring ways to increase efficiency and effectiveness, to older adults being able to access healthier foods and local communities discovering ways to increase economic impact.

Over this past year, we've 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.

The following pages highlight just some of the programming that staff delivered to Washtenaw residents in 2024. We continue to provide our programs in a variety of spaces and delivery methods that are convenient for our participants to engage in and access. Our partnership with you makes this all possible. On behalf of the MSU Extension team serving the 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.



**6,674** participants from the county attending programs

**466** youth enrolled in 4-H



**395** Ask Extension questions answered

**327** volunteers serving in county

## Overall Impact

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



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



**47** Partnerships within this county



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



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



**6,377** contacts through social media, web activity, e-newsletters, and handouts in this county



**482** client consultations



**295** counseling hours for Washtenaw County MSU Product Center clients

## Economic Development, Environmental Conservation, and Agricultural Productivity

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



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



**284** soil test samples processed



**150** participants in county agriculture programs



**4,014** participants attending programs hosted in the county



**61** clients served in this county from the MSU Product Center



**470** virtual programs statewide related to financial education, food systems, water and environmental quality, government and businesses



**\$ 1,037,252** Annual Sales in this county from MSU Product Center clients



**192** 4-H Volunteers



**2,667** youth participants in programs hosted in the county



**\$ 60,065.28** 4-H volunteer hour value



**945** nutrition and physical activity participants hosted in-county



**133,306** total youth participants statewide



**1,271** county residents who participated in health and nutrition programs



**12,861** total volunteers statewide



**9,808** of people participating in Food safety programs including ServSafe® statewide

## A Scoop of Support: How the Saline Lions Club Helped Sweeten 4-H Scholarships

Scholarships play a vital role in supporting youth, especially with the rising costs of college, and Washtenaw County 4-H has always been committed to funding senior scholarships through fundraisers like the Holiday Tree Sale and the 4-H Kitchen. In 2024, while the 4-H Kitchen wasn't held during the Washtenaw County 4-H Youth Show, volunteers worked hard to staff the 4-H Snack Counter, though ice cream—usually a highlight—was not available, leading to a decrease in revenue.

In a wonderful display of community spirit, the Saline Lions Club stepped in to generously provide ice cream throughout the event, which became a beloved highlight for attendees. While the Snack Counter's earnings were lower than usual, the Lions Club's contribution didn't stop there—they donated \$1,000 from their ice cream sales to support the 4-H scholarship fund. This donation will not only help sustain but also increase the scholarships available to senior 4-H members. This partnership between Washtenaw County 4-H and the Saline Lions Club is a shining example of community collaboration.



Photo Credit: Mandy Rogers

# Equipping Youth for Success in a Changing World

## 4-H Youth Program

Many people associate 4-H with farming or animal husbandry, but the organization offers so much more! As Michigan's largest youth development program, 4-H provides a wide variety of opportunities for young people to explore their passions. Each year, thousands of youth across Michigan engage in hands-on learning, from science and technology to clothing and textiles, and much more.

These fun, educational experiences help develop skills that empower youth to lead and succeed throughout their lives. After all, leadership isn't innate—it's cultivated through growth and experience! To learn more about participating in Washtenaw County 4-H please visit the link here: [Washtenaw County 4-H - Washtenaw County](#)



Photo Credit: Mandy Rogers

## 34th Annual Project RED Educates 2,000+ Third Graders on Agriculture

The 34th annual Project RED (Rural Education Days) program took place in Washtenaw County, bringing local third graders together to learn about the importance of farming and natural resources. The program educates students about agriculture and commodities, many who have limited exposure to these topics.

The event, which is a collaboration between the Washtenaw County MSU Extension and the Washtenaw Farm Council, reached nearly 2,000 third-grade students, 449 chaperones, and 79 teachers from 25 public and private schools across the county. Teachers were also provided with educational resources to extend the lessons in the classroom.

During the program, students engaged in various hands-on learning stations that explored different aspects of agriculture, including animal care, dairy production, corn growing, and water conservation. The event is designed to inspire students to learn more about Michigan's agricultural industry & natural resources, potentially sparking interest in future careers in these fields.



Photo Credit: Kathy Siler from Washtenaw County Farm Bureau

# Guiding Families and Youth Towards a Bright Future



Photo Credit: Edward Manuszak

## Child & Family Development Program

Parents and caregivers play a critical role in shaping a child’s development and academic success. To support families across Michigan and promote school readiness, MSU Extension offers research-based programs for parents, caregivers, and early childhood educators—those who are in the best position to nurture and advocate for children’s growth.

These programs empower families by enhancing early childhood skills in science, math, preliteracy, and social-emotional wellness. By increasing caregivers’ understanding of child development, MSU Extension helps foster a strong foundation for lifelong learning and success. To Learn more about how to attend a class or event please visit the link here: [Child & Family Development](#)

## Insights from a Parenting Education Participant

“Over the years, I’ve utilized your MSU Extension classes for parenting my five-year-old son & seven-year-old daughter. Your teachings have been a true blessing in my life, & I can honestly say they’ve helped me navigate some of the toughest moments as a parent. Your resources have been invaluable to me on both a personal & professional level.”

“I can’t say enough how much I admire your work and presentations with MSU Extension. Your guidance has been priceless in my parenting journey, & your teachings have equipped me to better raise my children while also preparing for their future growth. You’ve not only helped me improve my skills as a parent but also helped me grow personally through some of the more challenging times in my life.”

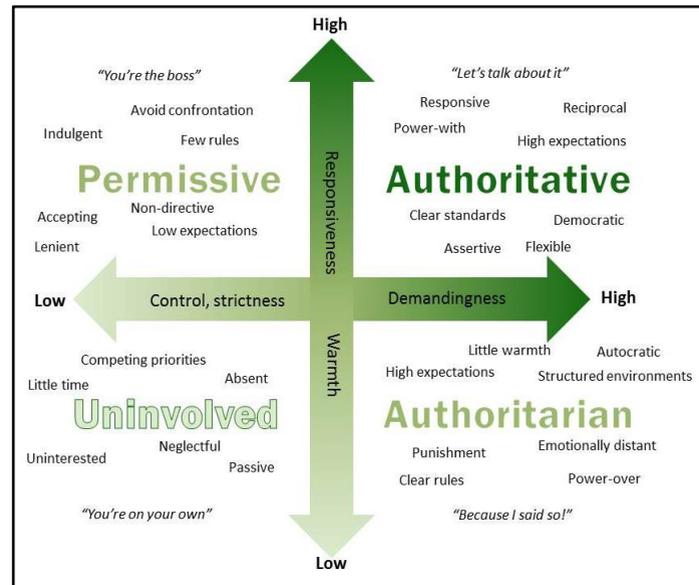


Photo Credit: Google Images

Photo depicts the different types of parenting styles

# Ensuring Safe and Healthy Food for All



Photo Credit: [Facebook](#)

## Food Safety

Ensuring food is safely prepared and handled can prevent foodborne illnesses, reducing healthcare costs and enhancing overall community health. MSU Extension offers a range of classes to support food entrepreneurs, community volunteers, childcare providers, and consumers interested in food preservation. Our high-quality, affordable programs teach the importance of safe food practices and helping individuals make informed choices to protect their health.

From food safety to proper preservation techniques, MSU Extension's research-based education empowers Michigan residents to enjoy healthier, safer food and water in their daily lives. To learn more about our program, please visit the link here: [Safe Food & Water](#)

## Bridging the Gap: Halal Food Training for Underserved Communities

The Training for Management of Halal Food has been developed to fill a gap in knowledge surrounding halal diets. The goal of this training is to give those who work with food an introductory knowledge that reaches underserved communities. Additionally, research shows that Muslims in the United States who follow a halal diet face more food insecurity due to the lack of access or awareness with halal food. Receiving feedback on this training continues to verify the gap in halal food knowledge. By incorporating the requirements of religious diets with food safety education, it will support health equity to increase the food security of underserved communities.

Quotes from participants:

"I'm proud that MSU considered this training!! Practically all workshop/ trainings don't consider the Muslim diet."

"I enjoyed the training, and I would like to understand the culture more."



Photo Credit: Google Images



Photo Credit: Google Images

# Healthier Communities, Stronger Futures



Photo Credit: [Facebook](#)

## Community Nutrition

MSU Extension's team of experts is dedicated to promoting better nutrition and physical activity across Michigan. By offering evidence-based educational programs, we empower individuals and communities to make informed decisions that lead to healthier lifestyles.

Our staff works directly with schools, and community organizations, providing valuable resources that foster long-term, sustainable changes. Whether it's at the kitchen table or in school cafeterias, MSU Extension's programs are helping to create healthier environments and improve the well-being of Michiganders, one community at a time. To learn more about our program, please visit the link here: [Nutrition](#). Programming is supported through the [Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program](#) and the [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program- Education \(SNAP-Ed\)](#).

## Quick Reference Guide Empowers Michigan Food Entrepreneurs

On February 1, 2024, the MSU Product Center launched the "Selling Food in Michigan: Quick Reference Guide," an educational resource designed to assist Michigan food entrepreneurs with business start-up procedures and regulatory requirements. The guide was created in response to frequent questions received by MSUE Educators regarding food regulations, such as those related to food product licensing & distribution. Initially developed as an internal resource for MSU Educators, it quickly evolved into a public-facing tool aimed at providing quick, accessible information for food entrepreneurs & enthusiasts.

The guide offers three main categories: "I Want to Sell," "I Want to Start," and "I Want More Information About," covering topics such as food products, types of food businesses, & relevant regulatory bodies like MDARD, USDA, and the FDA. The guide includes key information, contact details, helpful links to articles and fact sheets, while also promoting MSU Product Center services for entrepreneurs looking for further guidance. In its first month, the guide attracted 191 users, receiving positive feedback for its user-friendly design and valuable resources.



Photo Credit: [Baked Goods - Product Center](#)



Photo Credit: [Jams and Jellies - Product Center](#)

# Seeds of Progress: Gardening for a Greener Future



Photo Credit: MSU Extension  
Master Gardener Diane Phelps

## Washtenaw MSU Extension Master Gardener Program

The MSU Extension Master Gardener Program (EMG) offers comprehensive horticulture education & leadership training for volunteers passionate about making a difference in Michigan communities. Volunteers in this program are dedicated to enhancing the quality of life through horticulture and beautifying neighborhoods across the state.

The program serves two key purposes: to provide adults (18 years or older) with research-based horticulture education, equipping them with the knowledge to become skilled gardeners. And to cultivate a network of trained gardeners who, through volunteer activities, teach sustainable, environmentally-friendly gardening practices to others in their communities. To learn more about our program, please visit the link here: [MSU Extension Master Gardener Program®](#)

## Cultivating Knowledge and Community Through Volunteerism

MSU experts train dedicated volunteers on environmentally sound horticulture practices rooted in research. In return, trainees provide at least 40 hours of volunteer community service to extend MSU's outreach across Michigan. Those who successfully complete training and their volunteer commitment within 12 months become certified MSU Extension Master Gardeners (EMGs).

MSU EMGs often remain active in the program for many years, participating in a minimum of 20 volunteer hours and 10 education hours annually to retain their certification as an MSU EMG. Washtenaw County has 106 Extension Master Gardeners that contributed a total of 4,860 volunteer hours in 2024.



Photo Credit: MSU Extension  
Master Gardener Katie Stone

# From Planning to Ownership

## Creating Financial Security for All



Photo Credits: Pexels.com

### Finance and Homeownership

Money and housing can be stressful for everyone. MSU Extension delivers impactful, research-based financial education, strengthening community resilience in Washtenaw County. The [Homeownership Education course](#) guides aspiring homeowners, demystifying the complex homebuying process. This course provides a Certificate of Completion required for different down payment assistance and loan programs.

[Targeted workshops and webinars](#) are offered on a wide variety of money management topics, delivering crucial financial skills.

"Train-the-Trainer" style courses, featuring *Your Money, Your Goals* and [Get Ready, Get Set, Get Going](#), provide frontline workers and individuals with actionable tools to effectively guide clients in financial conversations.

[HUD-certified housing counseling](#) offers personalized, one-on-one guidance for individual financial challenges. For more information, please visit the website at [mimoneyhealth.org](http://mimoneyhealth.org).

### Breaking Barriers: From Re-Entry Simulation to Financial Literacy Advocacy

In December 2024, the Washtenaw County Finance & Homeownership Educator (FHE) participated in a simulated re-entry exercise hosted by Washtenaw County Friend of the Court. Assigned the persona of a recently released individual, the FHE experienced firsthand the overwhelming barriers of probation meetings, substance abuse screenings, obtaining documents, & securing benefits. This exercise highlighted the constant struggle against a system that often seems to push individuals toward failure, leaving them with a deep sense of fatigue & frustration.

Inspired by this experience, the FHE now focused on bringing financial literacy courses to local prisons as a "pre-intervention" for individuals eager for a fresh start. The simulation provided valuable insight into the financial and housing barriers many face, guiding how to create impactful, relevant content. The FHE also connected with local leaders such as the Deputy Director of A Brighter Way and a leader at TaylorMade Re-Entry, both of whom encouraged this important work in Washtenaw County to begin.

# Building Bridges: Our Partners

Ann Arbor District Library	Pinckney Community Public Library
Ann Arbor Public Schools Aftercare Program	Plymouth Orchards
Avalon Housing	Saline Young Adult Program
Bishop Elementary School	SOS Community Services
Carpenter Place	St. Louis Center
Chelsea School District Partnership	The Farm at Trinity Health
Community Family Life Center	The Farm at Trinity Health 4-H Junior Master Gardener Program
Cranbrook Tower	Trinity Health
Dawn Farm	University Michigan Mars Rover Team
Dawn Farm Downtown location	University of Michigan Bureau of Senior Housing
Dawn Farm Ongoing Programming- Downtown Ann Arbor	Washtenaw Area Council for Children
Dawn Farm Ongoing Programming- Stony Creek	Washtenaw County Conservation District Partnership
Dawn Farm Stony Creek Location	Washtenaw County Environmental Health Department
Disability Network Washtenaw Monroe Livingston	Washtenaw County Farm Bureau
Domino's Farm Petting Farm Washtenaw County 4-H Partnership 2024	Washtenaw County Farm Parks
Eva Boyd - Reach One Teach One	Washtenaw County Foster Grandparents
Ford Early Learning Center	Washtenaw County Rural Education Days 2025
Girls Group 4-H Explorations Days Collaboration	Washtenaw County Treasurer's Office
Lincoln Early Childhood at Model	Washtenaw Great Start
MHealthy	Washtenaw Success by 6 Great Start Collaborative
MHealthy 2024	Willow Run Acres
Mill Pond Manor	WISD Young Adult Sites
Neutral Zone	Women's Center of Southeast Michigan - Mom Share
Peace Neighborhood Center	

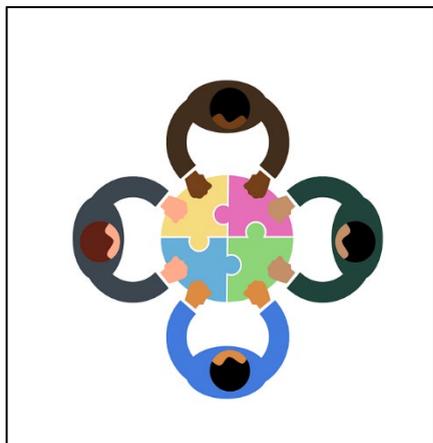


Photo Credit: Google Images



Photo Credit: Google Images



Photo Credit: Google Images

# Coalitions for County Progress

4-H Service Club 2024
Barrier Busters 2024
Chelsea Youth Mental Health Community Collaborative 2024
Head Start Health Services Advisory Committee
Horse association
Livestock and Dairy
Small Animal
Still Projects Committee 2024
Washtenaw Advisory Council
Washtenaw Alliance for Children and Youth 2024
Washtenaw Co. Barrier Busters
Washtenaw Co. Coordinated Entry Evaluation and Oversight Committee
Washtenaw County Food Policy Council, Food Waste & Packaging Policy Action Team
Washtenaw County Youth Commission 2023-24
Washtenaw County Youth Commission 2024-2025
Washtenaw Farm Council
Washtenaw Food Policy Council-Food Access and Nutrition Policy Action Team
Washtenaw Success by 6/Washtenaw County Great Start



Photo Credit: Google Images

Want more frequent updates about future programs and impacts? Sign up with the QR code to receive our monthly Report to Our Partners e-newsletter.



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## Statewide Network of Resources to Help You

**Ask Extension** offers one-to-one answers from MSU Extension experts and Extension Master Gardener volunteers on topics such as lawns, gardening, agriculture, nutrition and physical activity, food safety, food preservation, natural resources, community development, youth programming and more! Ask Extension: [www.canr.msu.edu/outreach/ask-an-expert](http://www.canr.msu.edu/outreach/ask-an-expert)

**Lawn and Garden Hotline:** 888-678-3464 Hours: M,W,F 9:00 am–12:00 pm (Year-round)  
Crabgrass, brown spots, or powdery mildew, the Lawn and Garden Hotline can give you information on all your home gardening questions.

**Food Safety Hotline:** 877-643-9882 Hours M-F, 9:00 am-5:00 pm Do you have questions about food expiration dates, how long food will last or preserving foods at home? The Michigan State University Extension food safety hotline can help answer these types of questions and concerns.

**Soil Mailers:** MSU Extension home lawn and garden and commercial soil mailers provide access to personalized fertilizer recommendations for thousands of Michigan residents every year. The home lawn and garden mailer can be purchased in person at MSU Extension offices or online from the [MSU Extension bookstore](https://shop.msu.edu/collections/msu-extension-bookstore). Commercial soil mailer are purchased in person at MSU Extension offices. Questions about soil results can be sent to [MSUsoiltest@msu.edu](mailto:MSUsoiltest@msu.edu)

**MSU Extension Bookstore** <https://shop.msu.edu/collections/msu-extension-bookstore> Look for bulletins, publications and MSU Extension products at the Bookstore!

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