



Message from the District Director

Once again, it is my pleasure to share the results of another successful year of partnership between Wexford County and Michigan State University (MSU) Extension. With your continued support, our team at MSU Extension has been able to make a difference in the lives of youth, families, businesses, and Wexford County residents through our broad range of research-based educational programs and services!

In 2023, our MSU Extension team worked to empower families and individuals to live healthier lives, supported new and local businesses, created opportunities for youth development and career exploration, helped farmers with business management and mental health awareness, and much more. Our staff live and work alongside Wexford County residents, are rooted in community relationships, and are responsive to community needs.

Our partnership with you makes this all possible. On behalf of the MSU Extension team serving Wexford County, thank you for another great year. We look forward to your continued support and hope you'll be able to join us during one of our upcoming programs.

Eric Karbowski
District Director



99

Extension programs held in
Wexford County

258

Programs with residents from
Wexford County

505

Number of participants from
Wexford County that participated
in SNAP-Ed programming

2,090

People attended programs held in
Wexford County

2,093

Number of residents from Wexford County
that attended MSU Extension programs

20,149

Facebook page reach

Wexford County Staff

- Bill Lindberg - Christmas Tree Educator
- Jessica Ackerson - Office Manager
- Danielle Schrock - Master Gardener Instructor
- Kate King - 4-H Program Coordinator
- Niki Schultz - MSU Extension Educator
- Erin Lizotte - MSU Extension Educator

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4-H Program Updates

As the largest youth development organization in Michigan, 4-H provides thousands of young people with experiential learning opportunities to explore new interests and discover their passion. In her role, Kate King works with the community to enhance and empower the Wexford County 4-H program through volunteer and participant recruitment, program development, partner engagement, and assessing program effectiveness.



"The best part about my job is seeing the smiles on young people's faces when they are with 4-H. Whether it is launching rockets, creating nature art, baking cookies, winning a blue ribbon at the fair, or any other of a multitude of scenarios, 4-H is creating a welcoming environment where youth discover who they are while developing the skills to lead for a lifetime, and we couldn't do it without the support of our community!"

-Kate King, 4-H Program Coordinator

80

Number of youth enrolled in 4-H

24

Number of adult volunteers

60

4-H clubs in Wexford County

Integrated Pest Management

The integrated Pest Management (IPM) programs collaborate with faculty and Extension educators to develop diverse information serving growers of crops and those looking for home and garden pest solutions. Erin Lizotte, IPM coordinator and senior statewide educator, supports producers in Wexford County to identify invasive species that can be harmful to their crops or home-grown produce and provides them with education and resources on best practices for pest management.



Erin Lizotte, MSU Extension Educator

Alliance for Economic Success

The Alliance for Economic Success is a 501(c)(3) public-private partnership that collaborates across Wexford and Missaukee Counties to support a healthy, integrated prosperity ecosystem for the Greater Cadillac Area. In her role as the Executive Director, Niki Schultz works side-by-side with residents and stakeholders to develop sustainable resources and supports centered around advancement and economic development.

"I am thrilled to be offered this opportunity to work in Missaukee and Wexford Counties and genuinely excited to join an organization where I can apply my knowledge, skills, and established relationships to provide our residents and stakeholders with creative initiatives focused on economic advancement and development." – Niki Schultz



**Niki Schultz,
MSU Extension
Educator**

SNAP-ED Updates

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Education Program (SNAP-Ed) teaches participants how to establish healthy eating habits and increase their time spent being physically active, while staying within a limited food budget.

MSU Extension SNAP-Ed nutrition instructors teach youth, teens, adults and seniors how to make health a priority through an instructional series. The goal of the SNAP-Ed program is to increase the likelihood that those eligible for SNAP benefits will establish healthy eating habits and increase their time spent involved in physical activity, while staying within their limited food budget.



"I can't purchase groceries anymore without checking the nutrition facts label and reading the ingredients." – program participant

Beginner Grazing School

The Michigan State University Extension Beginner Grazing School and pasture walks are educational opportunities designed to teach graziers how to better manage those pasture acres. According to the National Agricultural Statistics Service 2017 Census of Agriculture, there are 523,905 acres of pastureland in Michigan. These pasture acres are often on marginal ground, which is minimally managed. As part of this program, our team works with farmers to support improved watering systems, longer rest periods for their pastures, rotation of their stock, and improved diversity in their pastures.



Kable Thurlow,
Beef and Grazing Educator

Health & Farm Stress Update



Misty Oebel
Health & Farm
Stress
Extension
Educator

Farming, ranching, and agricultural production are mentally and physically demanding occupations. MSU Extension's farm stress team is committed to providing education, tools, and resources to the agricultural community.

Misty Oebel is a health and farm stress educator with MSU Extension that works alongside producers and key gatekeepers in Wexford County teaching them the skills and knowledge necessary to recognize the warning signs of stress, indicators of suicidal ideation, and connects them with resources like MSU Extension's teletherapy program.

Michigan Vaccine Project Overview

To help residents of Wexford County make informed decisions about vaccinations, MSU Extension partnered with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services to create the Michigan Vaccine Project (MVP). MSU Extension's statewide network of county offices and community partners provided the residents of Wexford County with evidence-based information about the role vaccinations play in helping protect Michigan's children and adults from life-threatening diseases.

Through this initiative, Maribel Richards and the MVP team implemented a statewide campaign using digital media, radio, print materials, and in-person programming to help Michiganders make informed choices about vaccinations.

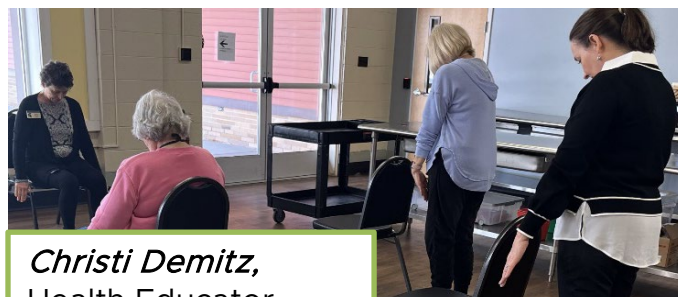


Health Educator Updates

MSU Extension offers the diabetes Personal Action Toward Health (PATH) program. This program is a six-week self-management workshop designed to help people take an active role in managing their diabetes. The PATH program meets the American Diabetes Association’s Diabetes Support Initiative criteria, a measure of high-quality programming.

One participant shared, “Both classes changed my life for the better because I now know that in order to have the kind of life I want to live, I must eat healthy and exercise. The two are like yin and yang. You can’t have one without the other. I feel like I have graduated from both classes. I feel confident going forward with how to live a healthy lifestyle.”

Tai Chi for Arthritis and Falls Prevention helps people with or without arthritis to improve balance, both mentally and physically, which helps significantly reduce the rate of falls experienced by older adults. Other benefits include improving relaxation, vitality, posture, and an improved immune system. Studies have shown that tai chi can reduce falls by nearly 70%. The program focuses on confidence building, which is linked closely to the reduced rate of falling.



Christi Demitz,
Health Educator

Master Gardener Program



Danielle Schrock,
Master Gardener
Instructor

The MSU Extension Master Gardener program is an adult horticulture and volunteer leader training program committed to improving science-based horticulture education to

Wexford County residents. The Master Gardener program trains, supports, and certifies MSU Extension master gardeners. The groups of master gardeners educate communities on research-based horticulture science and spearhead local community gardening projects.

“As a graduate of MSU and former intern with MSU Extension, I’m thrilled about the opportunity to serve our local community as the master gardener program instructor. My strong local relationships and vested commitment to supporting sound horticulture practices gets me excited for the future of the Master Gardener program in Wexford County.” - Danielle



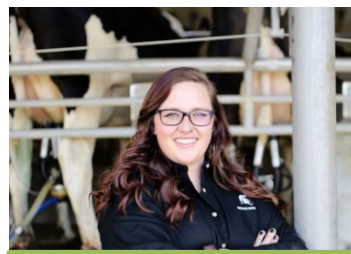
Christmas Tree Education

MSU Extension’s Christmas tree program provides educational programming to tree growers utilizing field educators, campus-based specialists, and researchers. Christmas Tree Educator Bill Lindberg works side-by-side with producers in Wexford County providing them with education and resources to maintain adequate tree nutrition, support tree production, improve soil health, minimize pest and weed invasion, and product marketing to help their trees and business thrive.

“Not only did your advice and guidance save us a good deal of money on fertilizer this year, we also may have just stopped a slow-motion trainwreck with our trees’ health. It will likely take a few years to correct this issue, but at least we now know that we are on the right track. Thanks for all your help.” – program participant

Dairy Educator & ERAIL

Accidents involving livestock occur throughout Michigan and preparing first responders to effectively respond to these accidents is a goal of MSU Extension's emergency response to accidents involving livestock (ERAIL) team. Cora Okkema is a member of the ERAIL team with MSU Extension who provides tools and resources to help animal control officers and first responders in Wexford County develop their skills in working with large animals. Often, first responders do not have experience working with large animals when responding to emergency situations, therefore, MSU Extension has assembled several tools and resources to help first responders during these unforeseen circumstances.



Cora Okkema
Dairy Educator



Field Crops Educator



Monica Jean,
Field Crops Educator

Agricultural production is a leading industry in Michigan and MSU Extension provides research-based field crop production recommendations and resources to producers in Wexford County. Monica Jean is a field crops educator who assists farmers with a variety of commodity production expertise including corn, soybean, edible dry beans, potato, and integrated crop and livestock systems through

educational programs, fact sheets, bulletins, articles, and individual contacts. Jean also supports the agricultural community with cover crop, soil health, nutrient management, and cropping system research projects.

Financial Educator

As a HUD-certified counseling agency, MSU Extension provides potential, current, and future home buyers with education about the obligations and responsibilities of purchasing a home.

Teagen Lefere is a financial homeownership instructor that works side-by-side with Wexford County residents to help them understand the complex home buying and renting process and teaches them the true costs of homeownership.

"Teagen, thank you so much for all of the help from the start and to the finish, with many phone calls and e-mails to you when needed, and keep up the wonderful work that you are doing because you are the very best at it!"

– program participant



Teagen Lefere
Financial Homeownership Instructor

Food Safety Educator

ServSafe® is a nationally recognized certification program for those working in the food service industry that is provided by MSU Extension. Kara Lynch is a food safety educator that is trained and credentialed to teach the ServSafe® curriculum. As part of her role, Lynch teaches Wexford County residents about foodborne illness, forms of contamination, food safety management systems, safe facilities & pest management, cleaning & sanitizing, and how to train employees about the latest food safety



Kara Lynch
Food Safety Educator

"Thank you very much for a great class. Excellent presentation, well organized, great discussions, nicely paced, interesting real-life stories. You're a great ambassador for MSU and the Extension Service."

– program participant