

Michigan State University Extension in Gratiot County: Solving Problems & Increasing Opportunities for Today & Tomorrow

In 2018, Gratiot County residents voted to maintain the research-proven education provided by Michigan State University (MSU) Extension in local communities!

On August 2, 2022, Gratiot County residents again will be asked to decide to continue investment that helps families, businesses and professionals gain the knowledge they need to be healthy and safe, to do their jobs better, to build strong communities, protect local environments and help young people gain the confidence and skills needed to be successful.

MSU Extension programs in Gratiot County help reduce the cost of public investment in health care and other governmental remediation services and increase the resources of families and local communities.

Gratiot County residents receive at least \$3, and often more, in return value for every \$1 the county invests in MSU Extension programs.

Delivering Education Despite the Pandemic

While stay-at-home orders hindered access to many opportunities during the pandemic, Gratiot County residents logged 453 registrations for MSU Extension online educational programs during 2020 and 2021. County residents accessed 191 online programs designed to improve farm management, enhance parenting and child well-being, and promote healthy and safe eating as well as food preservation among the many online MSU Extension educational offerings.

- Gratiot County physicians and health service providers recorded 29 registrations for the 2020 and 2021 online Pediatric and Adult Influenza webinars and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Fall Immunization conferences hosted by MSU Extension to stay up to date on current public health trends and research to prepare for the immunization seasons.
- In addition to accessing online webinars, 3,700 Gratiot County residents accessed online educational information in 2020-21 from MSU Extension websites logging 6,200 visits to view more than 24,000 pages of content

Empowering & Equipping Youth Success

Sixty-eight percent of Gratiot County 4-H seniors graduating between 2012 and 2017 enrolled in college after high school compared to 48.5% of area youth aged 18 to 24. 4-H participation has proven to help youth build the skills needed for future success.

- In 2020, Gratiot County MSU Extension 4-H programs engaged 541 Gratiot County youth aged 5 to 19 in 4-H special interest, short-term and club virtual learning opportunities that helped youth develop new skills and interests across a myriad of topics. During the 2020-2021 pandemic shut-down, 351 Gratiot County youth registered in virtual 4-H Clubs led by 54 community-based adult volunteers.

Educating for Greater Farm Profitability

Gratiot County producers managed 51,000 heads of cattle including 22,000 dairy cows, and Gratiot County farms planted 290,400 acres of field crops that produced 19.6 million bushels of corn, wheat, soybeans and oats in 2021 (U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service, County Estimates, 2021). Gratiot County is the sixth highest value market for crop and livestock production in Michigan.

- Access to evidence-based information is critical when business decisions depend on it. MSU Extension is a leader in discovering knowledge and helping farmers apply tested solutions that benefit their farms, their families and their communities. Gratiot County MSU Extension educators provided access to articles, webinars and timely social media posts designed to help producers manage the challenges of coronavirus disruptions to agriculture, prepare for tax season and manage the ongoing financial and business planning needed for farming.
- MSU Extension dairy experts provide Gratiot County dairy farmers with current research and knowledge on animal handling, antibiotic use and animal nutrition. Staff members consult to help farmers check milking protocols, assess feeding systems and provide financial assessment and advice related to farm management practices.

Building Strong Financial Capability

Gratiot County MSU Extension educational programs help people learn to both build and grow entrepreneurial enterprises and manage their personal and household finances effectively to improve their financial health and well-being.

- Gratiot County's MSU Product Center Innovation Counselor supported 120 entrepreneur clients who achieved \$6.76 million in product sales in 2020. Education was provided on such topics as licensing, sales and pricing, cottage food businesses and sound business concept development.
- Gratiot County staff provide one-on-one and group education for residents seeking support in preparing for homeownership, managing risk of and avoiding foreclosure, handling credit card debt, and investing for their future and the future of their children.

Helping Families Make Healthy Decisions

At the end of December 2021, 4,739 Gratiot County residents were receiving federal food assistance. MSU Extension provides a variety of educational supports to help individuals and families needing food assistance learn how to make the most of their food dollars and safely prepare meals that are both healthy and tasty.

- Gratiot County MSU Extension staff partners with Live Well Gratiot and other community partners to provide nutrition classes and resources to support families in making healthy and budget-friendly choices that allow them to get the most of their food resources.

MSU Extension is eager to continue serving Gratiot County residents in strong partnership with the County Board of Commissioners. By working together, MSU Extension can continue to help people improve their lives by bringing the vast knowledge resources of MSU directly to individuals, families, businesses and communities.