



Kent County

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

BY THE NUMBERS



Nearly 5,500 Kent County residents participated in a total of 681 MSU Extension programs or opportunities



3,506 Kent County youth participated in 4-H programming



1,161 Kent County residents participated in agriculture or agribusiness related workshops or sessions



342 Kent County residents received social & emotional or mindfulness training



66,659 MSU Extension webpage visits from Kent County residents

MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR

Once again I am delighted to share the results of another successful year of partnership between Kent 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.

The 2020 programming year has been like none other. As the novel coronavirus entered Michigan and the state put protections in place in the form of the Stay Home, Stay Safe order, MSU Extension staff went to work to adapt their classes to a virtual setting. Within a week, MSU Extension launched the Remote Learning and Resources and set to work to create resources that individuals, businesses and families needed. MSU Extension is proud to have continued its strong partnership with Kent County.

Local MSU Extension staff and the statewide network of Educators provided information and expertise to local farmers, government officials, local and state employees, as well as, county youth and adult residents. This annual report gives examples of some of MSU Extension's accomplishments and the impact that we continue to have in the County. Thank you for the opportunity to share our most valuable resource – our people who strive to provide answers to questions that help solve real problems right here in Kent County.

Our partnership with you makes this all possible. On behalf of the MSU Extension team serving Kent 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.

Erin Moore, District Director

Program Highlights



The largest youth development organization in Michigan, 4-H serves more than 200,000 young people.

YOUTH CODING CLASS

Veronica Quintino-Aranda joined the MSU Extension 4-H team in January 2020 and works to engage diverse audiences in Kent County. In collaboration with Looping Coding Center and Dock Ministries, Veronica offered a coding class to students representing Kelloggsville, Innovation Central High School, Grand River Prep, San Juan Diego Academy, and East Kentwood. Offering the class in a virtual or face to face format, 77% of the participants were Latinx. The coding class proved successful in overcoming challenges of access to Wi-Fi; access to electronic devices and language barriers. The class had perfect attendance with a waiting list for future programming. This program was made possible with additional funding from the Wege Foundation and, due to its success, will grow in 2021 with additional cohorts.



4-H Program Coordinator, Veronica Quintino-Aranda donned her virtual cap and gown to celebrate the Spring E2 Cohort

EXITO EDUCATIVO

Exito Educativo is a partnership based program that promotes academic success among Latino families in Kent County. Through grant funding from the Wege Foundation, MSU Extension has been successfully continuing this program with GRPS, Union and Wyoming High schools. The spring Exito Educativo cohort was one week away from graduation when the Stay Home, Stay Safe order went into place. As a result, the MSU Extension 4-H team hosted a virtual graduation! MSU Extension hosted classes for parents in Spanish to teach them how to access and utilize the zoom platform. The program will continue in 2021 with three new cohorts and partnering schools.

ADULTING 101

Adulting 101 programming allows youth and young adults to gain skills and knowledge of useful information that will help them to be successful in an everchanging world. This exciting series of Adulting 101 was offered for high school youth with topics that included Household Tasks, Developing a Spending Plan, Cooking 101, Debt vs. Credit and Being an Informed Renter. This webinar series had multiple states represented with over 1,000 registrations and 111 Kent County residents participating. This program will continue to expand in 2021 and we look forward to continuing to prepare young people in our community for success with vital life skills.



Adulting 101 was created to provide older teens with knowledge and skills to help them successfully make the transition to living on their own.

Program Highlights

4-H SPIN CLUBS

Creativity was the name of the game in mid-2020, when programming staff were unable to meet in person. Hardly missing a beat, the 4-H team went to work to create virtual learning opportunities for youth across the state. Staff utilized the SPIN (Special-Interest) club model while holding true to the 4-H mission of developing capacity in youth. Over 350 youth in the county took advantage of programs such as “Mushrooms: The Fungus Among Us,” “Junk Drawer Robotics” and “Ocean Explorers.” By offering virtual programs, and eliminating travel and geographic limitations, youth were able to take advantage of more learning opportunities.



A 4-H SPIN club is a special interest club where five or more young people get together to learn about a topic of interest.

AQUACULTURE CHALLENGE

The Aquaculture Challenge is a collaborative initiative between Lake Superior State University Biology Professor Barbara Evens, and MI Sea Grant Educator Elliot Nelson. The challenge is a competitive science competition designed to engage 8th-12th grade student teams from across the North Central Regional Aquaculture Center region. The goal of the competition is to expose students a wide variety of engaging STEM content, push teams to design innovative aquaculture designs and business models, and expose students to the potential of future aquaculture related career paths. There were 20 Kent County youth participants in 2020.



The Aquaculture Challenge engages youth in both hydroponics and aquaculture, as well as computer coding.

FOOD SAFETY

In January 2020, MSU Extension brought on a new Food Safety Educator, Wade Syers. Wade joined a statewide team of other Food Safety Educator's. MSU Extension offers a variety of food safety and preservation classes such as pressure canning and freezing, pickling and dehydrating, and preserving venison among others. Additionally, small business owners and entrepreneurs took advantage of the online Cottage Food Law classes to learn how to bring their food products safely to new markets. Over 286 Kent County residents took advantage of these classes.



Food safety plays a vital role in the health and nutrition of Michigan families.

Program Highlights



MSU Extension has a menu of programs that offer education in mental health awareness, anger management and reducing stress.



The unbiased education offered through MSU Extension presents best practices to help people at any stage in their financial lives.



Smart Gardening is MSU Extension's campaign using earth-friendly messages to help gardeners make smart choices in their own backyards.

MINDFULNESS

The need to work from home and keep our distance from others has put a strain on everyone's mental health. MSU Extension is very proud to have offered mindfulness, anger management and caregiver training to Michigan residents. Within a week of the Stay Home, Stay Safe state order, Holly Tiret was teaching virtual Mindfulness classes to not only residents of Kent County and Michigan but students and adults abroad. Her classes in breathing, laughter and anger management have been met with great success. In Kent County, 150 residents took advantage of the Relax: Alternatives to Anger classes and 192 residents took advantage of the Mindfulness classes. Overall, these classes reached over 3,000 Michigan residents.

MONEY MANAGEMENT

The financial health of Michigan residents is a key topic in which MSU Extension engages. Throughout the pandemic, Jinnifer Ortquist, Financial and Homeownership Educator offered a series of classes on money management, homeownership, renting smarter, and avoiding foreclosure among others. While these classes are offered on an annual basis, this team also developed pandemic related classes to aid residents in navigating the unique circumstances presented in the last year. These classes included "Navigating Money Challenges During COVID-19" which covered state and federal resources, as well as CARES Act highlights and "Cash Crunch during COVID-19: Ten Tools to Manage Your Finances." MSU Extension continues to monitor the financial situation and will adapt classes as necessary into 2021.

SMART GARDENING

MSU Extension Smart Gardening OUTREACH was represented with exhibits in the West Michigan Home and Garden Show. While this event often inspires thoughts of spring, it is also an opportunity to tap the expertise of MSU Extension educators. The conference was hosted by Diane Brady and Rebecca Finneran, of MSU Extension, and an array of horticulture experts. Featured topics ranged from smart plants pollinating, tips for gardening success by building resilient soils, edible ornamentals, to creating habitats for bees to thrive and recognizing captivating caterpillars. A total of 1,038 Kent County residents gained considerable amounts of tips, tricks and the tools to create a beautiful garden in our community.

Featured County Story:

InBooze Cocktail Kits Wins 2020 Minority Business Award from MSU Product Center

On November 12, Ashleigh Evans, owner of InBooze Cocktail Kits based in Grandville, received the 2020 Minority Business Award from the Michigan State University Product Center during their Cook, Share & Prosper online summit. This award recognizes an emerging or established MSU Product Center minority owned business that has demonstrated excellence, innovation, and growth during this challenging year.

"I am honored to receive this award from the Product Center," says Evans. "This has been a challenging year in so many ways. I am grateful to all of my customers for supporting my business. It is not easy being a mom of four small children, while managing all aspects of InBooze. I appreciate being recognized and I am excited to see what 2021 will bring."

Evans launched InBooze in 2018. She was inspired by the desire to enjoy cocktails at home but didn't want all of the sugar that traditional cocktail mixes usually contain. "I dehydrate fruit and herbs so the alcohol can be infused with natural flavors," explains Evans. "Each InBooze kit contains all the ingredients and instructions to make great tasting cocktails at home for you as well as for your friends and family."

InBooze Cocktail Kits can be found in over 20 stores in Michigan and Evans regularly attends events in the Chicago area to promote her products. She is fulfilling over 500 orders per month and has some great holiday specials planned. In 2020, she began partnering with corporations to provide their employees and online conference participants with kits as a creative stay-at-home gift.

Kendra Wills serves as an MSU Product Center Innovation counselor in the Grand Rapids area and have worked with Evans. Wills says "she is a great example of a passionate entrepreneur. She builds on her strengths, which include social media, marketing, and the culinary arts, and is willing to put in the hours and drive time needed to get her product in front of as many people as possible. It has been a pleasure watching her business grow."

Many food and agricultural businesses across Michigan have been working long hours adapting to the pandemic to survive.

The MSU Product Center team feels many businesses deserve recognition for their hard work and creativity during this difficult time. Four awards were granted by the MSU Product Center this month. Award winners include: Coveyou Scenic Farm Market in Petoskey for Best COVID-19 Pivot; Radical Plants, LLC based in Mt. Clemens for New Product Development; InBooze Cocktail Kits for the 2020 Minority Business Award; and Harwood Gold based in Charlevoix received the Innovation in Marketing Award.

[Michigan State University Extension](#) and the Michigan State University Product Center help entrepreneurs and businesses to develop products and service ideas into the food, agriculture, and bioenergy markets. Its team of experts consults with clients on a one-on-one basis, helping new entrepreneurs navigate from concept development to launch. The MSU Product Center also offers specialized services such as labeling, packaging, and nutritional analysis.



Program Highlights

SPRING 2020 TREE FRUIT WEBINAR SERIES

In response to the Stay Home, Stay Safe order, the MSU Extension Tree Fruit team hosted the 2020 Spring Tree Fruit Educational session as a series of webinars. This 10-day webinar series included topics such as weather predictions, apple and cherry disease updates, spring sprayer set-up, orchard weed management among others. Fruit specialists were invited to present at the lunch time sessions. This was a true team effort with an overwhelming positive response from fruit growers and stakeholders. The series attracted 478 people statewide, with 75 attending from Kent County.



The MSU Extension fruit team moved its spring tree fruit educational programs to a series of live webinars.

APICULTURE EDUCATION

The MSU Extension Apiculture Team delivered a series of webinars for new and experienced beekeepers. The group reached over 2000 people across the state of Michigan, including 98 in Kent County. The team covered topics such as preparing for swarm season, early season management, and first year colonies. MSU Extension provides robust education on beekeeping. The College of Natural Science runs the Michigan Pollinator Initiative which houses many resources for experienced and aspiring beekeepers. Additionally, all the MSU Extension webinars are housed with the initiative to provide continual and ongoing education for the growing interest in beekeeping. To access, please visit: <https://pollinators.msu.edu/resources/beekeepers/>



MSU Extension Veteran Liaison, Adam Ingrao, holding up a hive.

FARM BUSINESS

Operating a farm is complicated in nature. MSU Extension has a work team dedicated to addressing farm business management. Their programs include beginner farmer training, succession planning, understanding changes in the Federal Farm Bill, preparing for tax season on the farm, loan preparation and managing farm stress. In 2020, 61 Kent County residents participated in this program. Additionally, District Director, Erin Moore, serves as a liaison with the county's Agriculture Preservation program so that as new programming is proposed, the county has the resources and expertise of MSU Extension professionals at their fingertips.



MSU Extension assists farmers and farm businesses through educational processes that apply management, production and economic knowledge to critical issues.

Program Highlights



Learning lessons for healthy eating habits are invaluable and strengthen the foundation for a healthy lifestyle.



MSU Extension support staff assisted the MEDC as a mediator in connecting small Michigan businesses in need of PPE with Michigan based suppliers.



Information and resources for agriculture operations during the pandemic can be found at <https://www.canr.msu.edu/agriculture/Rapid-Response-for-Agriculture/MSU-Extension-CHAMP-COVID-19/index>

NUTRITION EDUCATION

In 2020, MSU Extension continued offering Nutrition Education through both the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFENP). This team implements curriculum such as “Show Me Nutrition” This curriculum is adaptable by grade and age and, in addition, it can be coupled with educational standards. Students and teachers alike enjoy learning about healthy snacking, reducing sugar sweetened beverages and introducing more physical activity into our daily lives. When we make healthy eating habits fun, educational and hands-on we see the incredible benefits of programming like Show Me Nutrition in our communities.

PARTNERSHIP WITH MEDC

When COVID-19 hit Michigan, there was an almost immediate shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) for hospitals. The demand and shortage left countless businesses in Michigan wondering how they could procure much needed PPE to reopen. MSU Extension partnered with Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) to connect businesses throughout Michigan with suppliers of PPE. This collaboration between MSU Extension and MEDC began in May of 2020 and continues to this day. MSU Extension has connected over 3,000 businesses with reputable suppliers of PPE. Of those 3,000, 214 were businesses from Kent County.

COVID-19 + AGRICULTURE

The novel coronavirus impacted the Agricultural industry in unique ways. Early in the pandemic, during the Stay Home, Stay Safe order, there were outbreaks at processing facilities and on farms. MSU Extension formed a Rapid Response to Agriculture work team to help counties understand the unique issue Agriculture faces. The team developed a COVID Hazard Assessment and Mitigation Tool (CHAMPS) to help farms understand the risk of spreading COVID in their operations, and to avoid needing to close due to outbreaks. This team created a website for Agriculture producers to easily access new information from federal, state and local entities on resources for the industry.

MSU Extension staff located in Kent County

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Meet your District Director!

Erin Moore

MSU Extension District 7 Director

Erin Moore serves as the District Director for MSU Extension District 7, which is comprised of Allegan, Barry, Ottawa and Kent counties. Erin works with local governments, nonprofits, school systems and neighborhood groups to help identify community challenges and propose and implement successful solutions. Before joining Extension in March 2018, Moore worked for three years as a training consultant and senior program specialist with the California Department of Health and managed its strategic planning process for partnership engagement. Prior to her work in California, she spent seven years working in international development, serving countries in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as sub-Saharan Africa. Erin received a master's degree in public health focusing on global health strategies from the George Washington University in Washington, D.C., and her bachelor's degree in Spanish from the University of Michigan. Erin lives in Grand Rapids with her husband Joe and their dog Mari.



Erin always welcomes conversations on ways to collaborate and to apply the research based knowledge of MSU Extension to the critical issues you face. Feel free to email Erin at mooree16@msu.edu or call at 616-632-7887.

For MSU Extension District 7 programming and news, follow us on Facebook.

[MSU Extension District 7](#)

Through successful partnership and collaboration with Kent County, MSU Extension is able to continue its local presence and to provide vital educational resources and programming in such areas as community and economic development, agriculture, land use, health and nutrition, and youth development.

Thank you Kent County!

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MISSION:

Michigan State University Extension helps people improve their lives through an educational process that applies knowledge to critical issues, needs and opportunities.

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