



# Kent County

## 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

### BY THE NUMBERS



3,409 youth participated in 4-H, early childhood or after school programs



14,383 volunteer hours served by the 396 West Michigan Extension Master Gardeners



3,729 adults and youth benefited from health and nutrition programs



\$260,987,664 total economic impact of MSU to Kent County



\$54,771,318 spending with local businesses



\$34,192,482 MSU financial aid for Kent County students

### MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR

Over the past year, MSU Extension has continued to provide exceptional programming in Kent County. MSU Extension works to meet community needs by partnering with local organizations to bring programming that directly impacts county residents' lives. This year's highlights include the innovative programming to addresses delayed planting issues across the state of Michigan as well as a new collaborative partnership with Arbor Circle's Family Engagement Therapy Team.



We're excited to present the 2019 Annual Report that gives an overview of MSU Extension's accomplishments and ongoing work. We're passionate about serving Kent County and we look forward to a new year. Thank you for your continued support of MSU Extension and for partnering with us to make a difference.

Erin Moore  
District 7 Director

### CONTACT



Kent MSU Extension  
775 Ball Ave. NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503



[canr.msu.edu/outreach](http://canr.msu.edu/outreach)  
[msue.kent@county.msu.edu](mailto:msue.kent@county.msu.edu)



Michigan State University Extension



616-632-7865



@MSUExtension

# Program Highlights



Diversification is an increasing need for farms to stay competitive and to remain profitable.

## CULTIVATING LOCAL FARM ECONOMIES

Local government officials, farmers, and other interested community members were invited to join MSU Extension educators and community partners to learn about the trends in Michigan's value-added processing, agritourism, and renewable energy markets. Those who participated learned how to tailor local regulations that allow for on-farm diversification while addressing health, safety, and public welfare concerns. In Kent County, 27 people attended the workshop for facilitated discussion and to hear from experts in the field.



MSU Extension Educator, Amy Irish Brown, presents at the weekly IPM meeting,

## INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT FOR FRUIT

With more than 900 million pounds of apples produced per year, apples are Michigan's largest fruit crop. Kent MSU Extension houses Educator Amy Irish Brown, who serves the growers on the Fruit Ridge with critical information on pest management. For twelve weeks each summer, Amy hosted breakfast meetings with growers, chemical resell consultants/sales people and chemical manufacturing representatives to bring timely pest, weather and horticultural information to decisionmakers in the tree fruit business in West Michigan. She reached over 800 people with her educational sessions in 2019.



For more information and resources on hemp production in Michigan, go to <https://www.canr.msu.edu/hemp/>

## HEMP 101

In the 2018 Farm Bill, USDA made provision for commercialization of industrial hemp in the United States for the first time; however, the regulatory framework was not released until the fall of 2019. Calls and emails continued to come in to MSU Extension offices throughout the state from people looking for general information about industrial hemp as well as recommendations on numerous topics from seed sources and soil fertility to plant spacing and irrigation. MSU Extension has created a resource hub for Hemp production that includes an FAQ for industrial hemp production. Additionally, MSU Extension hosted a "Hemp Production 101" Webinar series that had 254 registrants. Interesting tidbit – of those who participated, 40% were not currently farmers but interested in learning more about growing hemp.

# Warrior Women Loving Wellness



WWLM Graduate receives her certificate from Gloria Martin (MSU Extension) and Cynthia Robinson (Arbor Circle).

**The start of a new partnership:** In the summer of 2019, MSU Extension was approached by a Peer Support Lead for the Family Engagement Therapy service at Arbor Circle. They were interested in adding nutrition education to their regularly scheduled services for serves women in recovery from substance abuse. After a quick meeting, MSU Extension jumped at the opportunity to partner. In the fall of 2019, MSU Extension and Arbor Circle launched the first wrap around services for these women. The group met every other week for twelve weeks. In the first week, they named themselves “Warrior Women Loving Wellness.” Each week they received a cooking/ nutrition lesson from the SNAP-Ed Curriculum “Cooking for One.” The curriculum taught essential kitchen skills such as measuring out ingredients, label reading, storage. As the women grew more confident, they learned easy recipes made with few ingredients.

**Inclusion in the Program Design:** The most successful programs MSU Extension implements ensure that there is input into the design for those receiving the service. Each week, Gloria Martin (MSUE) and Cynthia Robinson (Arbor Circle) met with the group to hear what they were looking to get out of the program and get feedback on what would be valuable to incorporate into each week’s session.

**Incorporating MSU Extension Services:** What made this program unique was that the program was held at the MSU Extension office, and each week were offered a second educational program to compliment their wellness goals. The group learned money management techniques, diabetes prevention and management and practiced mindfulness. The last week, a guest Chef, Werner Absenger, who is the Program Director for the Secchia Institute for Culinary Education, joined the group for a cooking lesson and for the graduation ceremony. This collaboration was a great success and one that will be replicated in the future.



**At the graduation ceremony for Warrior Women Loving Wellness, participants received educational incentives to promote the continuation of cooking at home.**



**Arbor Circle’s Cynthia Robinson tastes Chef Absenger’s creation.**

# Program Highlights



NATIONAL EXTENSION WORKING GROUP

Dining with Diabetes covers topics such as healthy eating, being active, monitoring, taking medications and reducing risks.



Chef Tunde Wey at the Food System Disparities event.



Revolution Farms was one stop on the Cultivate Michigan tour of production facilities with an emphasis on salad green production.

## DINING WITH DIABETES

In 2019, MSU Extension secured a grant through the Lions Club to implement Dining with Diabetes throughout Kent County. DWD is a fun and interactive series for individuals with prediabetes, type 1 or type 2 diabetes, members of their support system and/or anyone interested in learning more about healthy eating and diabetes prevention. Participants learned how to make healthier food choices and incorporate balanced menus into their dining experience. Participants also got to sample and taste the delicious foods that are made during each of the classes.

## CULINARY CONVERSATIONS

In 2019, MSU Extension had the opportunity to collaborate with our partners to put on the Culinary Conversations series. Our partners included: the Grand Rapids Downtown Market, GROW and Start Garden. The purpose of these networking events was to bring together food business professionals to have them build social capital. The three events were: Creating Your Local Food Network, Food System Disparities with Chef Tunde Wey and Culinary Conversations with Eva Turow Pow: Generation Yum! The “Meet Ups” brought in 66 people from surrounding areas to the Downtown Market to learn about local food.

## CULTIVATE MICHIGAN

The Michigan Farm to Institution Network (MFIN) is a space for learning, sharing and working together to get more local food to institutions. MFIN aim to meet the Michigan Good Food Charter goal of 20% Michigan food to institutions by 2020. Through the network, MSU Extension hosts a statewide local food purchasing campaign, called Cultivate Michigan, to help Farm to Institution programs grow and track their progress. Community Food Systems Educator, Garrett Ziegler, hosted a tour through Kent County to demonstrate the unique and diverse year-round production that is available in Michigan. Specifically, this tour was focused on salad green production and introducing buyers to a new producer through a tour and education. Tour stops included Revolution Farms in Caledonia, and Van Eerden Food Service in Grand Rapids.

# Program Highlights

## KEYS TO EMBRACING AGING

Georgina Perry, Community and Behavioral Health Educator, reached 48 seniors in Kent County with her program “Keys to Embracing Aging” that trains older adults on 12 points for growing old successfully. Topics covered include brain and social activity, physical activity, eating smart and healthy, keeping a positive attitude, stress management, financial affairs and knowing your health numbers, among others. She partnered with the Grand Rapids Senior Social Exchange, Delaware Manor, North Kent Connect, Verne Barry and Leonard Terrace Apartments, Sheldon House and St. Andrews Church. In 2020, she’ll be shifting towards implementing “Wellness Initiative for Seniors,” a new comprehensive series for senior wellness.



MSU Extension is excited to bring a new curriculum “Wellness Initiative for Senior Education” to Kent County in 2020.

## FINANCIAL LITERACY

Financial and Homeownership Educator, Jinnifer Ortquist, reached 247 Kent County residents with Money Management, Financial Literacy, Foreclosure Intakes, Homebuyer Education, and HUD Certifications in 2019. The Homebuyer Education course highlights the steps in the homebuying process and promotes financial capability and stability. This series fulfills the educational requirement for many down payment assistance programs including MSHDA and the City of Grand Rapids. New this year, Jinnifer has also started taking referrals from the court system to help probation officers diversify the programs they can offer for supporting their team.



MSU Extension offers courses on student loan repayment, retirement and improving credit scores, many of which are available online. <https://www.canr.msu.edu/mimoneyhealth/>

## MINDFULNESS FOR CHILDREN

Health Educator, Holly Tiret, taught staff at the Kent Intermediate School District how to incorporate Mindfulness for Children into their everyday classrooms. Holly also taught Kent County residents “Relax: Alternatives to Anger,” “Powerful Tools for Caregivers,” and “Nurturing Families” as part of her social and emotional learning portfolio. In total, she reached 586 Kent County residents with health programming.



The 2017 Kent Count Community Health Needs Assessment lists mental health has the number one priority issue for the county.

# Program Highlights



With more than 900 million pounds of apples produced per year, apples are Michigan's largest fruit crop.

## APPLE CRUCH

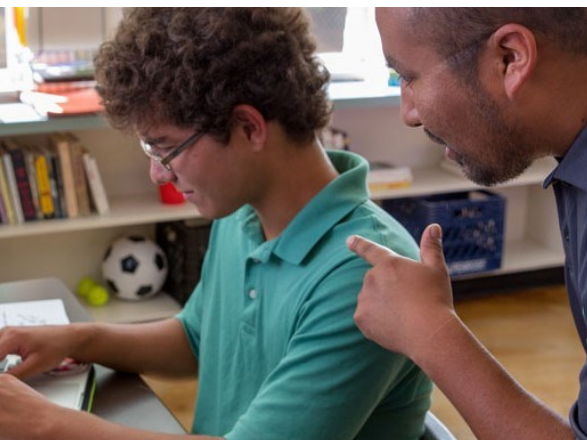
On October 10th, 2019, students and adults alike participated in the annual Farm-to-School month event that helps raise awareness for Michigan Apples. Statewide, over 850 institutions participated (schools, hospitals, early childhood centers, non-profits, businesses, colleges/universities). Extension Educators collaborating on this project provided support for development of the registration page, crunch resource guides, local apple sourcing support, promotion of the event through Facebook and participation in Crunch events in our region. In Kent County, there were 20,028 apple crunchers!



MSU Extension helps veterans in Kent County access the federal benefits to help combat food insecurity.

## VETERAN OUTREACH

In 2019, MSU Extension was awarded a USDA/MDHHS grant for working with Veterans. Steve Whittington joined the MSU Extension team in May as a Program Instructor for SNAP Outreach to Veterans. He went straight to work engaging with Veteran Services providers throughout the District. Of note, Steve participates weekly at the West Michigan Veteran Assistance Program Pantry in Grand Rapids, where he speaks one-on-one with veterans about accessing their food benefits. Additionally, he works with veterans and providers to raise awareness about other classes that MSU Extension offers that would be beneficial to veterans. Stay tuned for exciting new trainings coming in 2020!



MSU Extension helps to equip people with the knowledge and resources to make sound decisions for their future.

## COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS EXPO—APRIL 27, 2019

Frank Cox, Career Workforce Preparation Educator, partnered with the Grand Rapids African American Health Institute Co-op in Grand Rapids, MI to put on the College and Career Readiness Expo for youth from the Delta Academy and the Kappa League. The session provided information on the following foundation for career preparation, actions for career preparation, hard skills and soft skills, and skills-based volunteering activities. The youth first participated in an activity where they filled in a chart with the level of education and salaries and the amount of years it takes to achieve a certain level of education.

# Featured County Story – Delayed Planting



Photo: Deep ruts created by harvesting soybeans in wet soil conditions. Photo by Mike Staton, MSU Extension

**The issue:** Throughout Michigan and the Midwest, prolonged wet weather and flooding in spring 2019 put farmers in a difficult financial position. Many farmers delayed planting and greatly adjusted management practices. Some fields were not planted at all. Due to these conditions, farmers faced a unique set of challenges in fall of 2019 making harvest related decisions.

**How MSU Extension is helping:** MSU Extension's statewide network of agricultural educators have responded to this situation by tracking growing conditions, working individually with farmers, hosting crop update sessions and writing educational articles detailing how farmers could adjust to inhospitable conditions, make difficult choices and apply for crop damage assistance. Because this issue has the potential to greatly affect farm income, many farmers found themselves under financial stress.

MSU Extension provides programming dedicated to serving farmers under stress - whether it be physical, financial, emotional or some combination of pressures. Farmers who are struggling can find a MSU Extension expert who can help them or utilize the ask a question online resource so MSU Extension can connect them to the proper resources.

**Managing farm stress:** Taking care of crops and animals is hard on farmers and agribusiness professionals. Caring for your own health and wellness in this high-stress profession is often overlooked but is just as critical as caring for your farm business.

From weather, to equipment breakdowns, a lot of things can cause stress. Researchers at MSU Extension are conducting a research study to learn more about struggles Michigan farmers experience and what types of information may help.

Farmers know how to take care of their animals and crops, taking careful steps to ensure they are healthy and safe, yet farmers may need support and encouragement to tend to their own mental and physical stress and fatigue. Stress becomes especially intense when an on-farm injury occurs, commodity prices are low or natural disasters decrease yield.

Whether these stresses come from a financial issue or the stresses of everyday life, MSU Extension can help. If you're concerned about yourself, a family member, a friend or a neighbor MSU Extension has resources and educators that can help you identify and manage stress.

**\*\*MSU Extension was granted a one time \$500,000 award to implement farm stress programs. Please visit our dedicated farm stress site to learn more about programs offered and the research being conducted. [https://www.canr.msu.edu/managing\\_farm\\_stress/index](https://www.canr.msu.edu/managing_farm_stress/index) \*\***

# Program Highlights



The children enjoyed creating crafts at Kent District Library Kentwood Branch.

## RECYCLED CRAFTS AT KENT DISTRICT LIBRARY

Susan Fenton, 4-H Program Coordinator, conducted a four-week series on recycled crafts for elementary age youth at Kent District Library Kentwood Branch. Each week, youth would participate in a drop-in type activity where they would make a garden-related, recycled craft. These events help bring 4-H projects to new audiences and recruit new youth. These events took place on July 1, 8, 15, and 22. The series served 70 youth over the course of 4 weeks.



Exito Educativo is a partnership-based program that promotes academic success and achievement among Latino families.

## 4-H ÉXITO EDUCATIVO

The Éxito Educativo (E2) program in Kent County is a 4-H club for Latino and Hispanic high school aged youth and their families. Based on a curriculum developed by the Julian Samora Institute and delivered by 4-H staff and volunteers, this program helps students and their families learn more about post-secondary education options and processes. Many youth in the program will be the first in their families to attend college and attend for six weeks to learn about the importance of higher education, how to facilitate family communication, the academic requirements for high school graduation, career exploration, accessing financial resources, and navigating the college admissions process. In 2019, MSU Extension served 70 students and their families.



Kent County youth practicing show techniques with their animals.

## KENT COUNTY SHOWMANSHIP PLUS WORKSHOP

The Kent County 4-H team had tremendous success with their Showmanship Plus workshop that took place at the Kent County Youth Fairgrounds in Lowell, Michigan. With over 60 youth in attendance, youth ages 5-19 took part in the workshop to get hands on experience showing live animals. Youth learned time management, how to address the general public, how to recruit buyers to bid on their animals, how to write thank you notes, animal health and nutrition, managing animal weight and how to train their animals. Additionally, the youth tackled topics in money management and animal husbandry – both critical elements of animal science .



# Program Highlights

## EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER PROGRAM



The MSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Training Program is a long-standing program that trains Michigan residents to share science-based, environmentally-sound gardening knowledge. Additionally, Extension Master Gardeners share environmentally responsible gardening practices and ideas for improving food security, and are committed to improving the quality of life in Michigan through horticulture-based volunteerism. In Kent County, there are 266 certified Extension Master Gardeners. Additionally, 5,236 Kent residents took advantage of the EMG promoted soil testing.

## CHINA ART EXCHANGE

Through the 4-H Children's Art Exchange, Michigan children, grades K-6, communicate through the 4-H Children's Art Exchange by being asked to create 'visual letters' to send to children their own ages in China. A 'visual letter' is like a written letter in that both tell stories; share important ideas and feelings; and connect children on two sides of the globe. The medium however is different in that visual letters use images and written letters use words. The written letter is limited with the language differences. Thus, visual letters took shape as the primary means of communicating. The Art Exchange Learning Objectives are to learn about China through Chinese children's art, including language, natural science, family, home, school, geography and the arts, learn how to look at and talk about art, discover the many similarities between children in Michigan and China, and create a visual letter. Kent County had 848 children participate.



"Feelings", by Brooklyn Collison, age 11, was one of the pieces of art sent as a gift to youth in China.

## 2019 PRUNING WORKSHOPS



Two, 4-hour workshops were filled to capacity in early April with gardeners and green industry employees wanting to learn about pruning basics, gain confidence in pruning and learn when not to prune. Workshops include two-hours of interactive lecture coupled with a two-hour outdoor demonstration and hands on activities. Groups are exposed to techniques used for many varieties of shrubs and smaller trees. A certified arborist was brought in to discuss tool safety, licensing and certification of professionals while demonstrating large-tree pruning techniques. There were 51 Kent County residents in the 2019 class.

# MSU Extension Product Center “Entrepreneur of the Year” 2019—Byron Center Meats

In 2019, Byron Center Meats received the 2019 “Entrepreneur of the Year” award at the Annual Making it in Michigan Conference. The community-focused business has seen quite a few changes through the years. Over 70 years ago, the first generation of this family-owned business opened a meat locker to serve those who produced meat, fruits, and vegetables. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generations are continuing the tradition and have expanded their avenues of serving the local community. Today, Byron Center Meats supplies the food service industry with federally inspected steaks, continues to increase their custom packaged products and serve producers both large and small, provides exemplary service in their retail store, and makes community philanthropy a priority.

In 2007, Byron Center Meats saw hardship when they experienced an electrical fire which forced them to rebuild their plant. Although they experienced great loss of a major portion of their facility, Byron Center Meats was up and running again, cutting steaks, within 75 hours of the fire -- something the business wouldn't have been able to do without the outpouring help of their community. After the fire, Byron Center Meats expanded tremendously to what they are today.

Byron Center Meats has focused on being innovative and strived to be at the top of their field throughout all aspects of their business. In September 2018, with the support of MSU Extension's Product Center, the local business began utilizing a mobile slaughter unit to better serve those in the community who wish to sell their locally grown products. Byron Center Meats was the first business in the eastern United States to implement the federally inspected mobile slaughter unit. Byron Center Meats has also assisted with several small business startups, such as The Blue Wagyu and Alebird Brewing.

Byron Center Meats partners with MSU Extension annually to put on “Producer Days” – a free educational day for the producers that they cut and package products for to receive free educational sessions on topics that are timely and important for their businesses. It was MSU Extension's privilege to work with Byron Center Meats as they brought the first federally inspected mobile unit East of the Mississippi to Michigan. Our Environmental Management Educator, Sr Meat Quality Educator and the MSU Product Center's Food Processing Specialist worked with Byron Center Meats and the USDA, EGLE and MDARD to make the state of the art mobile plant operational.

Byron Center Meats continues to grow; the 4<sup>th</sup> generation is now working at the business as well as 35 employees. Along with being an innovative, generational, family business, Byron Center Meats seeks to improve their community by supporting local charities each year. Byron Center Meats hopes to continue growing in the years to come.

If you haven't yet, stop by and visit the 2019 “Entrepreneur of the Year.” Congratulations, Byron Center Meats!



The Byron Center Meats team, led by Laura and Steve Systma, celebrate their Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

# MSU Extension staff located in Kent County

---

Diane Brady	Horticulture Events Manager	616-632-7873	bradydi1@msu.edu
Daniel Davis	Grand Ideas Garden Team Lead	616-632-7873	david29@msu.edu
Christi Demitz	Disease Prevention Educator	616-632-7881	demitzch@msu.edu
Rebecca Finneran	Consumer Horticulture Educator	616-632-7886	finneran@msu.edu
Debbie Green	County Support	616-632-7877	greende4@msu.edu
Debra Gulick	Master Gardener Coordinator	616-632-7880	gulickde@msu.edu
Kaitlin Hodgman	Community Nutrition Instructor	616-632-7901	hodgmank@msu.edu
Amy Irish-Brown	Fruit Tree Educator	616-632-7891	irisha@msu.edu
Glenda Kilpatrick	4-H Supervising Educator	616-632-7879	kilpatri@msu.edu
Jennifer Labun	ANR Events Management	616-632-7872	sibsonje@msu.edu
Erin Lilly	4-H AmeriCorps Volunteer	616-632-7899	lillyeri@msu.edu
Stephanie Marino	HNI Supervising Educator	616-632-7889	marinos1@msu.edu
Gloria Martin	Community Nutrition Instructor	616-632-7887	marti878@msu.edu
Erin Moore	District 7 Director	616-632-7887	mooree16@msu.edu
Milagro Minch	Community Nutrition Instructor	616-632-7864	portill3@msu.edu
Jinnifer Ortuist	Financial & Housing Educator	616-632-7874	ortuisj@msu.edu
Georgina Perry	Behavioral Health Educator	616-632-7884	perrygeo@msu.edu
Alan Pilkenton	Educational Media Coordinator	616-632-7867	pilkento@msu.edu
Veronica Quintino Aranda	4-H Program Coordinator	616-632-7875	vquintin@msu.edu
Vanessa Ramirez Prado	Community Nutrition Instructor	616-632-7898	ramir326@msu.edu
Latoyia Thomas	Community Nutrition Instructor	616-632-7871	thoma634@msu.edu
Holly Tiret	Social & Emotional Educator	616-632-7893	tiret@msu.edu
Angela VanOrder	MG Diagnostic Responder	616-632-7891	vanorde7@msu.edu
Yesenia Velasco	Community Nutrition Instructor	616-632-7882	velasco@msu.edu
Steve Whittington	Veteran's Outreach Instructor	616-632-7890	whitti34@msu.edu
Kendra Wills	Product Center Educator	616-608-7424	willsk@msu.edu
Garrett Ziegler	Community Foods Educator	616-608-7436	zieglerg@msu.edu

The eXtension Ask an Expert tool is a method for allowing our clients to ask questions through an online question and answer tool. Visit the eXtension website at: <https://extension.org/> to submit your question to an MSU Extension expert today!

# Collaboration Across MSU Extension

---

MSU Extension is an organization comprised of individuals with broad knowledge of subject matters related to a particular discipline, such as field crops, nutrition, or youth development. Having four MSU Extension Institutes gives the ability to bring together cross-disciplinary expertise to address issues that are multifaceted and complex. For example, MSU Extension Educators and Program Instructors have worked together on physical and financial health issues, agricultural and stress issues, economic, community development and conservation issues, and issues that span generations.

Your local office is housed with experts in particular fields. Individuals may serve in the Agricultural and Agribusiness Institute, the Children and Youth Institute, the Health and Nutrition Institute or our Community, Food and Environment Institute. However, even if you do not have a local expert for the issue that you need addressed, MSU Extension has the unique functionality of drawing from a statewide pool of experts to make sure that you have the information that you need. In addition, the MSU Extension website [www.msue.msu.edu](http://www.msue.msu.edu) is maintained and updated on a regular basis. We are always looking for ways to collaborate with each other to apply knowledge to the critical issues you face.

**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!**

**MICHIGAN STATE**  
UNIVERSITY | **Extension**

**MISSION:**

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

MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity employer, committed to achieving excellence through a diverse workforce and inclusive culture that encourages all people to reach their full potential. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status. Issued in furtherance of MSU Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Jeffrey W. Dwyer, Director, MSU Extension, East Lansing, MI 48824. This information is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names does not imply endorsement by MSU Extension or bias against those not mentioned. The 4-H Name and Emblem have special protections from Congress, protected by code 18 USC 707.