



Kent County

2015–2016 ANNUAL REPORT

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MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT COORDINATOR

Michigan State University Extension is the community-based educational arm of Michigan State University (MSU), working in partnership with counties throughout the state. We help people improve their lives by bringing the vast resources of MSU directly to individuals, communities and businesses.

For more than 100 years, Michigan State University Extension has helped grow Michigan’s economy by equipping Michigan residents with information they need to do their jobs better, raise healthy and safe families, build their communities and empower their children to dream of a successful future.

We provide the highest quality research- and evidence-based educational programs to meet the needs of our local communities. Our staff have access to MSU AgBioResearch scientists, other MSU researchers, and land-grant university researchers throughout the nation.

This report is a snapshot of work done by MSU Extension staff with Kent County residents over the past year. We value our relationship with the leadership in Kent County and with all of your constituents. Working in partnership, we make a positive difference for people across the county. Thank you for your support.

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MISSION:

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

4-H CONNECTIONS

4-H Children and Youth programs.....	3853
4-H members (traditional club enrollment)	1002
Special Interest program participation	485
Youth in school enrichment programs	2199
Teen volunteers	27
Adult volunteers	483

Master Gardeners recertified.....389

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MSU Extension’s Expanded Digital Reach



More than 3.7 million people viewed more than 7.2 million pages on MSUE website



~1.3 million newsletters covering 90 topic areas were distributed to about 16,900 email addresses



More than 3,500 Facebook followers and more than 2,800 Twitter followers.

Based on data for 2015-16 program year.

Keeping Businesses Strong



When you support MSU Extension, you help participants understand the economic, environmental and social benefits of purchasing local and regional foods. This fuels the economy by creating and retaining jobs, and helps ensure a healthy tax base.

MSU Extension and the [MSU Product Center](#) help Michigan entrepreneurs develop and commercialize high-value, consumer-responsive products and businesses in the food, agriculture, natural resources and bioeconomy sectors.

MSU Product Center innovation counselors served **41 Kent County businesses in 2016**. These businesses added **10 new jobs** and retained **9 jobs**, while increasing their sales by **\$633,714 in 2016**. The total increase in value of these business clients is estimated at over \$15 million. One new business was launched in the county in 2016 under the guidance of the MSU Product Center.

Business counseling is conducted on a one-on-one basis and may take place at the MSUE office or a business location. The assistance provided is tailored to meet the needs of the client and may include things like developing a business plan, and education on licensing, regulation, financing and launching a product for retail.

In addition, two Kent County businesses took home state awards at this year's *Making It In Michigan* conference and trade show.

[The Gluten Free Bar](#) was launched in 2010 by brothers Marshall and Elliott Radar and two partners, Ben Wahl and Jeremy Sher. All four owners received the prestigious Entrepreneur of the Year Award. Their goal is to create a great tasting protein bar line made from high quality ingredients. Today, the business has 25 full-time employees and distributes in over 8,000 stores in the U.S. and Canada. Gluten Free Bars can be found in Meijer and Spartan Nash stores as well as Whole Foods and CVS.

[Caledonia Packing](#), a custom slaughter facility that processes beef, swine, lamb and goat secured Federal Grant of Inspection status in 2015. This status allows them to sell meat to retailers, which has resulted in an increase in sales of 77% and an increase in their workforce to four full time employees and eight part-time staff. Caledonia Packing received the Barrier Buster Award for their work to secure federal inspection and their ability to keep the business going during a family medical emergency.



Supporting Food and Agriculture



When you support MSU Extension, you help participants learn profitable and efficient business and production practices.

MSU Extension staff provide education and research in many areas important to local producers. Participants learn profitable and efficient business and production practices as well as how to optimize and reduce the use of pesticides and fertilizers, and conserve and protect water resources.

Apple production:

Apple production is expanding in the United States and around the world and this includes Kent County, which ranks **7th in the U.S. of all apple producing counties**. The 2016 Michigan apple harvest was one of the largest in recent years with estimates of 31 million bushels harvested (1.3 billion pounds). This large crop was due to increased plantings and very favorable spring weather conditions with limited frost and freeze injury.

Kent County leads all counties in Michigan in apple production with approximately 11,592 acres of apples owned by over 120 family farms (2012 Ag Census data). There are over 350 growers on family farms in the apple business in the Grand Rapids metro region and over 120 people in supporting industries. MSU Extension assists the commercial apple industry in Kent County via two Extension educators, Phil Schwallier and Amy Irish-Brown, who cover tree fruit production in an eight county region. The work of these two educators is focused on problem prevention for pests and horticultural needs along with bringing new research-based information to the region. Together, these regional educators acquire an average of \$80,000 in grant funds annually to conduct research projects, many of which are in Kent County. They also work closely with MSU researchers in their projects to bring further resources to the West Michigan apple industry.

Dairy production:

Kent County ranks 14th in the state for total number of dairy cows. In 2016, there were **35 dairy herds with 9,500 cows in the county**. Low milk prices were experienced at the farm level during most of 2015 and all of 2016. This situation created financial stress on many dairy farms. During February 2016, MSU Extension dairy educators and farm management educators offered a program that focused on optimizing dairy farm profit. MSU Extension also has developed a workshop for people who work with agricultural producers and farm families who want to know more about managing farm-related stress.

Urban Agriculture



When you support MSU Extension, you help us serve Grand Rapids urban farms, which grow healthy fruits and vegetables for food desert neighborhoods.

MSU Extension has supported urban farms in Grand Rapids for several years. Extension is a community partner with the YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids on a USDA Community Food grant to educate farmers and build their capacity so they can supply the Veggie Van and corner stores in food desert communities. MSU Extension also assisted in the development of a successful grant project between the Kent Conservation District and Urban Roots farm to build capacity for this urban farming operation.

Kent/MSU Extension assisted [New City Urban Farm](#) in developing a successful grant proposal to [SARE](#) (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Extension grants) which funded the installation of a pizza oven at the farm this past summer. The pizza oven will be used as a value-added agriculture tool to generate income from imperfect produce that might otherwise become compost.

The [West Michigan Growers Group](#), a newly formed non-profit organization of direct market growers in region, is a key partner of MSU Extension's local food systems work. For the second year, MSUE partnered with the WMGG to sponsor a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) Open House at the [Grand Rapids Downtown Market](#) in March 2016. More than 500 people participated in this event and a third event is planned for 2017.

We work to support people interested in becoming farmers through a variety of programs, including:

- [The MSU Extension Beginning Farmer Webinar Series](#)
- [The MSU Vets to Ag program](#)
- [The MSU Student Organic Farm Certificate Program](#)
- [The MSU Institute of Agricultural Technology](#)

MSU Extension hopes to expand our offerings through a USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program grant project, which will fund the creation of a farm management apprenticeship program if the grant proposal is awarded.



Michigan Hops



A 2015 economic study determined beer tourism was driving over \$12 million in economic output in Kent County.

MSU Extension provides valuable education, research and demonstration throughout the state to support current and prospective producers of emerging crops. Increased growth in craft beer results in increasing opportunities for Michigan producers to help supply hops and malting barley to this growing market. The emerging craft beer raw material sectors provide a major opportunity for rural and regional economic development.

According to the Brewers Association, the industry group that represents U.S. craft brewers, in 2014 Michigan's craft beer sector had 205 craft breweries with an overall annual economic impact of \$1.85 billion. Today, Michigan has 379 permitted breweries and ranks 5th in the nation. Experience Grand Rapids commissioned a Beer Tourism Economic Study in 2015 and determined beer tourism was driving **\$12.23 million in economic output in Kent County.**

The reemergence of commercial hop production in Michigan began in 2009 with a 1.5 acre plot on Old Mission peninsula. Since then, hops have been planted in many counties across Michigan. In 2014, Michigan ranked 4th in U.S. hop production with 300 acres harvested. This number will almost double in 2017 with one farm, MI-Local Hops in Williamsburg, MI, which will grow over 450 acres of hops, including a 2+ acre research and demonstration farm in partnership with Michigan State University Extension.

According to the Great Lakes Hops Map, there are **12 commercial hop producers** in Kent County:

Mom and Pop Hops	Hopyards of Kent
AJ Hops in Rockford	43 Degrees Hop Farm
Big Mitten Hops	Belmont Hops
Redjo Hopyard	Hop Ridge Farms
Ed Dunneback and Girls Farm	HeiBruin Hops
Egypt Valley Hops	Becker Hop Farms

Each year, MSU Extension and the Michigan Brewers Guild host the [Great Lakes Hop & Barley Conference](#), which rotates around the state. This conference regularly attracts over 350 participants from multiple states and countries. MSU Extension has taken a leadership role in this industry by providing research and outreach to current and prospective growers on best practices for planting, harvesting, and pest management.

Housing and Personal Finance Education



The Michigan State University Extension Financial and Homeownership Education Program was awarded a \$100,000 grant in 2016 from the Rose Foundation.

This grant will support Financial Capability Education and Financial Coaching in Kent and Muskegon Counties from October 2016—March 2018.

According to the National Financial Capability Study by FINRA in 2015 for Michigan:

- 49% lack a rainy day emergency fund to cover expenses for 3 months.
- 14% reported their household spent more than their income.
- 18% reported having medical bills that are past due.

The goal of MSU Extension's personal finance and housing educational programs is for Michigan consumers to:

- become aware of their personal financial profile
- adopt sound financial and housing practices, including
- successfully manage their spending and savings plans
- utilize financial products and services in a beneficial manner.

Kent/MSU Extension partnered with the Grand Rapids Housing Commission to offer money management workshops at Hope Community, Leonard Terrace and Adams Park Apartments. In addition, the Family Self Sufficiency Program continues to require Extension's Creating and Managing a Spending Plan workshop for their program graduates. This workshop is offered at Sheldon Apartments. **Due to increased demand,** homeownership education workshops are now being offered on a regular basis at the Kent/MSU Extension office. This course is required for MSHDA mortgage and down payment assistance programs, as well as some area lenders.

Other Kent MSUE Money Management community program partnerships include: Kent County Health Department, Kent County MI Works, North Kent Community Services, Grand Rapids Salvation Army Senior Center, Dwelling Place, Grandville Region III Transition Program, Parkview Elementary School, and Trinity United Methodist Church. **In total, 332 adults received money management education (112 in one-time workshops and 220 in 6-hour series).**

Improving the fiscal health of Michigan communities

Only with healthy, vibrant communities can Michigan residents be expected to thrive. To help Michigan prosper in a sensible, sustainable fiscally responsible way, MSU Extension launched the [Center for Local Government Finance and Policy](#) in late 2015. The center is led by MSU Extension economist Eric Scorson, who has assisted multiple cities during fiscal crises including Detroit, Flint and Lansing.

Ensuring a Safe and Secure Food Supply



MSU Extension efforts in ensuring safe and secure food lead to a healthy population, which in turn helps keep health care costs in check and our communities viable.

Reducing foodborne illness through education

The National Institutes of Health estimates that every year, 48 million people in the United States become ill and 3,000 die from pathogens in food. Causes range from outdated home food preservation practices to unsafe sanitizing practices at public events and small businesses.

MSU Extension reached 381 Kent County residents through 15 in-person food safety workshops in 2016. Workshops included four 16-hour ServSafe trainings, three 8-hour ServSafe trainings, food preservation, Cottage Food Law, and Cooking for Crowds.

Since 2015, Kent/MSU Extension has partnered with the Kent County Health Department to offer ServSafe certification classes for local restaurant personnel. MSU Extension recently received a **national award for food safety** from the National Association of Family and Consumer Sciences for collaborative work with the Kent County Health Department to create an [online training for food service workers](#). The Health Department received a grant from MDARD for this project in 2014. In 2015, the course was translated into Mandarin Chinese and Spanish. National and international exposure to this class resulted in almost **700 individuals completing this course in 2016**.

On-farm food safety

MSU Extension has been working with several partners around the state to ensure Michigan farmers are informed on the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) and its potential impacts on their businesses. FSMA is the most sweeping reform of our food safety laws in more than 70 years. This is a significant impact to fresh produce growers because it calls for new standards and training programs. To learn more, visit www.fda.gov

In addition, MSUE is partnering with Cherry Capital Foods to build **the first statewide USDA Certified Group GAP program in the nation**. MSUE is providing compliance education through a robust suite of resources, events, and trainings, which will assist growers in obtaining GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) certification. Kent/MSUE is working with the West Michigan Growers Group and West Michigan FarmLink to provide training and resources in Kent County.

Developing Youth and Communities



When you support MSU Extension 4-H programs, youth participants learn life skills that prepare them for the workforce – especially for highly sought after jobs in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Youth participants in 4-H club and after-school programs learn life skills that prepare them for the workforce – especially for highly sought after jobs in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). They also learn leadership and decision-making skills in 4-H that increase their likelihood of becoming civically active.

Many 4-H club members raise animal projects as part of their educational experience. As outlined in "[Showcasing the science in 'animal science'](#)," youth use science in all aspects of raising animals. Anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, chemistry, ethology (study of behavior), virology (study of viruses), bacteriology, endocrinology (study of hormones) and many more scientific fields play a large role in animal production.

Kent/MSU Extension 4-H led a school-enrichment program using the Learn, Grow, Eat and Go! curriculum at **Northpointe Christian Elementary School**. This program engaged 122 students (K-3rd grades) in weekly lessons about gardening, plant needs, and nutrition. Additionally, 132 youth (10 homeschool youth were invited) were able to plant herbs and decorate their containers.

Fourteen youth were engaged in STEM programming at **Jubilee Jobs** on four days in July 2016. Students participated in hands on activities like architecture challenges and aerospace lessons.

Five youth attended the 4-H Science afterschool program at **Byron Township Community Center** in May and June 2016. For five weeks, youth learned about physical sciences, chemistry, architecture, and other topics while participating in hands-on activities.

The Byron Township Community Center also invited 4-H to lead lessons in June and July 2016 on gardening, healthy living, and horticulture for elementary age youth. Each week, youth learned about plants, their life cycles and needs, and gardening. They also planted their own garden with tomatoes, peppers, herbs, and melons on the Community Center grounds. In addition, ten youth participated in the **Outdoor Adventure 4-H Day Camp** hosted by the Byron Township Community Center from August 15-19, 2016. Youth participated in activities like nature hikes, learning about weather, emergency preparedness, and other hands-on learning.



Developing Youth and Communities

“Before you are a leader, success is all about growing yourself. When you become a leader, success is all about growing others.”

— Jack Welch

Building leadership skills for a lifetime

Leadership skills are developed at a young age. 4-H believes it is important to provide youth with educational experiences so they understand how government functions. This will prepare them to be better informed citizens and leaders in their community.

In 2016, 4-H partnered with the **Notawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi** to offer the **United Youth Leadership Program**. Through this program, nine youth were able to learn about tribal, county, and state government. The group toured the Pine Creek Reservation in Fulton, Michigan as well as Kent County governmental offices including the Kent County Recycling Facility, the Animal Shelter, the Kent County IT Department, Kent County Courts, the Sherriff’s Department, and the group attended a Kent County Board of Commissioners meeting. In addition, the group participated in the 4-H Capitol Experience in Lansing to learn and experience state government. Students reported an increase in knowledge of tribal, county and state government as a result of this program.

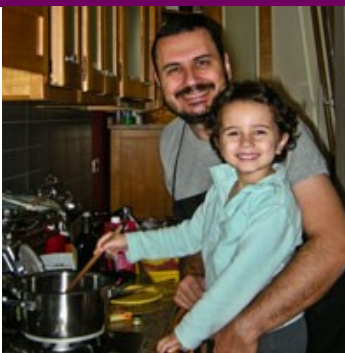


Nine members of the United Youth Leadership Program of the Notawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi participated in a field trip to many Kent County government departments in March 2016.

Keeping People Healthy



Encouraging healthy behaviors helps reduce food and health care costs by helping prevent chronic health conditions and providing safe environments throughout a person's life span.



Improving nutrition and increasing physical activities in Michigan communities

MSU Extension delivers relevant, evidence-based education to help people in Michigan stay healthy throughout their lifespans. Programs teach participants how to buy and prepare nutritious, budget-friendly foods and increase physical activity. For example, Kent/MSU Extension partnered with the State of Michigan's **Healthy Child Care** initiative in 2016 to provide technical assistance to home childcare providers using the Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (NAP SACC). The goal of this research project is to enhance nutrition and physical activity practices in early care settings.

In 2016, Kent/MSU Extension nutrition education programs reached **1,219 adults and 983 youth** from Kent County through a workshop series. Thirty-four percent (34%) of these participants identified as African Americans, 36% identified as Caucasian, 19% identified as Latino or Hispanic and 11% identified with other racial or ethnic groups or as more than one race. These programs are supported with funds from two USDA grants: the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP).

Results from a statewide evaluation of all MSU Extension nutrition programs in 2016 showed that:

- 79% of youth participants improved their abilities or gained knowledge about how to choose foods according to Federal Dietary Guidelines.
- 79% of adult participants made a positive change in at least one nutrition practice, such as preparing foods without adding salt, or using labels to make food choices.
- 73% of adult participants made a positive change in at least one food resource management practice, such as planning meals in advance or comparing prices.

Chronic Disease Prevention and Management:

MSU Extension educator for chronic disease prevention and management, Christi Demitz, provides programming for seniors in partnership with the Area Agency on Aging of West Michigan and the Nutritional Options for Wellness (NOW) program through ACCESS of West Michigan. [Matter of Balance](#) is a series of strength training workshops to prevent falls among older adults. Twenty (20) Kent County residents participated in this class in 2016. In addition, Kent/MSU Extension offered **Diabetes PATH** and [Dining with Diabetes](#) workshops in Kent County with 38 participants in 2016.

Keeping People Healthy

Encouraging healthy behaviors helps reduce health care costs by providing safe environments throughout a person's life span.



Children can be taught how to pay attention and pause before reacting to stress.

Photo credit: Pixabay.

Social and Emotional Health

In 2016, more than 1,000 people (757 adults and 263 youth) have taken part in our Social Emotional Health classes offered at various sites around Kent County, including: Kent County Juvenile Detention, Baxter Community Center, Hope Housing, Michigan Works, Kent District Libraries, Freedom House, Alpha Women's Center, Harbor House, Pilgrim Manor, Transitions School and many more.

Provided in collaboration with West Virginia University Extension, [Stress Less with Mindfulness](#) introduces participants to the experience and practice of mindfulness to reduce stress. Mindfulness can be defined as paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally. Research has shown that practicing mindfulness is effective in reducing stress-related symptoms such as worry, depression and physical tension, and may be helpful in managing chronic conditions such as cardiac disease and diabetes. In 2016, Kent/MSU Extension reached 126 youth and adults from Kent County with Stress Less, and 64 adults with Mindfulness for Children.

[RELAX: Alternatives to Anger](#) is an educational program that actively engages participants to gain knowledge and skills to constructively deal with anger. The core concepts include recognizing anger signals, empathizing, listening, accepting that others' anger is not about you, and letting go of the past in order to maintain a present perspective. Participants learn to better manage their anger and stress at home, in the workplace and in school. In 2016, 255 adults and 82 youth from Kent County were reached by this program.

[Be SAFE \(Safe, Affirming and Fair Environments\)](#) is an MSU Extension initiative designed to create environments that are physically and emotionally safe. Be SAFE focuses on education and prevention of bullying, bias and harassment and other hurtful behaviors. During the summer of 2016, Georgina Perry and Holly Tiret provided Be SAFE at the Kent County Juvenile Detention Center with 47 youth. Evaluations showed youth have reported positive changes in their knowledge about healthy ways to deal with stressful situations like bullying. They also reported improved knowledge about the qualities of healthy relationships, the potential effects of cyberbullying, and ways that stereotypes can affect how people treat one another.

Making the Most of Our Natural Assets



Michigan Sea Grant helps to foster economic growth and protect Michigan's coastal, Great Lakes resources through education, research and outreach.

A collaborative effort of the University of Michigan and Michigan State University Extension, Michigan Sea Grant is part of the NOAA-National Sea Grant network of 33 university-based programs.

District Council Invited Lawmakers to Learn on the Water

On September 23, 2016, members of MSU Extension's District 7 Council headed out on the *D.J. Angus*, a vessel owned and operated by GVSU for the purpose of educating people about the Great Lakes and inland waters. Also in attendance were State Representatives Amanda Price and Ken Yonker, now the Kent County Drain Commissioner .

Council members and leaders participated in water quality sampling in Spring Lake and Lake Michigan led by GVSU staff. In addition to learning about how invasive species have dramatically affected our lakes, the group heard from MSU Extension's District Sea Grant Educator Dr. Dan O'Keefe on connections between our waterways and coastal economies.

The group learned about Michigan Sea Grant's work with the Lake Michigan salmon and trout fishery, a cornerstone of the \$7.1 billion Great Lakes sport fishery. Sea Grant has been instrumental in helping anglers understand their fishery and share data with biologists through the *Salmon Ambassadors* and *Great Lakes Angler Diary* programs. In 2016, many anglers were caught off guard by the Chinook stocking cut proposal. MSU Extension News articles helped people better understand the issue by addressing some common misconceptions.

- **Most Chinook salmon caught in Lake Michigan are wild, not stocked.** According to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Mass Marking Program, wild-spawned Chinook salmon made up 71 percent of the Chinook catch for Michigan anglers in 2014-2015.
- **Even ports that are not near spawning rivers rely mostly on wild fish.** Grand Haven is a good example of a port that does not support natural reproduction. Volunteers with the *Salmon Ambassadors* program found that 74 percent of Chinook salmon caught in the Grand Haven area in 2015 were wild.
- **Alewife are at a historic low.** The USGS Great Lakes Science Center's bottom trawl survey found that yearling and older alewife biomass density dropped to the lowest levels since monitoring began in 1973.
- **Natural reproduction is a huge factor.** In 2017, Lake Michigan stocking is being reduced from 1.80 to 1.35 million Chinook salmon. If wild reproduction returns to normal, we could see an increase of over 3 million young Chinook salmon entering Lake Michigan in 2017. This could completely overwhelm the effect of the stocking cut in terms of the total number of Chinook salmon available in Lake Michigan. In other words, there is a good chance that people will not notice any decrease in the quality of fishing over the next few years. The bad news is that Lake Michigan still appears to have too many mouths to feed and too little food.

Improving Health and the Economy through Local Food



MSU Extension is working with several partners to help meet the state's goal of 20% local food in schools, colleges, universities and hospitals by the year 2020.

Farmers markets help keep money in our local economy and provide access to fresh healthy food. Kent County is home to 13 farmers markets. MSU Extension delivered our new *Discover Michigan Fresh* curriculum at six of these markets in 2016 (Sparta, Byron Center, Kentwood, Plainfield, Metro Health and Fulton Street). This course provides participants with a market tour, information on seasonal eating habits, and how to pay with SNAP and [Double Up Food Bucks](#). Estimates by community partners show around \$550,000 worth of SNAP and Double Up Food Bucks sales at area farmers markets in 2016. In 2010, this amount was only \$52,000.

Kent County's 300 schools with almost 120,000 students, serve over 75,000 meals each day. MSU Extension is working with a variety of state and local partners to increase the amount of Michigan agricultural products served through school meals. The goals of this initiative are to improve the health of students and to grow our state's economy.

The [Cultivate Michigan](#) campaign promotes four featured foods each year – one per season. Participating schools, colleges, hospitals, childcare programs and long-term care facilities receive purchasing guides with featured food ordering codes and recipes. The campaign also offers webinars, kitchen staff trainings, farm tours and special events – like the Michigan Apple Crunch. The 2016 foods were kale, carrots, potatoes, and cherries. Schools track their local purchasing through an online reporting system. In 2016, 57 institutions participated in the Cultivate Michigan campaign, including nine from Kent County.

Once we get healthy, local foods on the menu, it is important that students put them on their plate and eat them. [Smarter Lunchrooms](#) is a training program developed by Cornell University to teach schools how to display and market healthy foods during school meals. The program also gives instructions on creating a healthy eating environment that reinforces positive eating habits. Kent/MSU Extension implemented Smarter Lunchrooms in five Grand Rapids Public Schools (East Leonard, Palmer, Mulick Park, Coit Creative Arts Academy, and Kent Hills) in partnership with the Michigan Department of Education's Team Nutrition. Each school implemented at least ten changes that have been found to increase fruit and vegetable consumption, which also reduced food waste.

Protecting Pollinators



MSU Extension supports the Michigan Pollinator Initiative to address priority issues that threaten pollinator populations.



Kent/MSU Extension's pollinator garden has educational signs in both English and Spanish.

The Michigan Pollinator Initiative (MPI), managed by Michigan State University, works to address current and future issues related to bees and other pollinators. The mission of the initiative is to develop a coordinated research, education, extension and policy driven effort to address priority issues related to pollinators. MPI works in pursuit of research-based solutions for beekeepers, growers, land managers, and policy makers to promote economic vitality and ecological stability.

Most researchers agree that a combination of factors is causing declines in bee and pollinator populations. These factors include: pathogens, loss of habitat, and pesticide exposure. Home gardeners have an important role to play in protecting pollinators because flowerless landscapes such as large paved areas and mowed lawns with strict weed control contain little or no food for pollinators.

MSU Extension offered the following educational events in Kent County in 2016 to encourage home gardeners to plant flowers and adopt pollinator friendly practices in their home gardens:

- The March 5, 2016 Smart Gardening Conference at DeVos Place with 261 participants from 39 Michigan counties.
- The June 17 and 18, 2016 Master Gardener College open house reception at the Grand Ideas Garden with 283 participants.
- An August 2016 Smart Gardening for Pollinators Conference at Kent/MSU Extension with 43 participants from 15 counties.

In addition, Kent/MSU Extension added signs in Spanish to the Grand Ideas Garden to help educate Spanish-speaking visitors about the importance of pollinators and pollinator friendly plantings in the garden.

For more information, please read MSU Extension's new publication, "*Protecting and enhancing pollinators in urban landscapes*" or visit <https://pollinators.msu.edu>

You can also access Smart Gardening tip sheets on a variety of important topics from MSU Extension at http://msue.anr.msu.edu/topic/home_gardening/tip_sheets

Farmland Preservation

The goal of the Kent County Farmland Preservation program is to create a long-term environment for agricultural production. The Purchase of Development Rights program is an economic development tool to retain agricultural businesses. This voluntary program compensates owners of agricultural property for accepting a permanent deed restriction on their land limiting future development of the land for non-agricultural purposes.

Kent County is home to some of the most prime, unique fruit growing lands in the nation. Agricultural producers in Kent County supply some of the state's leading food processing facilities including the Gerber Products Co., Zeeland Farm Services, Country Fresh, Cole's Quality Foods, Kellogg's, King Milling, Michigan Turkey Producers, and Yoplait.

Two easements were closed in 2016 covering one farm, the Malone farm. The Malone farm consists of a 56 acre parcel and a 100 acre parcel, of which the Federal ACEP program contributed approximately 45%. The 56 acre farm was purchased through grants secured from the Wege Foundation and Grattan Township.

The Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board is working to preserve two farms in 2017: the Bradford Dairy Farm, through funds secured from the American Farmland Trust, and the Roth Farm, through Federal Funds and a Wege Grant. Once these farms are preserved, the total acreage of prime and unique farmland preserved through the Kent County Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program will be just under 3,500 acres.

The Kent County Agriculture Preservation Board will submit a grant application to the USDA NRCS Farm and Ranchland Protection Program to seek 45% of matching funds toward the total cost of preserving the Roth farm in 2017. The Agriculture Preservation Board has submitted a proposal to the Wege Foundation to assist with funding a portion of this 2017 project.

West Michigan's agribusiness sector produces one-third of Michigan's total agricultural sales, contributing \$1.5 billion to the regional economy. (The Right Place)



THE WEGE FOUNDATION



American Farmland Trust
SAVING THE LAND THAT SUSTAINS US



Linda Bradford Anderson of Bradford Dairy farm in Sparta, Michigan has been active in the Kent County farmland preservation program since it began in 2003.

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Members of the MSU District 7 Extension Council—2016

- Nora Balgoyen-Williams (Allegan)
- Mark DeYoung (Allegan)
- Carrie Jo Anderson (Kent)
- Dick Bethel (Kent)
- Harold Mast (Kent)
- Jerry Miller (Kent)
- Mary Jane Belter (Ottawa)
- Mike Bronkema (Ottawa)
- Greg DeJong (Ottawa)
- Matt Fenske (Ottawa)
- Audra Fuentes (Ottawa)
- Yumiko Jakobcic (Ottawa)
- Michelle Morrow (Ottawa)
- Matt Schmid (Ottawa)

MI SPARTAN IMPACT

MSU works side by side for a stronger Michigan.

In 2016:

**Number of students from Kent
County enrolled in Michigan
State University:**

1,977

**Number of Michigan State
University Medical Residents
and Interns Serving in Kent
County:**

479

**Number of Michigan State
University Medical Students
from Kent County:**

148

**Number of Kent County
residents employed by Michigan
State University:**

246

Every day, Michigan State University works to advance prosperity for the people of Michigan—making a positive impact on the state’s economy in the areas of agriculture, manufacturing, technology, health care, education, energy, environment, and the arts. Michigan State—particularly through AgBioResearch and Extension—plays a key role in the state’s annual \$101 billion food and agriculture system through partnerships, research, and educational programs in all 83 counties.

MSU’s talent and expertise help position Michigan as an uncompromising competitor in a global market, and we make vital contributions to the state’s economy.

The University Research Corridor—comprising Michigan State University, the University of Michigan, and Wayne State University—has a combined \$16.8 billion annual economic impact in Michigan. MSU is making a difference—everywhere—in Michigan. See more at: www.mispartanimpact.msu.edu

