



# Tuscola County 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

## BY THE NUMBERS



Over 100 years MSU Extension staff have provided education to Tuscola County residents



\$61,678 spending with local businesses in Tuscola County



654 MSU alumni living in and contributing to Tuscola County, and 63 students currently enrolled



MSU disbursed \$1,219,265 in financial aid to Tuscola County students



MSU Extension website received 14,816 visits from Tuscola County residents; 71% were first-time visitors



2,915 youth involved in 4-H and other youth development programs



\$5,733,008 total economic impact in Tuscola County

## Message from the District Director

Michigan State University (MSU) Extension is part of the national Cooperative Extension network, which is housed at land-grant universities across the country. MSU Extension is funded through a partnership of federal, state and county governments, and works with individuals, businesses, organizations and communities to identify and address Michigan's existing and emerging priorities.



From Great Lakes water levels and protection of our natural resources to industrial hemp farming as an emerging business enterprise, from workforce preparedness and youth education to nutritional instruction for our income challenged residents, from tourism and economic growth to training for newly elected county commissioners, MSU Extension delivers evidence-based education for the benefit of Tuscola County. This report highlights the work done last year.

We're passionate about addressing the current and emergent needs of Tuscola County. Thank you for supporting MSU Extension and for partnering with us to make a difference.

Jerry Johnson, District Director



# Supporting Food and Agriculture



**Here is a quote from a participant,** “It’s the first thing in the morning and there is a lot of information I can use. It’s easy to see and it is relevant to the work I do every day.”

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## Field Crops Virtual Breakfast Series

Every Thursday during the growing season, farmers were able to access the most current information available for timely, relevant in-season crop and weather information from MSUE Field Crops Specialists and Extension Educators. Each 30-minute meal was divided into 15-minute segments for crop information and weather. This innovative approach using technology has provided growers from every region of the state the opportunity to participate in a live webinar via their computer, laptop, or cell phone. Each participant was able to ask questions of the specialists and educators during the live sessions.



The Virtual Breakfast Series is a result of a focus group that included young farmers asking for opportunities to have fast-paced, video or Internet based, and unbiased research information during critical times of the spring and summer.

A wide range of topics was planned according to the seasonal issues that frequently occur at specific times. However, the series was flexible, adaptable, and had the ability to change quickly and effectively when unexpected issues arose.

One of the unexpected issues for 2019 was the lengthy planting delays for all crop producers. The MSU Extension Agriculture and Agribusiness Institute provided a “Delayed Planting” webpage due to these widespread weather delays throughout Michigan.

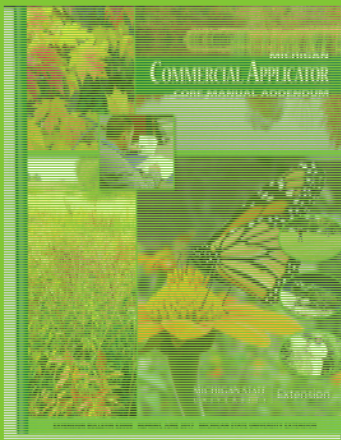
The Virtual Breakfast Series provided the initial discussions concerning delayed planting and responded to the need to have additional crop management, crop insurance, and risk management options for growers. The recorded sessions were included on the Delayed Planting Resources webpage along with other timely topics to assist growers. In an effort to reach a wide, diverse audience, each week’s session was close-captioned for the hearing impaired. A link to each week’s recording was included in the weekly MSU Extension Field Crops Production email digest that goes out to 4,476 subscribers.

This was an example of how the MSUE Field Crops Team was able to provide information at the right time with an unscheduled topic.

	Zoom participants:	YouTube video views:	Facebook posts w/ embedded video	Views	Likes/ comments/ shares
Totals to date:	862	1248	6108	2321	91
Average/session	50.7	73.4	359.3	136.5	5.4

## Supporting Food and Agriculture, continued

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



### **Thumb Ag Day**

MSU Extension hosted its annual Thumb Ag Day on Wednesday, December 12, 2018, at the Ubyly Heights Country Club. Approximately 200 visitors from 10 different counties met with 83 vendors at the event. Participants also had the chance to attend educational sessions, including: Making production cost fit today's market, a commodity market update and ways to combat nutrient transport from agricultural fields and downstream water bodies. MSU Extension field Crops Educators, Martin Nagelkirk, Phil Kaatz and Bob Battel also presented an agricultural review with results of the 2018 field trials, which included an update on RoundUP resistant marestail.

### **Pesticide Licensing Exam & Review**

State law requires licensed pesticide applicators to complete an examination and continued education to maintain their credentials. This process helps ensure that pesticides are applied in a manner that protects people and the environment. Each winter we offer certification training and updates for pesticide applicators. The review session is for those wishing to receive final training before the exam or for those needing pesticide re-certification credits. Bob Battel holds review sessions during the winter months in Tuscola and Huron Counties. Study manuals may be purchased at your local MSU Extension office or may be ordered from the NPSEC Fulfillment Center online at:

<https://npsecstore.com/pages/michigan>.

## Supporting Food and Agriculture, continued

**MSU Extension provides trusted, scientific-based education and expertise in:**

Animal Welfare Dairy Management



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

### Happy Cows Live in Michigan

“Happy Cows live in Michigan” was the 2019 dairy team winter program. This half-day program was geared toward dairy farm owners and managers with finding low-cost solutions to improve productivity as the goal. This program discussed the latest research and strategies to improve efficiency with animal welfare in mind. Topics included: the importance of continual improvement in efficiency, heat stress and its implications, the impact of stocking density on health and profitability, strategies to maintain a stable rumen, and calf and heifer management for improved well-being and profit.

The 14 farms who participated in the *Impact of Various Cooling Systems on Cow Comfort and Production Efficiency on Michigan Dairy Farms* project received individual farm reports. Research findings were shared at the winter meetings, after the project was completed.

The “Happy Cows Live in Michigan” winter program meetings were held in 6 locations with 40 producers attending. An exit survey asked participants to indicate the level of increased knowledge on the presented topics on a scale of 1= low to 5= high. The average for the participants attending the program was 3.9. Some of the changes that farms indicated they would implement because of their new knowledge were: improving labor efficiency, re-evaluating feeding procedures, stocking density, heifer culling, calf nutrition and colostrum testing, improve rumen stability, as well as decrease heat stress with more fans allowing better airflow and wind speed.

### Thumb Dairy Odyssey

Thumb Dairy Odyssey Days completed its 8th and 9th events. The first event took place in the summer of 2016. This continues to be a unique event that is pulling youth from all over the state to learn about dairy. 4-H'ers Milan Forrester and Annie Bowman helped organize the events.

Youth were able to go to two different local dairy farms. They learned about animal science, agriculture and most importantly some of the career possibilities they present. Many farms across the state of Michigan struggle to find those who want to work on farms or work in agribusiness.

The youth were also encouraged to try showing animals at their county fair or by attending events like Michigan State University's Dairy Days. This year, more than 80 people attend Thumb Dairy Odyssey Days.



# Developing Youth and Communities



## MSU EXTENSION 4-H STAFF

**KATIE COOPER**  
4-H Program  
Coordinator

**Committee Leaders:**  
**Jackie Garner**  
4-H Council President

**Genevieve Hecht**  
4-H Large Livestock  
President

**Jennifer Beardslee**  
4-H Small Livestock  
President

**Amy Kotsch**  
4-H Horse Leaders  
President

Tuscola County 4-H provided local members and volunteers opportunities to connect to learning experiences beyond the county as well. These included:

## 4-H School Enrichment

School Enrichment programs are a great way to get 4-H into the classroom. 4-H Staff and volunteers are able to partner with local schools and use the 4-H Embryology curriculum to help provide teachers with a fun science activity. The embryology program is where students can learn about the developmental stages of embryos. Embryology is a 21 day program where students can observe and learn about the life cycle of chickens. 4-H staff set up an incubator and provide eggs for the students to be able to get a hand on learning experience right in their classroom. This year 4-H staff was able to provide Central Middle School in Vassar with this school enrichment opportunity.

## 4-H Community Service

4-H'ers pledge there "hands to larger service"! Many youth who participate in Tuscola County 4-H help in different community service project! In the 2018-2019 program years clubs have helped clean up there communities, provide free, high quality educational opportunities to youth, hosted a petting zoo for foster kids and have helped out at local shelters. By giving back to their communities, young people can:

- Learn the value of helping others, develop leadership, communication, organizational skills and a sense of empowerment.
- Learn how important the connection is between subject matter and life in the community.
- Learn how to cooperate with one another and work as a team with diverse groups of people including adults, peers and others with different backgrounds and experiences.
- Succeed in an area different from academics, athletics or popularity.
- Build self-esteem from the positive results of their service.
- Develop problem-solving and decision-making skills by applying their knowledge to real-world situations.
- Develop a sense of being responsible for their community and a sense that citizenship requires them to actively participate in their community.
- Receive recognition for their efforts and possibly college scholarships.
- Experience the world of work.



## Developing Youth and Communities, continued

4-H is America's largest youth development organization, providing educational opportunities to over 6 million youth. The 4-H program offers a vast selection of project area topics—science, healthy living, arts, and civic engagement to name a few, all with hands-on experiential learning for youth. 4-H programs are available for all youth ages 5-19, and are made possible by the service of our dedicated volunteers. We always welcome new members and new volunteers; if you are interested in joining 4-H, please contact the Tuscola County MSU Extension office at 989-672-3870. We would be happy to help you enroll today!

### Our Volunteers



4-H programs are made possible by the service of our dedicated volunteers. An Effective 4-H Council is essential to planning, conducting and evaluating 4-H work. To be successful, 4-H programs must meet the needs and interests of local participants. Determining these needs and interest and then developing and implementing programs that fulfill those needs require the organized involvement of local volunteers and community stakeholders. Tuscola County's 4-H program has several committee boards that are made up of 24 dedicated volunteers. They are vital to the local 4-H program as these volunteer groups fulfill their mission through the following functions:

- Assist in developing a total 4-H program based on the needs of youth and the county and then actively carrying out the plan.
- Introducing new 4-H projects, programs and activities that are designed to attract new youth to the 4-H program
- Planning for and assisting with the recruitment, education and recognition of 4-H members and 4-H volunteers.
- Raising and managing funds to underwrite the planned 4-H curriculum, program and activities.
- Recommending policy and procedures for the county when not determined by state or national regulations.
- Providing for the representation of the 4-H program at other meetings and events.
- Evaluating the overall 4-H program on a continuing basis.
- Promoting the work of the 4-H council, its committees and the entire 4-H program throughout the county.

Not only do young people gain by being involved in community service, the clubs and groups that they are in also experience benefits from planning and carrying out service projects.

### Camp Activities included:

- Outdoor skills
- Olympic training
- Cabin Games
- Skits
- Shooting sports
- Nature walk
- Mud hike
- Kayaking
- Swimming in Lake Huron
- STEM
- Team building events
- Minute-to-win-it games
- Outdoor cooking

Tuscola County 4-H provided local members and volunteers opportunities to connect to learning experiences beyond the county as well. These included:

### **2019 Thumb Area 4-H Camp**

Fifty-nine (59) youth and twenty-two (22) teen counselors and nine (9) adult chaperons from Huron, St. Clair, Sanilac and Tuscola Counties attended Thumb Area 4-H Camp held at Camp Cavell in Lexington on July 1st-3rd, 2019. The main purpose was to get youth (4-H and non-4-H), ages 9 to 14 of age , involved in an outdoor-living experience.

Our awesome team of 4-H teen camp counselors and four (4) MSUE staff are responsible for planning, implementation and evaluation of the Thumb Area 4-H camp program. Throughout the year, committee members are involved in numerous workshop and training in preparation for Thumb Area 4-H Camp.

Thumb Area 4-H Camp offers a golden opportunity to youth to make new friends and share experiences in camping, all while building and developing life skills.

### **Project RED (Rural Education Day )**

Project Red day is a day when Tuscola County 3rd grade students venture through local educational and hands-on stations outlining the role agriculture plays in their lives. Tuscola County 4-H and the Tuscola County Farm Bureau have built meaningful relationships and programs at our county level to foster strong agricultural communities among our youth.

### **Agriculture Career and College Night**

Tuscola County 4-H, Tuscola County Farm Bureau and Tuscola County FFA partner together to provide an opportunity for students to meet and talk with local Agriculture businesses and colleges who provide Agriculture courses. Agriculture Career and College Night is to help youth prepare for there future.

### **The Tuscola County Fair**

The County Fair is an opportunity for 4-H youth to showcase all their hard work to the community. Over 300 4-H youth participated in the Tuscola County Fair. Showing projects at the fair has many educational benefits such as teaching youth about the value of hard work, healthy competition, and many life skills.

# 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.

Health and Nutrition Staff serving Tuscola County

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Youth doing a MyPlate activity to put foods into the correct MyPlate food group.

## Show Me Nutrition and Grow It, Try It, Like It

Nutrition programming for 50 youth who participated in a 6 week series of classes about healthy eating, MyPlate, and being more physically active.



## Healthier Childcare Environments

The Healthier Childcare Environment initiative helps childcare providers identify areas for improvement related to nutrition and physical activity policies and environmental practices. A trained nutrition education coach from MSU Extension helps childcare providers through the process and connects them with resources to work towards best practices. Areas of focus include: Active/inactive play time, fruits and vegetables, Screen time use, Menus and variety, Physical activity policy, and Nutrition policy. After 4-6 months of planning and implementing new nutrition and physical activity best practices, the result is a Healthier Childcare Environment for the childcare providers and the children they care for! In Tuscola County two childcare sites participated in this program impacting over 30 children and their families.



Kids tasting new foods like hummus and red/yellow peppers at snack time



Children creating their own menu with play food using MyPlate as a guide.

Success stories from program participants:

*"After participating in the Healthier Childcare Environments program, my childcare has made some positive nutrition and physical activity changes. We are more active now doing structured activities together with all the kids. I am adding other fruits and vegetables to explore new foods. The kids like the MyPlates to use while eating their meals and snacks."*

*"We are now more active doing structured activities together daily after receiving a lot of good ideas. The children are more aware of the foods we are eating, and I am adding other vegetables to the menu to allow them to try others. I have turned the TV off a lot more. I used to have it on for background noise but realize it is not necessary. The policies for nutrition, physical activity and screen time that we developed are helpful and part of my handbook."*





**Health and Nutrition  
Staff serving  
Tuscola County**

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## **Thumb Octagon Barn School Tours**

Karly, along with Huron County Community Nutrition Instructor, Renee Stacer, spent three days at the Thumb Octagon Barn during their School Tours again in May. Over all three days, Karly and Renee taught over 200 students from the Thumb area about germs, handwashing, and food safety.

## **Building Healthy Communities at USA**

Unionville-Sebewaing Area (USA) Elementary School received a Building Healthy Communities Grant for their 2018-2019 school year. Karly Creguer coached the school on ways to create and maintain a healthier school environment for the students and staff. As a part of the grant, Karly taught Show Me Nutrition to every 1st, 3rd, and 5th grader at USA, totaling 153 students. In addition, Karly helped the school form a Student Leadership Team for their Fuel Up to Play 60 program. The students lead several initiatives, including the creation of three large banners with healthy messages to spruce up the cafeteria. They also received an additional grant through Fuel Up to Play 60 to build a Gaga Ball pit on the playground. Many students will now be able to play Gaga Ball together to remain active at recess!

## **Cooking Matters for Adults**

Cooking Matters continues to be a hit in Tuscola County! Karly teamed up with the chef from Hills and Dales General Hospital and together they taught 15 participants ways to prepare healthy meals while staying on a budget. In addition, Karly also partnered with the Registered Dietitians from the Caro Center to teach a Cooking Matters for Adults series at the Caro Senior Commons. They were able to teach 14 participants that eating healthy can still taste great.

### **Success story**

A participant in the Cooking Matters for Adults class held at the Caro Senior Commons recently opened an adult foster care home. She shared that she now cooks several of the meals she learned in class for her residents, providing them with healthier meals!

## **Senior Project FRESH**

250 Senior Project FRESH coupon booklets, worth a total of \$5,000, were distributed to low-income senior citizens to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at farmer's markets and roadside stands. Not only does this program help out our seniors – it also helps out our local produce farmers!

## **Today's Mom with Health Department**

This year Karly partnered with the Maternal Infant Health Program at the Tuscola County Health Department to offer two Today's Mom series. Between both series, 16 pregnant mothers and their partners learned about the importance of nutrition and physical activity during pregnancy. At each session, Karly demonstrated a healthy meal or snack and each participant took the groceries from the recipe home. The groceries were provided by a grant from Great Start Tuscola. In addition, a Certified Childbirth Educator from Early Headstart also offered the expecting parents insight on what to expect during labor, delivery, and recovery.

## Keeping People Healthy, continued

**Health and Nutrition Staff serving District 10 (Huron, Lapeer, Sanilac, St. Clair & Tuscola Counties)**

**Kris Swartzendruber**  
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### Available programs:

- \* **Stress Less with Mindfulness**
- \* **RELAX: Alternatives to Anger**
- \* **PATH for Diabetes**
- \* **PATH for Chronic Pain**
- \* **Dining with Diabetes**

Kris Swartzendruber, Extension Educator for the Health and Nutrition Institute conducted the following programs for Tuscola County:

Two **Dining with Diabetes** series were held at:

Tuscola MSU Extension Office on October 30 – November 20, 2018

Tuscola Behavioral Health Service on June 17 – August 8, 2019

Through this 4-week series, MSU Extension was able to reach a total of 19 participants. Both series were sponsored by funds received from the Caro and Millington Lions Clubs and a statewide grant from the Lions of Michigan and Lions Clubs International Foundation. Dining with Diabetes is a fun and interactive series for individuals with prediabetes, type 1 or type 2 diabetes and members of their support system. During each class, participants learn how to make healthier food choices and incorporate balanced menus into their family dining experience. Classes include research-based education and cooking demonstrations from the recipes in the take-home participant books. Participants also get to sample and taste the delicious foods that are made during each of the four classes.

*The following are testimonials and comments from participants that took this series:*

*"I have learned through this class that foods cooked with healthier ingredients can be very tasty!"*

*"The recipes in the participant book are great! Very good class!!"*

Four **Stress Less with Mindfulness** series were held at:

First Presbyterian Church of Caro on September 10 – October 8, 2018

Tuscola County Court Employees on February 1 – June 7, 2019

Caro Senior Commons on February 27 – March 27, 2019

Human Development Commission Seniors on March 18 – April 15, 2019

Through this 5-week series, MSU Extension was able to reach a total of 73 participants. Mindfulness means paying attention to the present moment without judgement. Research has shown that practicing mindfulness is effective in reducing stress-related symptoms such as worry, depression, physical tension, and may be helpful in managing chronic conditions such as cardiac disease and diabetes. By offering alternative ways of relating to everyday life experiences, including thoughts, emotions, physical sensations and events, Stress Less with Mindfulness teaches and encourages the use of mindfulness self-care skills to help one feel better and enjoy life.

*The following are testimonials and comments from the participants that took this series:*

*"The class was helpful in getting me to live in the present."*

*"I would recommend this class because it can positively change thing in you and how you react."*

*"This class was enlightening!"*

- \* **The human mind has 70,000 thoughts each day. That's 70,000 opportunities.**
- \* **The typical brain is about 2 percent of your body weight but uses 20 percent of your energy.**
- \* **80 percent of repetitive thought are negative. But they don't have to be.**
- \* **A brisk 10- minute walk reduces the amount of cortisol (stress hormone) in the brain by 50 to 70 percent.**

A **RELAX: Alternatives to Anger** series was held at Tuscola Behavior Health Services on January 8 – February 5, 2019, reaching 13 participants. How we handle stress affects our emotional and physical health – it can also carry over to our relationships with others. The RELAX series helps people understand and manage anger and stress. It also helps participants develop communication skills needed for healthy relationships.

*The following are testimonials and comments from the participants that took this series:*

*"I learned so much about how to problem solve and de-stress myself. I recognize anger signals now and have alternatives to negative ways of responding."*

### **Farm Stress Program**

In collaboration with the Ag and Agri-Business Extension Educators in District 9 and 10, Kris Swartzendruber presented the Farm Stress program: Weathering the Storm in Agriculture - How to Cultivate a Productive Mindset at five Thumb Ag Review meetings in December of 2018, reaching 95 participants. Kris also presented this program to over 200 farmers at a late-planting emergency meeting for farmers, held in Memphis, Michigan on June 13, 2019.

Farmers know how to care for their animals and crops, however they don't always take the same care in monitoring and managing their own mental and physical health. Weather related issues, commodity prices, financial issues, etc. make stress especially palpable for the farmers in the thumb area.

MSU Extension puts a high emphasis on making sure farmers care for their own health and wellness. The Farm Stress program provides information and resources to help farmers, their families and those who work with farmers to identify the signs and symptoms of stress, provide healthy strategies to help manage stress and outside resources for additional help.



# Ensuring Safe and Secure Food



## Health and Nutrition - Food Safety Staff

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Food Safety is a global issue from farm to table. Its impact on our health and well-being is significant across the life span. Food-borne illness outbreaks occur on an ongoing basis crossing all socioeconomic lines from production, consumption and preservation of foods. Overall health is impacted by the safety of the food supply and foodborne illness.

To educate consumers about keeping their food safe, MSU Extension provides programming in the areas of Food Preservation, Cooking for Crowds, Safe Food=Healthy Kids and ServSafe manager training for adults. Food safety educational presentations for youth or adults groups are held upon request and online education is also an option for some programs.

Results of programming in Tuscola County include:

- **ServSafe** manager certification and food handler education was provided for 65 foodservice employees. This course provides education for the ServSafe Food Protection Manager course and proctoring of the Certification exam. Through ServSafe participants learn how to help prevent foodborne illness throughout the flow of food and set up food safety management systems.
- **Food Preservation**-In partnership with the Caro District Library, a food preservation class was offered to 19 Caro residents focusing on safe Canning and Freezing preservation processes.
- **Fight BAC Food Safety Education and Presentations.** 27 Youth engaged in a Fight Bac series of four lessons to learn about food safety and staying healthy by keeping germ free.
- **Safe Food = Healthy Kids** provides food safety education for childcare providers. The goal of the program is to reduce the incidence of foodborne illness in young children. In Tuscola County, 18 childcare providers attended training which incorporates hands-on learning with an educational texting campaign to enhance learning after attending the program.



Youth listening to the story, [Germ, Germ, Germ](#) and then practicing proper handwashing.

Childcare providers shared what they learned:

- \* I need to calibrate my thermometer and how to do it.
- \* I will improve with using gloves properly when handling food.
- \* Class taught me about foodborne pathogens and the right cooking temperatures to use for safe food.

# Ensuring Strong Communities

**MSU Extension understands that building civic engagement and healthy economic structures leads to greater opportunities and stronger communities.**

## **Serving the State of Michigan**

### **Andy Northrop**

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- Sustainable Tourism Development
- First Impressions: Tourism Assessments
- Planning for Tourism
- Community Vitality
- Leadership and Facilitation



MSU Extension Community Vitality and Tourism Educator, Andy Northrop, after four years, still actively co-chairs Prosperity Region 6 (PR6)- a seven county partnership comprised of Genesee, Huron, Lapeer, Sanilac, Shiawassee, St. Clair, and Tuscola Counties – tourism and quality of life subcommittee. The regional subcommittee has been responsible for facilitating a number of tourism and quality of life projects in partnership with county and various community leadership. Some of those projects include:

### **I-69 Thumb Region**

Local Crafty Agricultural/Agritourism Directory (2015, 2018) highlighting 150 breweries, wineries, farms, farmers markets, and specialty stores and business, such as orchards and U-pick farms.

<http://i-69thumbregion.org/agritourism-directory/>

### **Art in Place (2018)**

A program designed to create a livelier, engaging, and interesting place using art. District 10 communities were provided the opportunity to apply for Art in Place.

- Port Austin, MI (Huron County) was selected in 2018.

### **MSU Extension First Impression Tourism Assessment (FIT)**

Launched by Community, Food, and Environment Institute's tourism team in late 2016 and offered in partnership with PR6 since 2017, FIT has proven to be widely successful assessment program for communities across District 10 in need of new concepts to make their community places people want to live, work, play, learn, and return. Building from four successful FITs in 2017 (Elkton, Imlay City, Marlette, and Sebawaing ), MSU Extension, in partnership with PR6 tourism subcommittee, launched a second round of FIT assessments in 2018.

Cass City (Tuscola County) and Marine City (St. Clair County) were selected in 2018 and underwent the FIT program to identify strengths and weaknesses through a team of first-time visitors. Like the communities that underwent FIT in 2017, both 2018 communities received \$2,000 in funding from the PR6 tourism subcommittee to spawn new developments and actions after participating in FIT. Both communities, after receiving their results earlier this year, are currently in the primary stages of new developments and actions after participating in the FIT program.

[https://canr.msu.edu/tourism\\_first\\_impressions/community-reports](https://canr.msu.edu/tourism_first_impressions/community-reports)

## Ensuring Strong Communities, continued

### Serving the State of Michigan

#### Goals of our tourism program are to:

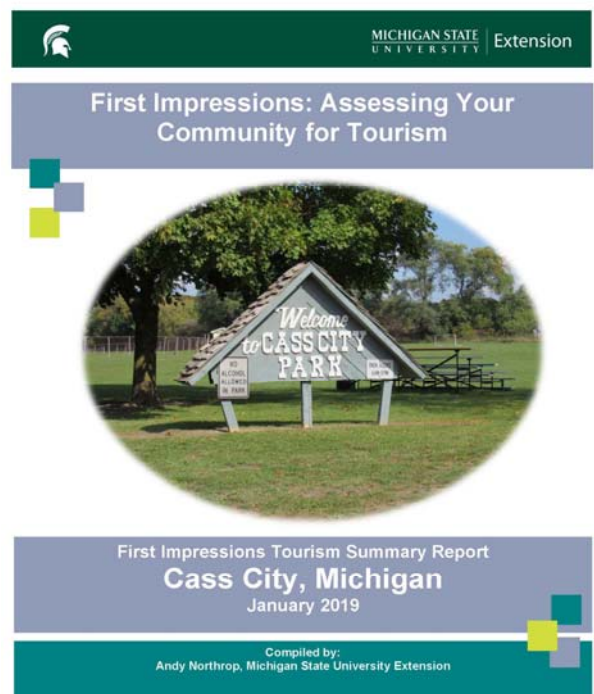
- \* Increase awareness of assets and opportunities
- \* Increase knowledge of best practices, trends and changes
- \* Develop new leadership roles, opportunities and action items
- \* Foster new collaborations and plans among stakeholders to advance community-driven tourism

**Cass City, MI** received their results in March 2019. More than 50 community leaders, business owners, educators, and residents attended the forum where results were shared. As of early 2019, Cass City community leadership has fostered the capacity to grow their assets and attractiveness in District 10 and across Michigan. Learn more about their results here - <https://canr.msu.edu/news/first-time-visitors-to-one-of-michigan-s-thumb-communities-provide-new-perspectives-to-drive-tourism-strengthen-community-vitality-and-spawn-local-leaders>

**Marine City, MI** received their results from FIT in February 2019. Approximately 60 community leaders, commissioners, business owners, and residents attended Marine City's forum to learn more from the first-time visitor assessment and share thoughts on what the destination can do better. Marine City's FIT results - <https://canr.msu.edu/news/marine-city-welcomes-first-time-visitor-perspectives-to-strengthen-community-collaboration-and-spawn-new-ideas-for-tourism>

The FIT program is now in its third and final partnership cycle with Prosperity Region tourism subcommittee and benefiting one more District 10 community. The City of St. Clair (St. Clair County) applied for FIT late 2018, which is actively planning their Community Report Forum where they too will receive the perspectives of five first-time visitors to drive new developments for the coastal community. FIT successes in District 10 continue to be a leading model for prosperous community and tourism development initiatives in other Michigan State University Extension Districts.

In addition, the FIT communities to date are regularly promoted statewide and nationally as successful examples of community collaboration and leadership when addressing placemaking, tourism, and quality of life for rural America. MSU Extension's Community Vitality and Tourism educator continue to work across



## Ensuring Strong Communities, continued

### Serving the State of Michigan

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- Fiscal Sustainability for Michigan Municipalities—Statewide
- New County Commissioner Training—Statewide

Feed back from Food Summit

“Discussing the food system is difficult because it’s very large and diverse I appreciated being able to focus on the food insecurity side and tailoring discussions to meet those needs”

St. Clair County Food Summit Participant

### Food Policy Council in Michigan’s Thumb Area

In July 2018, MSU Extension received a seed grant from the Michigan Local Food Council Network funded by the Kellogg Foundation. Although many local food councils concentrate on one county or smaller geographic area. The Thumb Council proposed to include the five Michigan Thumb counties of St. Clair, Lapeer, Tuscola, Huron and Sanilac.

The council spent the last quarter of 2018 organizing itself and collecting human resources in the area of food insecurity (food banks, pantries), agricultural producers, farmer market and farmers market organizers. The council focused on the development of larger food system needs and developed a mission statement:

#### ***“Identify, develop, and connect resources to support local food communities in Michigan’s Thumb”***

The Thumb Food Policy Council’s purpose is two fold; A) to create meaningful educational programming through community partners on the role of the food system in Michigan’s Thumb and it’s interaction to the overall food system in Michigan from a producer and consumer point of view and, B) provide recommendations and advocate for changes related to the Thumb food system specifically that will enhance the food security and food needs in the region.

Two community food summits were conducted, one in Cass City in partnership with the Meeting the Need for Our Village in Cass City and another in Port Huron. The results of these summits identified specific action steps to undertake moving forward, some of which have been completed and others in the preliminary stages of development. Some of those specific action steps included:

- ◆ Advocating for a grocery store in Cass City that has none
- ◆ Develop a community garden to produce fresh vegetables for food pantries
- ◆ Create new opportunity for food insecure consumers to have greater access to affordable, healthy, diverse, safe food.
- ◆ Discover successes within schools feeding kids and develop opportunities to showcase these to other schools for replication

The council looks forward to 2020 to create and deliver programs regarding food and agricultural literacy, development of sustained and coordinated food pantries in the Thumb and creating new educational opportunities in the communities that the council represents.



Addy Battel, Dori Battel & Royce Daskam presenting at the Summit

### Serving the State of Michigan

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#### FEEDBACK FROM COMMISSIONERS:

"I appreciate the new overnight format. It allows us to network with the other commissioners from across the state,"

Otsego County Commissioner

"This is a very good orientation to what my new responsibilities are as a commissioner,"

Delta County Commissioner

## New County Commissioner School

Since 1968, MSUE and the MAC have offered an educational program for new county commissioners following the November election. That program has come to be known as the New Commissioner School. The 2018 workshop marked the 50<sup>th</sup> year of this program.

In 2017 a long term evaluation of NCS was conducted to assess long-term change in commissioners' knowledge, skills, and confidence, as well as inform program revisions. Participants responded to questions rating their change in individual competencies, board competencies, and board culture. Information from that evaluation led to changes in the 2018 workshop, including fewer topics, more depth, and a move to a 2-day workshop.

This year, a team of MSUE educators offered New County Commissioner Workshop at four locations around the state. The workshop consists of two-half day sessions on the fundamentals of county government and included time for networking with other county officials, MAC staff, and MSUE educators and directors. Overall response to the format change was positive. Attendance was down only 10 following an election that yielded 24 fewer new commissioners.

A total of 191 people attended the workshops. Based on immediate post-workshop evaluation, 70% of reporting participants were newly elected county commissioners, 20% were experienced commissioners, and the rest were administrators, other county staff, and a couple of Michigan Department of Treasury staff. Commissioners from Tuscola County attend one of these workshops.

MSU Extension's government, leadership, and community engagement programs engage participants in learning skills of good governance, how to communicate with purpose, and how to collaborate on solving complex issues in order to improve their communities. Participants leave MSU Extension educational programs with:

- ◆ a deeper understanding of their civic responsibilities and roles within their own communities;
- ◆ increased confidence to make decisions;
- ◆ skills and information to better manage community resources;
- ◆ knowledge of how to implement best practices; and
- ◆ The application of knowledge and skills gained from good governance programs builds a stronger civic infrastructure.





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#### MISSION:

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