



# Allegan County 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

## BY THE NUMBERS



3,608 Allegan County youth involved in 4-H and other youth development programs



2,562 Apple Crunchers, the annual Farm-to-School month event to raise awareness for Michigan Apples



MSU Extension website received 14,868 Allegan visits



32 certified Extension Master Gardeners



\$12,148,571 total economic impact in Allegan County



\$491,865 spending with local businesses



650 Growers statewide served with Delayed Planting Education



MSU disbursed \$3,436,332 in financial aid to Allegan County students

## MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR

Over the past year, MSU Extension has continued to provide exceptional programming in Allegan County. MSU Extension works to meet community needs by partnering with local organizations to bring programming that directly impacts county residents' lives.

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 Allegan 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



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# Program Highlights

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A group of Allegan County Junior Rotarian showing off their origami cranes after hearing the “Sadako & 1000 Paper Cranes” story.

## THE ART OF ORIGAMI

Jan Brinn, Children & Youth Extension Educator, created the “Art of Origami” program and delivered it to the Allegan County Rotary Club and at the Allegan County STEM Family Night. The program elegantly incorporates the four H’s in its teaching – head, heart, hands and health. Participants learned the connection of origami with STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) and about the Japanese culture. Some participants challenged themselves to learn how to make the origami crane and learned about the “Sadako and 1000 Paper Cranes” story.



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

## CHINA ART EXCHANGE

For over 25 years, Michigan children, grades K-6th have been communicating with children their own age in China through the 4-H Children’s Art Exchange. Communication is done by creating ‘visual letters’. 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. Clearly, the written letter is limited with the language differences. Thus, visual letters took shape as the primary means of communicating. Allegan County had 40 children participate.



Camp Leaders and counsellors learn ice breaker activities to use with their campers.

## CAMP KIDWELL TRAINING

MSU Extension Children & Youth Educators, Janis Brinn and Janelle Stewart were asked by Camp Kidwell Director, K.J. Kelly, to facilitate staff development trainings during the week of the Allegan and Van Buren County 4-H Camp Kidwell Staff and Counselor Leadership Training. Jan and Janelle worked with staff to become aware of the importance of icebreakers and teambuilding not only with each other, but also with the campers they would be working with during the summer. They were also trained to recognize their leadership strengths and challenges and to appreciate those of others.

# Program Highlights

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## LIVESTOCK JUDGING TEAM

Approximately 19 youth were involved in Livestock Judging in Allegan County. The group met once a week beginning in March and attended several contests. Judging livestock includes giving reasons for why you placed the class the way you placed them. The club skillset involves public speaking and knowing animal condition scores and how to tell the difference. An exhibitor is judged on their reasons and how they present themselves. Giving oral reasons sounds like an actual Livestock judge that is judging a class. The team placed 5th at the National Livestock Judging contest!



Livestock Judging Team: Bridget Weller, Katrina Tucker, Kinsee Lettinga, Blake Pillars, and Kendra VanOrder posing with their ribbons!

## 4-H DAIRY TEAM

Allegan 4-H Dairy Teams spent four months preparing for state level competitions in Dairy Judging, Dairy Quiz Bowl, Dairy Management and showing their cattle at the state Dairy Days event held at the Michigan State University Pavilion for Livestock and Agriculture July 15-19, 2019. Allegan County 4-H'ers have represented the county for more than twenty years at the annual event celebrating all things dairy in Michigan. The teams are coached by Bev Berens, Robyn Wixom, Jennie Orantes, Christina Ybema, Shelby Berens and Allie Elzinga. Orantes, Ybema, Berens and Elzinga are all 4-H team graduates who enjoy helping and watching students grow and achieve through 4-H.



The Dairy Team poses for a photo opportunity at Dairy Days held on campus at Michigan State University.

## FESTIVAL OF TREES

Each winter, MSU Extension and the 4-H Camp Kidwell board turn camp into a "Winter Wonderland" featuring beautifully decorated trees and wreaths. The money raised at the Festival of Trees goes to finance the operational side of 4-H Camp Kidwell. People come from all over the county for a chance to visit with Santa, make cookies with Mrs. Claus and have a meal with family and friends! This year, the Festival of Trees raised over \$45,000 for camp and scholarships for kids. A huge thank you to all those who volunteered and attended!



Santa and Mrs. Claus pose at the Festival of Trees.

# Program Highlights

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MSU Extension helps veterans access the benefits they have fought for.

## VETERAN OUTREACH

In 2019, MSU Extension was awarded a USDA/MDHHS grant for Veteran Outreach. Steve Whittington joined the MSU Extension team in May as a Program Instructor for SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) Outreach to Veterans. He participated in the Allegan County Homeless Veteran Stand Down where he reached 100 veteran service providers and veterans that were in attendance. Steve is dedicated to working with veterans and veteran families to help them determine their benefit eligibility, evaluate their options and learn about additional support services.



The District 7 MSU Extension Advisory Council visits Camp Kidwell and honed their robotics skills.

## ALLEGAN SHOWCASE

This year, the District 7 MSU Extension Advisory Council chose to showcase Allegan County programs with a tour through the County. The first stop, 4-H Camp Kidwell, participants were able to channel their inner child by competing in a robotics competition. The next stop showcased the research being conducted at Trevor Nichols AgBio Research Center. The primary objective of TNRC is to find the best ways to keep fruit pest-free in Michigan while preserving the environment and ensuring economic viability for the state's fruit growers. After a delicious lunch at the famous Crane's Pie Pantry Restaurant and Vineyard, participants headed to Walters Gardens to learn about nematode research being conducted by MSU's Dr. Marisol Quintanilla Torneel.



March Garden Day featured lectures on topics such as pollinators, pests, and community gardens.

## CONSUMER HORTICULTURE

MSU Extension co-hosted a March Garden Day with the West Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association. The event was held at the Grand Haven Community Center. Consumer Horticulture Educator, Rebecca Finneran, delivered the keynote presentation entitled, "Romantic, Inspiring, Educational—Public Gardens of Today". This lecture brought together a historic look at public gardening throughout the centuries to emphasize the importance of research-based learning at university gardens and other noted gardens. There were 161 people in attendance, of which 17 were from Allegan County.

# Program Highlights

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## EXTENSION MASTER GARDENERS

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, ideas for improving food security, and are committed to improving the quality of life in Michigan through horticulture-based volunteerism. In Allegan County, there are 32 certified Extension Master Gardeners. Additionally, 50 Allegan residents took advantage of the EMG promoted soil testing.



Master Gardener Coordinator, Deb Gulick, and Allegan County Master Gardener, Barry Andersen, show off tomatoes in the Holland Community Garden. Barry has over 10,000 volunteer hours with MSU Extension!

## 2019 APPLE CRUNCH

On October 10<sup>th</sup>, 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). MSU Extension Educators collaborated on this project to provide 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 Allegan County, there were 2562 apple crunchers!



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

## MASTER NATURALIST

2019 saw the revival of the MSU Extension Master Naturalist Program. The mission of the MIMN is to educate and involve diverse communities of individuals in environmental and conservation issues in Michigan. As a certified Michigan Master Naturalist, participants are encouraged to share their knowledge gained through enhancing their professional abilities, direct practice on their properties, and volunteer activities in their home communities. Participants experienced hands-on learning at two locations in Allegan County – Trevor Nichols Research Center and Allegan Pine Plains Natural Area. There were 31 graduates from the program.



Participants in the Master Naturalist program explore an oak barrens near Fennville in the Allegan State Game Area. Photo credit, Beth Clawson.

# Program Highlights

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

## MOKA LIFE SKILLS

MSU Extension Disease Prevention Educator, Christi Demitz, participated in the MOKA Foundation's Allegan Life Skills event. Participants are adults with developmental disabilities, some of whom are living with diabetes and not managing it well. Christi delivered a one-time presentation on the Diabetes Plate Method, which is part of the Dining with Diabetes Curriculum. Dining with Diabetes is typically a five-session series conducted by MSU Extension and community health partners. Participants have the opportunity to explore and taste foods prepared from diabetes-friendly recipes.

## NUTRITION EDUCATION

In 2019, Sue Elwell, Community Nutrition Instructor, cumulatively reached 358 youth and 62 adults with nutrition education. Sue shares that "during my Show Me Nutrition series with 3rd graders at Brandon Elementary, a young gal shared that after sharing what she learned during our class, she and her mom started walking together every day. It was fun together time for them and they both feel better. They have increased their fruit and vegetables and have made a few smoothies. They are now reading the nutrition labels, paying more attention to the ingredients as well as the good and bad fats."

## BLUEBERRY PRODUCTION

Small fruit Educators, Carlos Garcia-Salazar and Mark Longstroth, hosted various workshops on in the fruit belt (Van Buren, Allegan, Ottawa) to equip farmers with the knowledge needed for successful harvests. Topics included advances in pest and disease control in blueberries that resulted in trials conducted at MSU Extension. Additionally, there were two special trainings for Hispanic blueberry growers that covered spotted winged drosophila and integrated pest management. The small-fruit team continues to look for innovative ways to protect one of Michigan's most treasured crops.



MSU Extension aims to improve the knowledge, skills and behavior of how individuals view nutrition.



Michigan blueberry growers produce about 100 million pounds of blueberries every year, making MI a leader in blueberry production.

# Program Highlights

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## REGIONAL FISHERIES WORKSHOP

Sea Grant Educator, Daniel O'Keefe, works with Steelheaders and Great Lakes Anglers from along the Southwest Michigan coast line. O'Keefe regularly updates the groups on Sea Grant citizen science and updates on the status of Lake Michigan fisheries and stocking rates. In April, O'Keefe presented at the South Haven Moose Lodge to attendants from Van Buren, Allegan and Kalamazoo Counties. Michigan Sea Grant is a partnership between Michigan State University and the University of Michigan



Michigan Sea Grant is part of the National Sea Grant College Program and receives funding from state, tribal, business and other sources.

## SMaRT ON-FARM RESEARCH

Allegan County Soybean Educator, Mike Staton, hosted an educational session on the 2018 SMaRT on-farm research results and recommendations for managing soybean cyst nematodes that was attended by 17 Allegan County growers. Turning point and open-ended questions were used to gather input from the participants regarding research topics for 2019 and recruited new trial cooperators. Production topics evaluated in 2019 were planting rates, seed treatments, row spacing, fertilizer, fungicide, spring tillage, cover crops and planting date.



SMaRT trial harvest in progress. Photo credit: Mike Staton

## SOYBEAN TOUR

Selecting high-yielding and pest-resistant soybean varieties is one of the most important decisions made by producers. Allegan County producers are fortunate to have one of eight MSU soybean variety performance trials conducted in the county. To increase awareness about, and showcase the quality of the trial, MSU Extension cooperated with four local agribusinesses and a local producer to plan and conduct a tour of the MSU Soybean Variety Performance Trial in Wayland. Nearly 60 soybean producers and agronomists participated in the trial tour and learned new information. The participants asked many questions of the presenters and expressed interest in receiving and examining the trial results.



Extension Educator, Mike Staton, covered recommendations for harvesting and handling frost-damaged or wet soybeans.

# 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) \*\***



# Collaboration Across MSU Extension

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MSU Extension is an organization comprised of individuals with broad knowledge of subject matters related 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 and 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 & Environment Institute. However, even if you do not have a local expert for the Extension 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 Allegan 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 Allegan County!**



**MISSION:**

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

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## MSU Extension staff located in Allegan County

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Sue Elwell	Community Nutrition Instructor	Ext. 2559	elwell@msu.edu
Dian Liepe	4-H Program Coordinator	Ext. 2557	liepe@msu.edu
Erin Moore	District 7 Director	Ext. 2553	mooree16@msu.edu
Mike Staton	Senior Soybean Educator	Ext. 2562	staton@msu.edu

## Additional MSU Extension staff serving Allegan County

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