

ANTRIM COUNTY 2025-2026 ANNUAL REPORT

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Message from the District Director

I am pleased to share highlights from another impactful year of partnership between Michigan State University Extension and Antrim County. Your continued investment ensures that residents of all ages have access to research-based education, responsive community support, and programs that strengthen the wellbeing and vitality of our region.

This year, our team continued to meet people where they are—whether in classrooms, on farms, in community spaces, or through flexible online and hybrid offerings. Because our staff live and work in the communities they serve, they remain closely connected to local needs and opportunities. That connection drives our work in youth development, agriculture and natural resources, health and nutrition, community and economic development, and lifelong learning.

Thanks to your partnership, we expanded opportunities for youth leadership and career exploration, supported families in building healthier lifestyles, strengthened local businesses, and provided farmers with tools and resources to support both economic resilience and mental health. These outcomes are a direct reflection of your commitment to fostering a thriving, informed, and connected community.

On behalf of the MSU Extension team serving our county, thank you for your ongoing trust and collaboration. We look forward to continuing this important work together and hope to see you at one of our upcoming programs or events in the year ahead.

Jennifer Berkey

District 3 Director

Michigan State University Extension

Impact



218
Programs accessed by residents



1,094
Reached through programming



22,459
Reached by social media



NORTHWEST MICHIGAN
GROWER BUS TOUR

In March 2025, the Northwest Michigan Horticultural Research Center (NWMHRC) staff organized a tour to West Central Michigan and the Ridge. The goal of this tour was to showcase technology on fruit farms around the state. The bus departed from the NWMHRC at 7am with over 70 growers on a chartered bus. Our first stop was in Hart, Michigan where we had a high-density apple pruning demonstration and highlighted top-worked Honeycrisp trees. At our second stop, the grower had used a Vivid X Vision system to estimate yields and bins per acre. This technology is mounted to an ATV, and research conducted by MSU researchers showed that this equipment helps growers achieve a tighter estimate for annual yields. We looked at a large planting of high-density sweet cherries under rain covers and had a pruning demonstration of this orchard system. We toured a sweet cider processing plant and saw a new line for packing fresh market sweet cherries. The

tour ended with a stop highlighting a new irrigation system—the first of its kind installed in Michigan—with water delivery and scheduling managed through the cloud and accessed by smartphone. In addition to the 70 Northwest Michigan growers on the bus, local growers from West Central Michigan and the Ridge joined at each site, for a total of over 150 attendees.

NEW PATHOLOGY EQUIPMENT
AT NWMHRC

In fall 2025, the Northwest Michigan Horticulture Research Center (NWMHRC) purchased new laboratory equipment to expand its capacity for in-depth plant pathology research and testing. This investment strengthens research on critical apple diseases such as fire blight and apple scab, as well as cherry diseases including cherry leaf spot, American brown rot, and bacterial canker.

New equipment includes a laminar airflow workstation, benchtop autoclave, microbiological incubator, centrifuge, and

other essential tools. These additions allow researchers to prepare sterile media on site and culture fungal and bacterial pathogens, supporting work with multiple diseases and testing for pesticide resistance in pathogens collected from local orchards.

This capacity is especially important given survey results from 2016–2019 showing widespread resistance to key SDHI fungicides used in commercial tart cherry production. Access to current disease and resistance data helps growers make informed management decisions to protect yield and crop quality. The enhanced laboratory will serve as an off-campus hub for tree fruit plant pathology research supporting the region’s agricultural industry.

AGRICULTURE PROGRAM



*Each year, Rothwell and her staff open the research center during the National Cherry Festival, welcoming more than **2,500** visitors to learn about cherry production*

IRRIGATION UPDATE AT THE NW STATION

In 2024, the Michigan Tree Fruit Commission awarded the NWMHRC funds to update the irrigation system. This spring, we were excited to start the install of the new WiseConn Irrigation system. Our old irrigation system was starting to wear out and the automated technology was outdated.

WiseConn is a relatively new technology, that some growers across Michigan are starting to adopt. It is categorized as a “smart irrigation system,” as it provides precision drip and sprinkler irrigation solutions, combining hardware (valves, controllers, sensors) with cloud-based software for monitoring, analytics and scheduling. They also integrate with other agritech platforms (e.g. CropX), so data from soil moisture, weather, sensors, etc., can feed into decision-making. We are in the process of connecting our WiseConn Irrigation system to our Enviroweather Station, so it can use real-time data to drive irrigation decisions.

Because the system uses real-time data (soil moisture, weather, flow, etc.) to schedule irrigation, it delivers the right amount of water, only when needed. That minimizes waste from overwatering or

running irrigation during rain.

The NWMHRC’s Farm Manager, Dan Bacheler, worked with Whitewater Irrigation and WiseConn to install this new system. Dan is in the process of learning how to operate and best utilize this new system and is excited about being able to automate irrigation timing remotely. We are excited about all the potential projects this new system may introduce.

This system is coming just at the right time. We have three new irrigation projects that are ongoing at the station: two in high-density apples and one in tart cherries. As we have light soils in northern Michigan and rainfall has become more erratic, dialing in the best water delivery will be critical to produce high quality crops.

We are also fortunate to have a newer MSU faculty, Dr. Younsuk Dong, on board to collaborate on our new irrigation trials. Dr. Dong received a Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and MSU collaboration grant to address climate resiliency. The new apple irrigation trials are supported through this innovative program. We look forward to some great data on best practices for watering and fertigation of fresh market apples.

Thank you to the Michigan Tree Fruit Commission for their support in this project! Thanks also to the Climate Resiliency program for funding innovative irrigation research!

Nikki Rothwell 2025 Cherry Industry Person of the Year

Nikki Rothwell, an MSU Extension specialist and coordinator of the NWMHRC, was named the 2025 Cherry Industry Person of the Year, one of the industry’s highest honors. A trusted leader in Michigan’s cherry industry for decades, Rothwell is recognized for her impactful research, innovative pest and disease management strategies, and unwavering commitment to grower education and support. Her work has fundamentally improved cherry production practices, including leading efforts that transformed management of spotted wing drosophila, while her outreach, adaptability, and leadership during times of industry need have made her an indispensable advocate for growers and the broader cherry community.

AGRICULTURE PROGRAM



Farms Assisted Represent:

\$19.7M in net worth



\$4.7M in annual sales



FARM BUSINESS
MANAGEMENT

Farm Business Management Educator Chris Bardenhagen works with area farmers on succession planning, financial management, and cost of production (farm-level and industry-level). Most farmers faced mounting difficulties this year, including ever-growing input costs, trade volatility, and in some cases, overproduction leading to weak prices. These issues make farm planning very difficult, and so consultations with MSU Extension Farm Business Management advisors are even more important and valuable in these challenging times.

Chris assisted nine area farms with Telfarm program outreach this year, helping to determine end-of-year tax strategies and to perform annual balance sheet financial analysis. Farmers who participate in the program gain a greater understanding of their farm’s financial strengths and weaknesses, and how they can improve their financial standing. This in turn helps improve the

farms’ resilience. The aggregate net worth of the farm businesses that Chris assisted is over \$19.7 million dollars, and these farms had over \$4.7 million dollars in sales in 2025.

Chris also consulted with many growers and other industry actors related to recently finished industry cost of production studies. Along with regional MSU Extension educators, Chris completed four Michigan studies in 2025: Apples, blueberries, cabbage, and peaches. Chris and Erin Lizotte have also been working with the chestnut industry on a cost study, as this is a potential alternative crop for tree fruit growers. Growers can use these studies as a decision-making tool, adjusting the spreadsheet and tables to consider different planning scenarios.

This year, Chris also consulted with many area farmers regarding important decisions relating to farm transfer plans. Succession planning is a hot topic with farmers right now, and Chris is connected with more than 12 farm

families. He also regularly presents the topic at local, regional, and state-level events. Succession planning tools and resources equip farm families to make informed choices to successfully transfer business skills, responsibilities, and assets to the next farming generation.



Advised
12+ farm families in
planning for the next
generation

AGRICULTURE PROGRAM



MICHIGAN AGRABILITY

The Michigan AgrAbility project helps people who want to continue working in agriculture even when illness, injury, or chronic conditions create barriers to work. AgrAbility is a USDA-funded partnership between MSU Extension and Easterseals MORC, with a mission to enhance quality of life so that farmers, their families, and communities can thrive, using assistive devices and adaptive equipment that makes farming safer and easier on the body.

In 2025, Michigan AgrAbility coordinated two events with client partners: a farm visit field day in Holland and a maple tubing installation day in Newberry. The field day brought together staff from Michigan Rehabilitation Services, the Michigan Center for Rural Health, Kent County Farm Bureau, and Extension to demonstrate the

adaptive items that allow Mr. VerHoeven to safely use his equipment and successfully farm 90 acres. The tubing installation day took place on Veteran’s Day at a veteran’s farm and provided hands-on training on how to make a small-scale maple sugar operation easier on the body by using tubing instead of lugging heavy buckets of sap across the snow.

The project also provided guidance to two MSU College of Engineering Mechanical Engineering Capstone projects: making improvements to a previous design group’s rolling kneeler cart prototype to help a client tend low-growing lavender while protecting her fragile foot bones and an arm support addition to an exoskeleton that could be useful for anyone who had experienced a stroke or injury affecting one arm so that they can lift and do overhead work such as pruning.

Throughout the year, the team worked with 164 clients at their farms and collaborated with Michigan Rehabilitation Services to provide equipment such as quick-attach hitches, lifts on tractors and combines, and cattle handling systems to 22 farmers across the state. AgrAbility also worked with Easterseals MORC to provide \$9,500 in donations to cover equipment for 12 farmers such as hand control levers, an air ride seat and an electric wheelchair, improvements that will make their work safer and easier on the body. Former clients also donated nine items back to the program, amounting to nearly \$30,000 worth of equipment that is back in use.

Staff had great presence around the state and provided 21 presentations, tabled at nine events, and had 341 direct interactions, from a total of more than 7,550 participants present at events.

AGRICULTURE PROGRAM



FARM STRESS

Farming remains one of the most unpredictable and stressful professions in Michigan. Through the MSU Extension Managing Farm Stress Program, we continue to combine farm business expertise with behavioral health support to strengthen the resilience of agricultural communities. Program leadership is based in our Benzie County office, allowing for responsive local engagement alongside statewide delivery. In 2025, the program led 74 training workshops, reaching more than 1,700 participants statewide, with measurable improvements in participants’ confidence to manage their own stress and to support farmers experiencing distress. Workshops are offered at community libraries and partner sites, including evenings and weekends, to improve accessibility for producers.

Local organizations interested in hosting a program are encouraged to contact their county office. Our other efforts included updated curricula, expanded media outreach, and release of the short documentary *Weathering Together* to explore the effect of stress on Michigan farmers and raise awareness of available resources.

Scan to view the short documentary *Weathering Together*



In 2025, the Farm Stress program:

Led more than **74** training workshops



Reached over **1,700** participants





MSU EXTENSION'S IMPACT ON MICHIGAN'S GRAPE & WINE INDUSTRY IN 2025

Michigan's grape and wine industry is an important part of the culture, economy, and agricultural landscape of Northwest Michigan. Through Michigan State University (MSU) Extension, local vineyards and wineries receive year-round support that connects university research with practical solutions growers use in their daily operations.

Our primary focus is on helping grape growers manage risks, improve vineyard health, and produce high quality fruit that supports the region's wineries and agricultural tourism.

Throughout 2025, MSU Extension

delivered educational programs, workshops, and field demonstrations covering vineyard management, pruning practices, soil health, pest and disease management, and adapting to changing weather conditions. These programs brought together growers, vineyard managers, and industry professionals to share knowledge and strengthen collaboration across the region. More than 1,200 participants attended Extension viticulture programs during the year, demonstrating strong community engagement and continued interest in advancing Michigan's wine industry.

A major focus of this work has been developing practical tools that help growers make better decisions. One upcoming resource will help vineyards better understand how winter temperatures affect grapevines – an

important issue in northern climates where cold can damage crops. Tools like this allow growers to prepare ahead of challenging weather conditions and protect long-term vineyard productivity.

More than 1,200 participants attended Extension viticulture programs in 2025



MSU EXTENSION'S IMPACT ON MICHIGAN'S GRAPE & WINE INDUSTRY IN 2025

Extension efforts also supported innovative projects aimed at improving efficiency and sustainability in Michigan vineyards. Current initiatives include improving methods to estimate grape yields before harvest, helping farms better plan labor and winery operations, and exploring new technologies that may allow plant diseases to be detected earlier. Earlier detection helps growers respond more effectively while reducing unnecessary inputs and environmental impacts.

In addition to organized programs, MSU Extension provides ongoing seasonal support through weekly vineyard updates, educational articles, and direct consultations with growers throughout the

growing season. This continuous communication ensures that local farmers have timely information needed to respond to weather challenges and changing vineyard conditions.

The grape and wine industry continues to grow across Northwest Michigan, supporting farms, local businesses, tourism, and rural communities. MSU Extension remains committed to working alongside growers and community partners to strengthen agriculture, encourage innovation, and support the long-term success of Northwest Michigan's wine region.





Antrim County Master Gardener Volunteers provided:

413 volunteer hours valued at \$14,368

A 34% increase in volunteer hours



EXTENSION
MASTER GARDENER

In Antrim County, volunteers provided 413 Extension Master Gardener hours valued at \$14,368*. In terms of year-over-year growth, there were 104 additional volunteer hours from Antrim County Master Gardener volunteers, equating to a 34% increase in volunteer hours and an additional \$4,020 in added community value. These hours supported educating residents, improving food security, and protecting natural resources in the county. Throughout the 2025 season, MSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteers assisted with invasive species management and habitat restoration at Glacial Hills Natural Area. Twenty-two invasive species removal events led by MSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteers were held weekly from April through November 2025. Priority species removed included Garlic Mustard, Wild Parsnip, Bull Thistle, and Japanese Barberry. Removing these species improves wildlife habitat by allowing native plants to return and provide food and shelter. Visitors to Glacial Hills and participants in invasive species removals

were educated on the importance of native plant habitat for wildlife conservation and environmental stewardship in the region. Volunteers at Grass River Natural Area and Torch Conservation Center tended native plant and pollinator gardens while educating visitors through programming about the importance of pollinators and native flowering plants. During gardening events in public spaces in Elk Rapids and Bellaire, volunteers educated community members on environmentally friendly gardening practices that protect water quality.

**Pollinators
are responsible for
1 out of every 3 bites of food—
making pollinator habitats
essential to
food systems and
ecosystems.**

At the Antrim County Government Center, MSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteers and Antrim County staff

worked together to maintain a pollinator habitat demonstration garden using native Michigan plants that are known to support bees, butterflies, and other pollinators. This year saw the installation of a new educational sign in the pollinator garden. The sign provides information to visitors about the native plants in the garden and how residents can support pollinators by creating similar habitats in their home landscapes.

This year, in collaboration with Antrim County, MSU Extension Master Gardeners and MSU Extension staff hosted a two-hour public event to unveil the pollinator garden sign. Extension Master Gardeners and MSU Extension staff also conducted a fall clean-up, harvested seeds for public distribution, and recognized the gardeners who made the project possible. Residents learned about seed harvesting, SMART gardening techniques, and the vital role native plants play in supporting pollinators.

*Based on the Independent Sector’s value of a volunteer hour in Michigan.

4-H PROGRAM



More than 60 tote bags were created using t-shirts which were donated to a local food pantry.

4-H PROGRAMMING

BUILDING SKILLS, CONFIDENCE, AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

In 2025, Antrim County 4-H expanded hands-on learning opportunities through creative arts, literacy partnerships, environmental education, and community service. Through strong collaborations with local libraries, schools, and community partners, youth built practical life skills, strengthened connections, and experienced the core 4-H values of learning, leadership, and service.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS & LITERACY ENGAGEMENT

MSU Extension 4-H supported literacy engagement in Antrim County through community partnerships with the Bellaire Public Library and the Central Lake District Library. As part of each library’s summer programming, 4-H staff and volunteers facilitated interactive reading and craft sessions for local youth. Following shared story times, participants engaged in themed art activities that reinforced literacy concepts, encouraged creative expression, and supported comprehension and fine motor skill development. These programs fostered a love of reading,

strengthened summer learning, and created welcoming spaces for families to connect while building confidence and curiosity in young learners.

CREATIVE ARTS, SUSTAINABILITY, GARDENING, & SERVICE

Through partnerships with local schools, libraries, businesses, and community organizations, MSU Extension 4-H offered creative arts, sustainability, gardening, and service opportunities across Antrim County. Youth at the Bellaire Public Library and Bellaire High School participated in the 4-H T-Shirts for Totes project, transforming gently used shirts into reusable bags. This hands-on activity emphasized sustainability, textile reuse, and community engagement. All totes created were donated to the Little Free Food Pantry in Elk Rapids, supporting local food access while empowering youth to make a positive difference in their community.

4-H also partnered with the Bellaire Public Library to offer a beginner Crochet Workshop designed to teach foundational handcraft skills. Youth learned how to chain, single crochet, and build small projects while developing patience, problem-solving, and fine motor skills. For many participants, this was their first experience with fiber arts—opening the

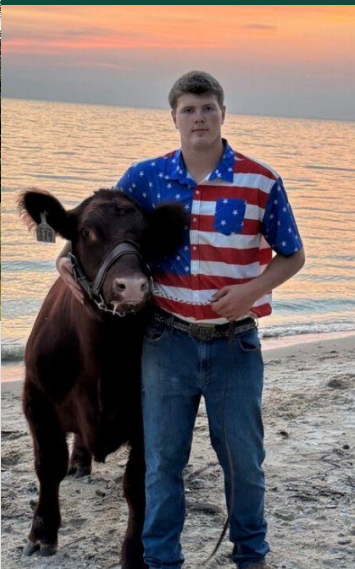
door to a new hobby and opportunities for continued creative growth.

In addition, MSU Extension collaborated with Ellsworth Farmers Exchange to host the first Antrim County Sunflower Contest, open to youth and adults countywide. Participants picked up sunflower seeds in April and were encouraged to grow their plants at home throughout the summer. In August, participants submitted photos and measurements for judging in two categories: tallest sunflower and largest bloom. Awards and trophies were presented during Family Day at the Antrim County Fair. This program encouraged hands-on learning about plant science and gardening while fostering friendly community competition and engagement across the county.

4-H PROGRAM



Wyatt Bargy received the 2025 Michigan 4-H Animal Science Youth Sportsperson of the Year Award



STATEWIDE OPPORTUNITES AND RECOGNITION FOR ANTRIM COUNTY 4-H YOUTH

Antrim County 4-H helps young people build skills and confidence not only locally, but through opportunities that connect them with experiences across Michigan. Over the past year, Antrim County youth participated in statewide 4-H programs that exposed them to college life, leadership roles, environmental education, and recognition for strong character.

Four Antrim County youth attended 4-H Exploration Days at Michigan State University, the state’s largest pre-college program for middle and high school students. Youth stayed on campus and took part in hands-on sessions focused on career exploration, leadership, science, and the arts. For many participants, this was their first time experiencing a college setting—helping them build independence, confidence, and a clearer sense of future possibilities.

One Antrim County youth was also selected to serve on the 2026 4-H Exploration Days Scheme Team, a statewide youth leadership group responsible for helping plan and guide the event. In this role, the youth works with peers from across Michigan to help select session topics, plan activities, and support younger participants. This selection reflects both personal leadership growth and the strength of Antrim County’s 4-H program.

Another Antrim County youth took part in outdoor and environmental learning through the Great Lakes Natural Resources Camp, a week-long program focused on Michigan’s forests, wildlife, water resources, and Great Lakes ecology. Youth participated in activities such as kayaking, forestry projects, and outdoor science lessons, gaining firsthand experience with natural resource stewardship and outdoor skills relevant to northern Michigan.

In addition to these experiential opportunities, Antrim County 4-H youth were also recognized at the state level for their character and leadership. Wyatt Bargy received the 2025 Michigan 4-H Animal Science Youth Sportsperson of the Year Award, presented by Michigan State

University Extension. This award honors one youth statewide for outstanding sportsmanship, leadership, and respect for others. Wyatt was recognized not only for his beef project work, but for an act of generosity at the Northwestern Michigan Fair, where he purchased another member’s steer that received no bids and returned the proceeds to that family. His actions reflect the values and life skills Antrim County 4-H strives to instill.

Antrim County 4-H Impact:
Youth participated in statewide programs focused on leadership, college readiness, environmental education, and character development—bringing skills, recognition, and pride back to Antrim County.



2025 LIVESTOCK SHOWING AUCTIONS

Antrim County youth have the choice to participate in two local fairs to demonstrate their showing skills and auction their livestock project. They can either participate in the Antrim County Open Fair or the Northwestern Michigan Fair. The Antrim County fair is a four-day community event that brings families and residents together. Youth showcased projects completed throughout the year, applying skills developed through their 4-H club experiences. County fairs provide hands-on learning where youth set goals, evaluate progress, receive feedback, and take responsibility for their work. For livestock participants, this includes daily animal care and accountability. The fair experience reinforces confidence and responsibility while supporting a long-standing community tradition.

NORTHWESTERN MICHIGAN FAIR

Youth also have a chance to participate in the seven-day regional Northwestern

Michigan Fair. Participation at a regional fair provides Antrim County youth with opportunities to showcase their projects, interact with peers from other communities, and experience a larger-scale event environment. These experiences strengthen communication skills, adaptability, and professionalism while allowing youth to represent Antrim County positively beyond county borders.

EDUCATIONAL VALUE TO ANTRIM COUNTY

Although 4-H does not oversee fair operations, educational programming contributes significantly to youth readiness and success at both local and regional fairs. The skills youth gain through 4-H —responsibility, decision-making, record-keeping, teamwork, and respect for animals and others— support participation in community events and positive youth development across the county.

Antrim County 4-H youth from the

Backyard Bunch 4-H Club partnered with the Elk Rapids Lions Club to support a free community Christmas Dinner. Members assisted with event setup, decorating, greeting guests, serving meals, and cleanup, while also sharing displays highlighting their 4-H projects and activities. This event provides a meaningful opportunity for youth to give back to their community while building teamwork, communication, and leadership skills.

Through hands-on learning, strong community partnerships, and meaningful educational experiences, Antrim County 4-H continues to support youth participating in local and regional fairs. In the coming year, MSU Extension looks forward to strengthening these pathways and expanding opportunities that help Antrim County youth gain skills, confidence, and civic pride.

SNAP-ED PROGRAM



SNAP-ED PROGRAMMING

HYDROPONICS SYSTEM AT CHERRYLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL

Cherryland Middle School advanced its healthy-eating efforts by implementing a classroom hydroponics system supported through an MSU Extension SNAP-Ed mini-grant and coaching. Students assembled the system, chose which vegetables to grow, and used their harvest in cooking lessons, food-safety activities, and school salad bar offerings. As the project expanded, students also created teas and edible flower gifts for staff, deepening hands-on learning and their connection to the food system. The project also supported science and nutrition education while encouraging student leadership and teamwork. This initiative helps embed healthier food choices into daily school life.

MOMS & TOTS CENTER

Moms & Tots of Ellsworth received a mini-grant and coaching through MSU Extension SNAP-Ed to build an on-site community learning garden. Throughout

the season, the garden provided more than 20 pounds of tomatoes and cucumbers—as well as fresh lettuce harvested directly by The Good Samaritan food pantry—to support local families. The garden served as both an educational space and a direct food source, helping reduce barriers to fresh produce for families with young children. MSU Extension staff worked alongside other volunteers to improve the learning garden in 2025 with the addition of a fence around the garden. This collaboration strengthened access to healthy foods and demonstrated the value of community-driven efforts.

LITTLE FREE FOOD LIBRARY

In 2025, SNAP-Ed and the Elk Rapids Food Coalition worked together to develop the Little Free Food Library, securing permits, raising funds, and building essential infrastructure with support from local partners. Pop-up pantries, library events, and strong volunteer involvement helped expand access to fresh foods and move the pantry toward full operation. This effort highlights how SNAP-Ed partnerships can strengthen local food systems and support residents facing food insecurity.

COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOLS

During 2025, MSU Extension SNAP-Ed continued to support healthy-eating education in Antrim County through targeted community and school-based programming. Youth participated in hands-on nutrition sessions with cooking and food-preparation demonstrations at the Elk Rapids Library, helping build practical skills around meal planning and healthy choices. At Cherryland Middle School, SNAP-Ed cooking classes were offered as part of a summer program where students worked in teams to follow recipes, measure ingredients, and prepare food safely. Lessons also addressed sugar in processed foods, giving students a clearer understanding of how nutrition choices impact their health.



MSU PRODUCT CENTER
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

The Michigan State University Product Center supports entrepreneurs in Northwest Michigan who are launching or growing businesses in food and agriculture. From farm-based products to value-added goods, the center provides expert guidance through business planning, market research and feasibility analysis.

Through its Traverse City-based innovation counselor, the Product Center offers personalized guidance to help local entrepreneurs turn ideas into viable products and services. In 2025 alone, staff worked with 15 entrepreneurs in Antrim County, supporting \$200,000 in capital formation.

By fostering local business development, the Product Center plays a key role in strengthening the regional economy and building a resilient, community-based food system.

ANTRIM COUNTY PRODUCT CENTER IMPACTS



15 Businesses



16 Counseling Hours



Over \$7 million in annual sales (combined)



176 total employees (combined)



\$200,000 Capital Formation



LOCAL POLICY EDUCATION

In 2025, the CFEI Institute of MSU Extension supported Antrim County communities by providing education focused on short-term rental (STR) policy options. As communities across Michigan seek clarity on STR management, Antrim County’s Deputy Administrator partnered with Kearny Township to host MSU Extension as one of nine statewide classroom sites. The training brought together local officials, staff, and residents to explore policy approaches, legal considerations, and decision-making frameworks relevant to local governance.

Thirteen participants attended the October 2 session at the Kearny Township Hall. Statewide evaluations showed strong outcomes, with 96.4% of respondents reporting increased knowledge of STR policy options and 92.6% finding the training valuable. Hosting the session locally helped ensure residents and leaders had access to unbiased, research-based information to support informed local discussion.

MICHIGAN SEA GRANT

In 2025, Michigan Sea Grant Extension continued its work to support science-based decision-making and stewardship of Great Lakes resources, with direct benefits for Antrim County residents and coastal communities. Through education, outreach, and leadership on regional initiatives, Sea Grant provided information on fisheries, recreational boating, lake level fluctuations, coastal erosion, and other Great Lakes issues affecting local shorelines. Sea Grant Extension educators based in coastal communities helped connect research to real-world applications relevant to Antrim County.

A key highlight for Antrim County in 2025 was progress in marina sustainability and shoreline innovation. Elk Rapids Marina earned designation as a Michigan Clean Marina, recognizing its commitment to practices that protect water quality, reduce pollution, and promote responsible boating. The designation was celebrated in August 2025 during a community event at the marina that included local partners and State Representative John Roth. In addition, Sea Grant participated in the



ReShore event at Elk Rapids Marina, where residents explored emerging shoreline and boating technologies, including electric boats, charging infrastructure, and drone demonstrations. These efforts highlighted practical tools and best practices for creating cleaner, more resilient waterfronts.

Sea Grant Extension also continued to provide leadership and collaboration on regional Great Lakes initiatives. This included service on the FishPass Education Committee, participation on the Michigan Clean Marinas Board of Directors, and co-leadership of the annual Freshwater Summit, held each October. The Freshwater Summit brings together more than 100 residents, leaders, and natural resource professionals to learn about timely topics such as Arctic Grayling reintroduction, Lake Whitefish and food web dynamics, and changing lake levels. Together, these efforts ensure Antrim County communities have access to science-based guidance to support healthy, productive Great Lakes and inland waters.

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