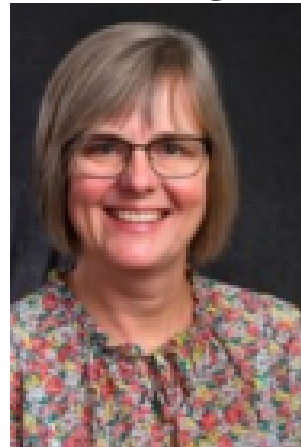


Message from the District Director



Based on MSU Extension annual reporting and evaluation feedback, 2022 proved to be another good year leveraging resources provided by Calhoun County to help us do our work in the community. Staff reports revealed working with schools, service organizations, local government, residents and youth to provide educational programs, and one-on-one consultation in Calhoun County. Indirect work was also strong in

the county with outreach through newsletters, social and print media, educational articles for farmers and businesses and fact sheets on nutrition, immunizations, early childhood education, youth development and other important topics to help people make decisions and improve quality of life. In 2022, District 13 educators worked together with MSU researchers, federal and state agencies and non-profits to bring in nearly \$1 million in grant funding to expand their research and outreach efforts. This report provides a few statistics and sample stories as evidence of our work. We look forward to continuing our partnership with Calhoun County and strengthening the community through quality research based information and educational programs.

Julie Pioch, District Director

Calhoun County Based Staff

Kathy Fischer - 4-H PC & CYI Supervising Educator
Nisha Ritchie - Community Nutrition Instructor
Kelly Jordan- Food Safety Program Instructor
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**Calhoun County
General Fund
Appropriations**

2020	\$133,564
2021	\$81,823
2022	\$118,715

420 4-H Youth Enrolled

106 Adult Volunteers

32 Community Clubs

1069 Total Youth Reached



446
EXTENSION PROGRAMS
INCLUDED CALHOUN COUNTY
RESIDENTS

2767
CALHOUN COUNTY
RESIDENTS ATTENDED
EXTENSION PROGRAMS

93
DIRECT CONSULTATIONS
REPORTED

89
PROGRAMS HELD IN THE COUNTY

SOIL TESTS STATS

22 RESIDENTIAL
13 COMMERCIAL

54 "ASK AN EXPERT" QUESTIONS ANSWERED

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT HIGHLIGHT

Calhoun County 4-H has been providing programming options to Voces of Battle Creek for several years. In 2022, we worked with the Middle & High School students to provide financial education. We talked about needs vs. wants, how to manage "fun" funds, budgeting and more. Each youth was able to experience creating a budget for themselves and learn how to manage their income. These are important life skills that students will use now and throughout their lives. All students shared after the program that they felt better able to manage their money and knew how to begin creating a budget.

4-H also worked with the Elementary students at Voces sharing kitchen science experiments. Each student was given a journal in which they would make a prediction about the activity of the day. They learned that the scientific process includes asking a question, make a hypothesis, testing the hypothesis, and then deciding if they were correct or needed to re-evaluate. The experiments all included things that could be found in the kitchen with the highlight of making ice cream at the end of the 6 week series. The students liked learning science in this way and seeing if they could predict what would happen.

WEBSITE STATISTICS

12,902
COUNTY VISITORS
46,565
PAGE VIEWS
21%
REGULAR CONSUMERS

Nutrition Education Success Stories

In April 2022, four "RE-think Your Drink" presentations were held at the Calhoun Area Career Center in Battle Creek for juniors and seniors. The presentation focused on added sugar and caffeine in drinks. Students shared a story of one of their classmates who had to be rushed to the hospital via ambulance from a heart condition activated by drinking an energy drink in school. A student had one of the drinks with them, so the MSUE community nutrition instructor (CNI) used the opportunity to practice reading the nutrition facts label together. The group saw three very serious health warnings on the label including that the product was not recommended for use by children under 18 years of age. The students and teachers were all really shocked by this, especially since this was a sugar-free drink, and it was purchased at the school. The students and CNI did the math on how much they were spending each year on these drinks. Some calculated that they were spending almost \$800 a year on energy drinks. A few weeks later, the CNI went back to the school to present the same presentation to the rest of the classrooms. A teacher reported that a school administrator had sat in the last time she was there and the very next day called the vendor and canceled all future orders of energy drinks and the administration team used up all their quarters to "buy" out all the energy drinks so the students wouldn't have them anymore. The school is now paying more attention to what drinks are on the approved school vending list and are using MSU Extension information to make sure that the options provided for the students are healthier. Students have reported they are glad the drinks are gone so they aren't as tempted to buy them.

A "Cooking for One" series was held with The Haven Women's recovery home in 2022. This program was for adult women in recovery and met six times for 60 minutes each session. The group met together in their shared living space and zoomed in each week to learn about ways they can budget better and make healthier behavior changes. Each week they did physical activities and would come up with fun and unique ways to get more activity in. Some of the creative ideas were doing squats holding items that we have in our homes. One woman held her infant while doing squats, the CNI showed them how she held her almost 15lb cat for squats. At the end of the series the participants shared what they learned. One participant shared that now that she is eating healthier and being more physically active, she has started to sleep better and has really seen the benefits. *"I am learning how to be more healthy all around. Mental health, emotional health, spiritual health and physical health all work together to equal an over all healthy ME!"*

Community Leaders Praise Lakes Program

Introduction to Lakes is a six-week course designed for lake users, lakefront property owners, and lake managers. In 2022, there was a cohort of 524 participants, the largest since the program began. Participants were spread out over 69 counties with two from Berrien County. Of the 524 participants, 86% of them completed all six units and received a Certificate of Completion. The high completion rate is attributed to the level of interaction with participants. Unlike many online courses, Introduction to Lakes is a cohort based and taught on a week-by-week basis, allowing for online communication between classmates and instructors through topical discussion forums. There were 2,255 discussion forum posts and replies on the course website. Comments included:

"I really loved the whole experience; I was looking to better educate myself to speak knowingly about watershed conservation at township meetings and thanks to this class I will be able to do just that. I now know how to be a better steward of the lakes and feel the support of so many organizations that you have made me aware of, thanks! "

"All of the information was clear, actionable and came with useful resource links."

"I feel like I learned a lot and have the tools to apply this knowledge when working with others in my area."

Calhoun is Wild About Conservation

Human activities in yards and neighborhoods affect local wildlife and the quality of water in our soil, land, lakes, and rivers. No matter the size, our yards can serve as a refuge for unique plants and animals. From landscaping with native trees and shrubs to adding water features, even the smallest of things that we do can help. The Wild About Conservation webinar series features experts from MSU Extension discussing conservation practices anyone can implement on their property. Participants registered in either one or all eight of the Wild About Conservation webinars for free from the comfort of their homes and Calhoun County residents enjoyed the webinars in 2022. Webinars took place on Tuesdays twice a month and addressed unique topics related to conservation including bumble bee conservation, landscaping over septic fields, bird conservation and research, planning and planting a native plant pollinator garden, and much more. The popular series will continue in 2023.

Partnership with Treasury Continues

Over 1,000 local government elected officials and staff participated in the 2022 Fiscally Ready Communities program, a partnership between MSU Extension and the Michigan Department of Treasury. The series included seven webinars on important financial management and sustainability topics for local government. Program participants included elected officials (40%), administrators and appointed officials. Over half had been in their role for less than 2 years, meaning this program provided valuable learning for new leaders in Michigan communities. Thirteen participants were from Calhoun County. Evaluations demonstrated clear gains in learning for all but the real story came through participant comments about value and behavior change:

"The importance of team work and communication to provide transparency within the process. Also to use everyone's input to gain the trust of the staff and public so that everyone feels valued and has a vested interest in the process."

"It was a very good review of requirements and implementation of financial controls. I wish I had had this training when I first became a Treasurer."

"I get caught up in the day-to-day issues and duties but don't take the time to review and update policies. This was a good reminder of the importance of performing this task."

"I plan to type out exactly what our little office does to ensure internal controls are utilized and deliver the final product to the council members in this month's council meeting packet."

Programs for Veterans

Heroes to Hives is a unique program offered through MSU Extension and partners that seeks to address financial and personal wellness of veterans through professional training and community development centered around beekeeping. The program provides veterans with beekeeping education and training. In 2022, 25 Calhoun county Veterans successfully completed the program which serves Veterans, Reservists, Active Duty or National Guard members of the U.S. Armed Forces and their adult children, spouses, partners and caregivers. In total, the 2022 online sessions had a 3362 participants. After successful completion Veterans are welcome to participate in hands on sessions offered by MSU Extension throughout the year.

Planning for Renewable Energy

A 2021 Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy study found Michigan communities unprepared for larger scale solar deployment. In response, MSU Extension collaborated with the University of Michigan to create a comprehensive resource, *Planning and Zoning for Solar Energy Systems: A Guidebook for Michigan Communities*. The Solar Guidebook was created to educate and enable thoughtful advancement of the deployment of solar energy in Michigan. A state-wide educational program followed to introduce the Solar Guidebook to planners, appointed and elected government officials. Six in-person programs and 2 webinars were held in 2022 with 373 participants (including leaders from Calhoun County) attending. Evaluations revealed that 93% of respondents increased their knowledge in the topic. In addition, participants said that they would:

"Discuss importance of including alternative energy into the Master Plan with my board."

"Definitely will address renewable energy in our Master Plan and follow up with zoning ordinance changes. Also, since our master plan addresses Agricultural preservation I think we need to define what we mean by preservation."

I will help review Master Plan updates to incorporate defined sustainability goals so that future ordinance updates address solar."

In partnership with Calhoun County Community Development, a follow-up session on the guidebook and MSU Extension resources was held for Calhoun County leaders in 2023.

In 2022, MSU Extension piloted a **Veterans Horticulture Therapy Program (VHTP)** with eight veterans at the Battle Creek VA Medical Center's Greenhouse. By partnering with hospital staff, weekly programming expanded from a single weekday to four classes per week at the fully-equipped, on-site greenhouse and gardens. Furthermore, significant investments in VHTP infrastructure have been made by the hospital's "Whole Health" program such as the new wheelchair accessible raised bed gardens now installed on the grounds. MSU Extension used the feedback from hospital partners and program participants to finalize the curriculum so it could be expanded to other Veteran audiences and settings in Southwest Michigan.

"Gardening for the Health of It" was the topic at the March Marshall Garden Club meeting where 63 attendees heard the veterans program as well as the clinical basis for horticulture therapy and therapy garden design.

Teaching Life Skills for a Lifetime

MSU Extension developed a series of life skills programs with the Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative (MYOI), a partner whose goal is to ensure that young people in foster care have successful outcomes in housing, education, employment and community engagement. There are over 11,000 children in foster care in Michigan. Youth living in foster care are often subject to adverse childhood experiences (ACE's). Providing programs where youth feel welcome, have a sense of belonging, their voices are heard and their contributions matter is particularly important. MSU Extension instructors serve as positive and supportive adult role models for youth. The team has specifically targeted their programs to young people who are aging out of the foster care system with the hopes that the information will help them be successful. Some of the session titles include Goal Setting, Informed Renter, Household tasks, Art of Time Management, Rockin' Resumes, Career Connections Through Volunteerism, and Changing the World with a Single Vote. In 2022, 61 sessions were provided to youth involved with MYOI, with a total of 1545 participants with several from Calhoun County.

Ag Programs Reach Greater Audience

The Integrated Crop and Pest Management Update is a long-standing statewide MSU Extension meeting that was originally geared toward agribusiness but more recently has drawn nearly equal numbers of farmers and agribusiness. It is designed to provide participants the opportunity to hear about current research results and updates on a wide variety of topics related to field crop production from MSU specialists. The program was forced to go online for 2020 but has been offered as a hybrid event in 2021 and 2022. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive from those who prefer in-person meetings and those who either cannot or prefer not to travel.

There were 408 registrants for the event in 2022- 185 in-person and 223 online. Questions were asked in the post-meeting survey designed to measure medium-term impact from the 2021 meeting along with those measuring short-term impact from 2022. Of the 279 people taking the survey 162 had attended in 2021, of which 69 indicated they had changed some aspect of their farm or business that impacted an estimated 437,733 acres and resulted in \$3,852,458 in increased revenue or savings.

Facing Racism in a Diverse Nation

In February and March 2022 MSU Extension facilitated a 6-week dialogue series called Facing Racism in a Diverse Nation for staff, administrators, and community partners of Harper Creek Public Schools. The Facing Racism program is part of Extension's Coming Together for Racial Understanding program, which brings participants together for dialogue to help organizations and communities have meaningful conversations around race. Thirty people participated.

Through these dialogues, participants developed new skills for working together across racial differences, gained understanding of the impact of race on lived experience, and built trust. The dialogue concluded with an action planning process in which participants identified steps they could take individually, within their school, and district wide. Participants also committed to continuing the conversations beyond the dialogue.

After the program, participants noted that they were better able to understand points of view that differ from their own on issues related to race and ethnicity, improved recognition of how dialogues can lead to positive change, and greater understanding of how race/ethnicity relates to issues of inequity. Of note, 82% of participants said after the dialogue that they are more hopeful they can have better relationships with people whose views differ from their own.

"Many of our team members expressed that this was beneficial and gave them 1) opportunity to hear others experiences; 2) opportunity to collaborate around new understandings and 3) an opportunity to move to action."

Short-term impacts indicated that learning had increased as a result of the meeting. There were 125 respondents who planned to make some change to their farm or business in the coming year that would impact an estimated 476,323 acres and result in an estimated \$5,174,968 in increased revenue or savings. Highlights from respondents focused on everything from individual topics to the smooth flow of the meeting, many commented on the appreciation of the virtual option for a variety of reasons. Here are a few highlights from respondents:

"Versatile, about more than just pests. Talked about farming "better" as a whole. "

"Appreciated the ability to choose what topic to listen to in break out sessions."

"Appreciate that I was able to participate virtually and didn't have to drive 2 hours."