



# Calhoun County 2018 ANNUAL REPORT

## BY THE NUMBERS



30 Extension professionals provided educational opportunities



1,415 youth involved in 4-H and other youth enrichment programs, 552 youth in 4-H clubs, 133 volunteers



Calhoun County youth received 250 books from 4-H at county fair



31 residents took advantage of MSU Extension's Ask an Expert website



Over 200 youth and adults attended series to improving eating and physical activity habits



6 entrepreneurs were provided a series of business counseling sessions from the MSU Product Center



30 Master Gardeners recertified completing 15 hours of volunteer service each in the community



Over 240 youth, residents and farmers participated in ag education programs

## MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR



Over the past year, Michigan State University (MSU) Extension partnered with Calhoun County to continue strengthening youth, families, businesses and communities. MSU Extension staff are grounded in local relationships and serve by bringing the university's research and resources to provide outreach and education in the areas Calhoun County residents need it most.

It has been exciting to be a part of the evolution of the county's community development department over the last couple of years. Working closely with staff who are managing Calhoun county parks, recycling programs, senior services, veterans and planning has great potential to produce more opportunities to leverage MSU Extension programs to improve community outreach and educational programming for all of us.

We're passionate about serving Calhoun County and are proud of the impacts we have made over this last year. For more information about the impacts highlighted in this report, or to see examples of other programs reaching the residents of Calhoun County contact me or visit our MSU Extension website ([www.msue.msu.edu](http://www.msue.msu.edu)).

Thank you for your continued support of MSU Extension and for partnering with us to make a difference.

*Julie Pioch, District Director*

## CONTACT



Calhoun County MSU Extension  
315 W. Green St.  
Marshall, MI 49068



269-781-0784



[www.msue.msu.edu](http://www.msue.msu.edu)

[msue.calhoun@county.msu.edu](mailto:msue.calhoun@county.msu.edu)

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

# Program Highlights



*Utility grade solar projects are being sited throughout Michigan.*

## **SHINING A LIGHT ON AG SOLAR**

State Policy changes in late 2017, made utility-scale solar projects more profitable. This triggered aggressive solicitation by solar developers to lease or buy land owned by farmers for solar projects. In response, a multidisciplinary team of MSU Extension Educators provided training to 452 participants, including 19 from Caloun County, during seven workshops held around the state. The program focused on policy, community planning and zoning, legal contract land leasing, tax issues, and the integration of solar with existing agricultural systems using evidenced based practices. In addition to the positive outcomes of knowledge and confidence, the program series resulted in new partnerships with agencies and associations involved in the solar industry. Overall, the program series provided Michigan residents and leaders with a unique opportunity to better understand the solar industry, its impact on local landscapes, personal finances, and the economy, as well as the role of local policy development in helping shape the state's energy future while balancing competing interests.

## **AG WORKER PROTECTION**

To assist growers with implementing new Worker Protection Standard (WPS) requirements, two workshops were held in west Michigan in January, 2018 with 126 people from 8 counties (including Calhoun) in attendance. Most attendees represented greenhouses, but nursery, tree and small fruit growers and municipal park systems managers also participated. Respirator fit testing services were provided to 54 people. Evaluations revealed that up to 96% of participants intended to make changes to their practices to be consistent with the new WPS standards; A majority of respondents intended to make these changes within 3 months. Total acreage represented by survey respondents was over 8100 acres. Growers reported that the information was worth from \$78,000 to \$163,000 to their agricultural or municipal operations.

## **FIELD CROPS EDUCATION**

Agriculture continues to be a growing economic driver in Calhoun County. MSU Extension provided relevant and timely information to the ag community in 2018. A program highlight includes two on-farm research and demonstration projects sited in St Joseph and Calhoun counties to demonstrate weed control strategies in soybean crops, funded by a grant from the Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee. A short video highlighting one of the fields was produced for YouTube and two others are in production. Two field days were held to highlight the results of the study as well as showcase presentations by MSU Extension Specialist Educators on other soybean topics. The meetings were co-hosted with the local MAEAP technician. Forty-seven attended from around southwest Michigan included from Calhoun.



*A greenhouse worker is instructed on proper respirator fitting.*



*On-farm research and demonstrations of weed control strategies in soybeans were conducted in Calhoun in 2018*

# Program Highlights

## EMERGENCY TRANSPORT TRAINING

Michigan is home to a vast livestock agriculture industry with production of various different animals spanning the state. It is also home to a number of small, medium and large processing plants with the Clemens plant in Coldwater, MI processing 10,000 pigs per day once they reach full capacity. Everyday on our roads and highways transport vehicles are hauling animals as part of production or for marketing. In an effort better prepare first responders and law enforcement as well as farmers, transport companies and truck drivers for rollover accident situations, a two day educational program was held at the Calhoun County Fairgrounds in May, 2018. The program brought together state agencies, industry experts, veterinarians, livestock producers, first responders and law enforcement to practice scenarios and receive training from experts involved in emergency response. The fairground was an ideal location for hands-on animal handling practice and euthanasia training.

All participants involved indicated that because of participation in this event, they developed or refined skills and feel better suited to respond to a livestock transport accident. This training also gave attendees an excellent opportunity to network with local law enforcement groups, as well as formulate key questions for continuous improvement of the different systems that they are each involved with. Each and every participant from this diverse audience specified that they are better prepared to address livestock transportation accidents and would be able to share critical information with their teams.

## ALBION CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

In 2018 MSU Extension led a series of meetings with community leaders in Albion to discuss improving civic engagement among minorities and groups traditionally left out of decision-making processes. Issues around civic participation, barriers preventing participation and solutions to address them were explored. Issues discussed included, lack of transportation, lack of internet connectivity among low-income residents leading to an inability to engage online, lack of childcare preventing families from participating in public events. Solutions included creating equitable participation in local decision-making, and authentic opportunities for engagement that were accessible and inviting to the low income and minority population in Albion. One outcome of the meetings was to develop a resource guide which would provide residents with information about who the best organizations and people would be to contact about various issues or questions. Their idea was to have a network of people connected and trusted in the neighborhoods and communities who would be able to share the information with residents. Over 40 participants were involved in the meetings including residents, city, chamber and foundation leaders.



*Emergency Response for livestock transport training invited state agency personnel, truckers, first responders and farmers to learn together.*



*The county fairgrounds site for the ERLT training was ideal for hands-on practice.*



*Team of MSU Extension educators is working with Albion residents to encourage civic engagement to improve decision making and solutions for the community.*

# Calhoun 4-H Highlights

## CREATIVE ARTS IN ALBION



*Graduates of the 4-H Creative and Expressive Arts Summer Day Camp come back year after year to work with youth in the program.*

4-H Creative and Expressive Arts Summer Day Camp participants discover natural talents and abilities, nurture younger youth and better their community through our annual five week summer program. Each summer ushers in an opportunity for Albion youth and young adults to make a difference as they build each other up, refine an expressive skill set and reinforce their sense of community by participating. The summer program runs four days a week for six weeks and takes youth through the process of developing a performance, with a community performance as the capstone.



The Calhoun 4-H program has 552 youth and 133 adult volunteers enrolled in 45 clubs. In addition to our traditional program, 4-H staff in Calhoun reached over 1400 additional young people with educational programs in 2018.

The Tractor Operator Program continues to be a success,

licensing 13 participants this past year. This program is instrumental in teaching kids interested in working on farms about safety, operation, and maintenance of tractors and farm equipment.

4-H continues to work with North Penn Elementary to provide educational programs in their school hoop house. This year 196 youth experienced hands on activities that supplemented what they were learning in the classroom.

The Science of Chocolate program brought 32 youth and adults together to learn about where chocolate comes from and how it becomes what we eat. Participants were able to see what cacao beans look like from growing to



harvest and understand the process of making chocolate. Of course, the sampling of different kinds of chocolate was the favorite part of this fun program.

Conservation Field Days is a 4-H program in collaboration with Battle Creek Kiwanis that takes place at the Kiwanis Youth Area of Baker Sanctuary. This program has taken some different forms over the years, but the goal of getting kids outside remains the same. A limitation on teachers taking field trips meant some creativity was needed to help them participate. The program is now regularly seeking transportation funds to pay for bussing for schools to attend. Ninety 5th graders attended the event in 2018.



In September, two AmeriCorps Volunteers joined the 4-H team in order to focus on youth programs in Albion and Battle Creek. They are recruiting volunteers and 4-H members to participate in a variety of science, technology, engineering, arts, and math programs. In just three months on the job, they have shown success in getting new 4-H programs started with "first generation 4-H youth." They have developed new partnerships with organizations and are helping to increase the impact and grow 4-H youth

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