

TUSCOLA COUNTY 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

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Message from the District Director



Karly Creguer
 District 10 Director
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2025 was a year of reflection for MSU Extension. Due to federal funding cuts, we said goodbye to the SNAP-Ed program after recently celebrating 30 years of these efforts in Michigan. Staff delivering this nutrition and physical activity education played a pivotal role in teaching youth, families, and older adults to make healthier choices - impacts that will remain for years to come.

This devastating loss to our organization prompted us to reflect on the legacy we are leaving behind with all our programs. The lifelong skills youth are learning through 4-H programs to be ready for the future, improved yields and more efficient practices employed on farms, better budgeting practices to move toward homeownership, innovative ways for communities to enhance their assets to attract tourists and residents and, in turn, stimulate the local economy. Extension works alongside our neighbors and communities to help them address their unique needs and flourish now and into the future. It is my pleasure to share with you more ways we are doing so in the following pages.

Local Impact



1,537 participants from Tuscola county attending **295** programs



47,117 handouts and e-newsletters distributed



1,645 participants attending **58** programs hosted in Tuscola County



1,797 youth reached by 4-H programming



22 partnerships



427 4-H enrolled youth



253 client consultations



275 total volunteers

Building Stronger, Healthier Communities

Community Nutrition: In 2025, community gardens were a key focus, teaching youth about growing and enjoying fresh fruits and vegetables while expanding access to local produce. Wendy Friend, Community Nutrition Instructor partnered with the Columbia Township Library in Unionville where **11** children planted vegetables in the library's garden beds, with plans to expand the garden next year. Another garden, planted by **5** teens through the Tuscola County Juvenile Probation program, was maintained behind the Sheriff's Office, with produce used by the jail kitchen to prepare meals for inmates.



Huron County View
May 22, 2025



Photo credit:
Wendy Friend

In partnership with the Caro Farmers Market, a one-day youth market was created to introduce students to entrepreneurship. **9** youth participated, designing booths, creating products, and managing sales, with support from **5** parent volunteers and **3** community members. Policies and procedures were developed to ensure safety, compliance, and smooth market operations. Youth selling homemade food completed the MSU Extension Cottage Food Law course.

Food Safety: In 2025, Cass City Public Schools went from serving meals at school to providing 7-day breakfast and lunch meal kits for families to pick up and take home. A partnership began between Food Safety Educator Laurie Messing and the Food Service Director during their summer 'Meet Up and Eat Up Program', to provide safe food education and digital food thermometers, making sure the food kit items were prepared to safe internal temperature.

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Cass City hosted two classes with **18** participants learning about canning basics, methods, water bath, and research-based recipes as well as hands-on demonstrations to can grape jelly and pickled carrots.

ServSafe®

- 5 classes held in Tuscola County with **55** participants

Food Safety for Seniors

- HDC-Caro = **20** participants
- HDC-Mayville = **9** participants

Preserving Classes

- Columbia Library = **3** participants
- Caro Library = **6** participants



Photo credit: Laurie Messing

Health & Well-Being: MSU Extension Health programs promote physical and emotional well-being through research-based education on aging, chronic disease prevention and management, diabetes prevention, healthy communication, sleep, mental health, and stress management.

Two recent grants expanded District 10's reach. The first grant supported the six-week Walk With Ease program, engaging **46** participants. The second grant funded Tai Chi for Better Sleep and Mindfulness for Better Sleep, which reached **97** participants while addressing the link between pain, sleep, and opioid misuse in rural communities.

District 10 Health Educators Jacqui Rabine & Kris Swartzendruber reached:

- **218** participants in the 18-session Tai Chi for Arthritis and Falls Prevention program, and **6** participants in the 8-session Matter of Balance program
- **185** participants in mental health programs
- **115** participants in disease self-management one-time presentations
- **411** participants in Mental Health First Aid
- **5** participants in the 6-session PATH (Personal Action Towards Health) programs

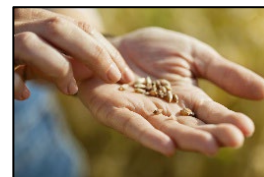


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Building Knowledge in Michigan's Agriculture Sector

Field Crops Programs – Upper Thumb Area (Huron, Sanilac, Tuscola)

In 2025, the Field Crops Team had multiple programs open to participants across the Thumb Region both in person and online. Some of the larger in-person events included: **101** attendees at Thumb Ag Day in Ubyly, **30** at the wheat regional field day in the Sebewaing area, **85** at Crop and Pest Update in January in Bad Axe.



Stock Image

Three dry bean trial locations were established in Tuscola County, encompassing **15** trials and approximately **1,600** plots. In August, Scott Bales, MSU Extension Dry Bean Specialist, presented at the Dry Bean Plot Tour hosted by the Michigan Bean Commission, which was attended by **40** participants. In December, multiple MSU specialists presented at the Dry Bean Winter Meeting in Bad Axe, reaching an audience of **110** attendees.








Pickling Cucumber Variety Trial at Saginaw Valley Research and Extension Center (SVREC)



Photo credit:
Salta Mambetova

Michigan leads the nation in pickling cucumber production, with nearly **29,558** acres grown statewide (NASS, 2022). To support this industry, a variety trial was conducted at SVREC, a major production region. Following harvest, cucumbers were brined at the Hausbeck tank yard and evaluated at the Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable & Farm Market EXPO. The session engaged **34** industry participants, including seed companies, processors, growers, and stakeholders, to assess variety performance and quality.

In total, SVREC (located in Richville, MI) hosted **5,399 participants** at **176 programs** in 2025.

2025 Educational Events	2025 Field Trials
 79 participants from 6 counties attended agricultural pesticide drone-use exploration (Saginaw Valley Research and Extension Center)	 1 Wheat Variety Trial in Tuscola (Dennis Pennington, MSUE Wheat Systems Specialist)
 22 participants from 14 counties attended hands-on cover crop biomass workshop (with Tuscola Conservation District at SVREC)	 8 Sugarbeet Trials (Huron, Sanilac, Tuscola) (David Wishowski, MSUE Sugarbeet Educator)
 18 participants from 14 counties attended vegetable/field crop/flower producer event (Rawson Memorial Library, Cass City)	 9 Soybean On-Farm Trials (Eric Anderson, MSUE Soybean Educator)
	 1 Deer Damage Trial

Beef Quality Assurance Training

Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) is a nationwide program that provides producers with science-based education on animal care, welfare, and beef safety. Producers can earn certification online or by attending in-person trainings.

In 2025, the MSU Extension Beef Team, in partnership with the Michigan Cattlemen's Association and Michigan Beef Industry Commission, held **8 BQA** in-person trainings. **2** of these were at Beagio's Restaurant in Kingston with a total of **71** participants attending.



Photo credit:
Jerad Jaborek

Beef x Dairy Feedlot Research

In 2025, Dr. Jerad Jaborek and colleagues completed their **third** Beef x Dairy feedlot research trial, evaluating performance and carcass traits compared to traditional beef and dairy cattle. Results were shared through multiple producer education events, conferences, and media outlets. Producers report this research has been especially valuable for making informed feedlot cattle purchasing decisions during a time of historically high feeder cattle prices.

Ensuring Youth are Beyond Ready for Life

Youth Development Program: In 2025, the Tuscola County 4-H program focused on hands-on outdoor learning and community partnerships, with staff and five committees supporting county fair and statewide opportunities. Fundraising and donations provided scholarships to reduce participation costs. The program also grew significantly, enrolling **38** new youth, training **52** volunteers, and chartering **one** new 4-H club to support long-term leadership and sustainability.

Educational Opportunities Offered: The Tuscola 4-H program partnered with Youth Quality Care of Animals (YQCA) to offer **four** in-person sessions for **58** 4-H and FFA youth. Additional hands-on outdoor learning included Birds, Bungalows and More!, engaging **8** youth in bird habitat exploration and birdhouse building; and Forest to 4-H: Deer Processing, which provided **14** older youth and volunteers with wild game processing, food safety, and physical safety education.



Photo credit:
ReAnna
Wilkerson



2025 Thumb 4-H Camp: Thumb 4-H Camp is a 4-day, 3-night camp in Lexington, MI, coordinated by 4-H staff and volunteers from five counties. Teen 4-H members ages 15–19 serve as counselors, leading activities for campers ages 12–14. Participants build life skills, friendships, and memories close to home. In 2025, the camp hosted **40** campers and **11** counselors, including **3** campers and **4** teen counselors from Tuscola County.











First Impressions Tourism Assessment Program

In partnership with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, now in its sixth year, MSU Extension offers First Impressions Tourism (FIT) assessments to Redevelopment Certified and Master-level Main Street communities. In 2025, the Village of Millington in Tuscola County was one of three communities selected through a competitive application process.

Community Report Forums are hosted by FIT Community Leadership Teams and are open, three-hour events that share what first-time visitors experience in the host community. Each FIT community is responsible for hosting a forum to present results. The Village of Millington's report can be viewed by scanning the QR code.

Statewide Impact

-  **\$244.2 billion** annual impact of food and agriculture on Michigan's economy
-  **846** clients served by Product Center helping launch new products/services statewide
-  **298,135** participants from across Michigan attending **7,997** programs
-  **206,346,096** contacts through social media, web activity, e-newsletters and handouts statewide
-  **13,661** total volunteers in the state of Michigan
-  **170,438** total 4-H participants in Michigan
-  **6,032** 'Ask Extension' questions answered by our research-based experts statewide
-  Michigan 4-H license plate introduced in 2025 with **\$25** of purchase benefiting 4-H youth development

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