

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

Extension

AWARDS PROGRAM

WE ARE EXTENSION

2021 FALL EXTENSION CONFERENCE

SEPTEMBER 27 – OCTOBER 1, 2021

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About the Awards Program

Michigan State University (MSU) Extension presents a variety of awards at its Fall Extension Conference each year. The awards honor outstanding MSU Extension staff members, programs, and key partners. The selection committee for the MSU Extension administration awards is made up of Extension administrators who represent institutes, district directors, and the MSU Extension Director's Office. While the winners of the Friend of Extension Award and John A. Hannah Award for Program Excellence are presented as part of MSU Extension administration awards, they are chosen by Epsilon Sigma Phi and the Michigan Council of Extension Associations, respectively. Also listed in this program are MSU Extension personnel who have received awards throughout the year from the following professional associations:

- Epsilon Sigma Phi (ESP), Alpha Psi Chapter
- Michigan Association of Extension 4-H Youth Staff (MAE4-HYS)
- Michigan Association of Extension Agents (MAEA)
- Michigan Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (MEAFCS)

MSU EXTENSION ADMINISTRATION AWARDS

KEY PARTNER AWARDS

Jael Tombaugh and Maezie Nettleton

Jael Tombaugh (she/her) and Maezie Nettleton (she/they) have been youth members of Michigan 4-H for 8 years. They each have been an important part of their county 4-H programs, served on the State Youth Leadership Council, and are the founding members of the Michigan 4-H LGBTQIA+ Alliance. As youth leaders and trailblazers in Michigan 4-H, they have influenced not only the 4-H program but also the efforts of Michigan State University Extension as it creates a sense of belonging for the LGBTQIA+ community.

Jael attends Albion College, majoring in pre-veterinary medicine with a minor in business. Jael has been involved in many 4-H project areas and groups at the local, county, state, and national levels. She is currently a peer advisor for the Michigan 4-H State Youth Leadership Council.

Maezie attends MSU where they are pursuing a bachelor's degree in horticulture with minors in sustainable agriculture and food systems, environmental science and sustainability, and educational studies. Maezie has participated in multiple state and national events, served as a counselor for the UP 4-H camp, and has been a part of many other 4-H activities. She was a panelist for the LGBTQIA+ session during Fall Extension Conference 2020.

In 2020, Jael and Maezie attended the National 4-H True Leaders in Equity Institute on behalf of Michigan 4-H. Through their work as a part of the institute, they identified a need to support youth in the LGBTQIA+ community in Michigan 4-H. Their work created the Michigan 4-H LGBTQIA+ Alliance, the first group of this type nationally in 4-H. Jael and Maezie worked with staff to create the alliance and publicly launched the teen leadership team in April 2021. Although this group is just getting started with 16 teens from across Michigan, these teens have expressed appreciation for a space for them to feel welcome and accepted.

The two have clearly established themselves as true leaders within their clubs, communities, and the state. They are valuable partners in MSU Extension's and 4-H's momentum toward greater diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Michigan Department of Natural Resources

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) is a state agency entrusted with the stewardship of Michigan's natural resources, managing them for the long-term benefit of the people of Michigan, and providing economic activity and opportunities for recreation. It uses the best stewardship practices available, many co-developed through partnerships between the MDNR and Michigan State University such as the Partnership for Ecosystem Research and Management and in cooperation with MSU Extension's Michigan Natural Features Inventory.

The MDNR and MSU Extension have statewide programmatic presences and administrative homes that share geographic locations, with MDNR staff located on campus and MSU Extension staff sharing space in Lansing. This geographic overlap is emblematic of a deeper relationship. They share similar missions that contribute to the quality of life for Michigan residents and visitors. The organizations team to generate evidence-based information used by individuals and organizations and applied in day-to-day activities to improve the lives of the people of Michigan.

Over the decades, the MDNR has provided considerable financial support for programming as well as provided facility space, shared expertise of their staff, shared staff positions, and co-hosted webinars, seminars, and events.

The partnership is one of the premier natural resource conservation partnerships in the U.S. It has resulted in innumerable opportunities for outdoor recreation for Michiganians and visitors, supporting a vibrant tourism sector. It has supported and enhanced fisheries and timber industries important to the economy. It has resulted in hundreds of research studies helping to conserve the rare species of the state and has enhanced the environmental literacy of generations.

MSU Extension's close interactions with MDNR are somewhat unique compared to other university-state agency relationships. This strong relationship advances Extension goals. MDNR is deserving to be recognized as an MSU Extension Key Partner.

Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services

Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services, a nonprofit organization, offers a full continuum of mental health services. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Michigan State University Extension leadership coordinated a meeting with Pine Rest to explore the possibility of partnering. The results of this meeting have been exemplary. The partnership resulted in developing a referral process, identifying licensed therapists having a connection to agriculture, and implementing the process for expedited access to comprehensive mental health services. The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development awarded grant-funded support to offset associated costs of the services for farmers.

The work Pine Rest provides has been a welcomed service to farmers and farm families in need. This partnership has removed barriers for farmers seeking mental health services in Michigan. Farmers from across Michigan have taken advantage of the opportunity to access life-improving and lifesaving therapeutic intervention through the teletherapy pilot project. Although it started before the pandemic, the teletherapy program became increasingly more useful throughout the pandemic as a strategy to reach farmers at a distance and meet them in their spaces of comfort and familiarity. Pine Rest has taken the additional step of ensuring that professionals connected to farmers have a background and understanding of the unique stressors in farming.

To further support the collective efforts, Pine Rest has participated in co-authoring an article for the MSU Extension farm stress website related to behavioral health and farm stress as well as offering impactful quotes from the providing clinicians. All of which MSU Extension has been authorized to use for the promotion of the program, expanded efforts, reduction of stigma, and the continued outreach to farmers in distress.

This partnership continues to gain traction as more farmers and farm families are accessing the needed support. In 2020, the teletherapy program was expanded to help Michigan's aquaculture and commercial fishers. Pine Rest is and will be a Key Partner for MSU Extension now and for many years to come.

Huron Pines

Serving Michigan for more than four decades, Huron Pines has conserved and enhanced northern Michigan's natural resources to ensure healthy water, protected places, and vibrant communities. By providing training, tools, and technical advice, the nonprofit works with all people, organizations, and companies who wish to invest in making Great Lakes waters, wildlife, and communities healthier.

A signature program is the Huron Pines AmeriCorp program, a service and workforce development program that helps develop leaders in conservation. Huron Pines also coordinates invasive species management partnerships including the Huron Heartland and Huron Coastal Invasive Species networks.

Huron Pines has partnered with Michigan State University Extension for many years, enhancing communities through conservation projects, place-based education partnerships, workforce development, and community service partnerships. MSU Extension programs have been host sites for the Huron Pines AmeriCorps program. Huron Pines also is an administrative and leadership partnership to the Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative (NEMIGLSI), a regional network enhancing student learning through place-based stewardship education. Examples of these partnerships include student-designed green infrastructure installations and student-managed schoolyard forests. Through Huron Heartland and Huron Coastal Invasive Species networks, they work with MSU Extension to support a strategic approach to invasive species management.

Hosting a Huron Pines AmeriCorps member provides tremendous value because MSU Extension AmeriCorps members expand outreach, collect data, and offer program support. The NEMIGLSI network has hosted more than 10 members who contribute to educational kits available for educator use. These kits contain activities and resources around identified community needs such as marine debris, water quality, and invasive species. At Michigan Natural Features Inventory, members improved the Vernal Pool Monitoring Patrol Program by helping with logistics, training, and application implementation for collecting data. Huron Pines has helped MSU Extension reach more youth while also helping youth increase awareness of science, technology, engineering, and math careers.

Huron Pines is most deserving of being recognized as a Key Partner for MSU Extension.

Americana Foundation

The Americana Foundation was established by Adolph and Ginger Meyer who were passionate about land preservation, agricultural heritage, and community agricultural education. Americana supports the growth, development, and sustainability of agriculture and food systems, open space and natural resource conservation, natural resources protection, and nature-based and agricultural education in Michigan.

In 1987, the Americana Foundation partnered with MSU Extension and gifted MSU a portion of the Meyer's 160-acre historic farmstead and financially supported its re-development as an agriculture and natural resources education center. MSU Tollgate Farm and Education Center provides unique hands-on learning on a working farm in an urban setting. MSU Extension uses its expertise in community education, agriculture, and natural resources to lead programming efforts on the site. Over the course of this partnership, the foundation continues to generously support MSU Extension.

Americana has supported large portions of the general facilities upkeep at MSU Tollgate so that it remains a premier destination for agriculture and natural resource education. Additionally, the foundation has supported garden volunteers, Extension Master Gardeners, MSU Extension education staff, and many projects at MSU Tollgate Farm and Education Center as well as supplying financial aid for those in need. This consistent support has made it possible for the farm to reach over 20,000 people on an annual basis and weather the COVID-19 pandemic. The foundation's leadership and commitment to MSU Tollgate Farm and Education Center has provided tens of thousands of people the opportunity to connect to agriculture.

Starting in 2019, Americana supported portions of two full-time positions and, during the pandemic, their support increased to a third full-time position. Without this support, much of the farm's programming and operations would have been lost. Instead, Tollgate has become a leader in virtual programming, grown its agricultural operations, improved volunteer processes, and expanded its communications. Tollgate is poised to have a greater impact than ever before, thanks in part to the continued support of the Americana Foundation, which is truly an MSU Extension Key Partner.

ESP FRIEND OF EXTENSION AWARD

Michael G. Hansen

Michael (“Mike”) G. Hansen supports Michigan beekeepers, honey bees, and Michigan State University through his role as the state apiarist in the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD). He has spent decades providing information and support to the beekeeping community, an industry that supports other agriculture sectors, such as cherries, apples, blueberries, and many vegetables, through pollination services. Although his role as state apiarist is only a small portion of his responsibilities, Mike stays up to date on beekeeping regulations, attends local and national beekeeping conferences, and communicates timely and relevant information about regulatory changes and pesticide topics to MSU Extension and beekeepers. He attends the Michigan Beekeepers’ Association’s monthly board meeting, gives presentations to beekeepers, and directs beekeepers and other stakeholders to MSU Extension.

In recent years, he advocated for MDARD to secure funds from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to support MSU’s work on the Michigan Managed Pollinator Protection Plan. MSU received funding to support the development and implementation of the plan. Funding that MDARD secures from the EPA currently supports the much-needed MSU Extension apiculture educator position.

Mike has contributed to and reviewed many MSU Extension documents, including one on beekeeping rules and regulations. When the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services announced it was going to use aerial insecticide applications to kill mosquitoes in response to an outbreak of Eastern equine encephalitis, Mike responded to many calls from beekeepers who expressed concern about how their bees would be affected by the spray. As he neared retirement, he arranged trainings for MDARD employees with MSU Extension to learn about colony inspections, hive handling, and topics important to beekeepers.

Mike Hansen has been a strong supporter of MSU Extension, beekeepers, and growers even though his official capacity as state apiarist is only a small part of his job at MDARD. He really cares about Michigan agriculture and those of us who are working to better it. He truly is a Friend of Extension.

EMERGING ISSUES/RAPID RESPONSE AWARDS

Michigan Sea Grant COVID-19 Rapid Response

Lauren Jescovitch, Elliot Nelson, Daniel O’Keefe, Heather Triezenberg

In 2020, businesses dependent on Great Lakes fish struggled to remain viable amid the COVID-19 pandemic. State-licensed and tribal fishers and processors saw sales to restaurants and wholesalers plummet while also contending with implementing new safety and sanitation guidelines. Many charter fishing operators, whose profits hinged on a lively tourist season and full boats, struggled to stay afloat. However, Great Lakes fisheries were omitted from the first round of federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act relief funding.

To address these challenges, Michigan Sea Grant (MISG) received a \$100,000 COVID-19 rapid response grant from the National Sea Grant Office, which aimed to help assess the aquaculture, commercial fishing, and charter fishing industries in Michigan in response to 2020 impacts. Extension educators Daniel O’Keefe, Lauren Jescovitch, and Elliot Nelson provided education and outreach, and conducted listening sessions with fishery industry members. They organized needs assessments and surveys of Michigan’s fish producers and charter fishery operators, which played a role in informing and securing \$15 million in the second round of CARES Act funding for commercial, aquaculture, processor, and charter fishery participants in Great Lakes states. Program leader Heather Triezenberg was key in grant application, administration, and project design.

MISG partnered with Taste the Local Difference, a Michigan food hub that connects consumers with local food producers and joined the Western UP Food Systems Collaborative to discuss local food systems.

MISG also interviewed commercial and aquaculture farmers to catalog business information and capacities, pandemic limitations, and general needs. MISG also planned educational sessions at the Michigan Fish Producers Association’s annual conference. This led to an expansion of a partnership with Michigan State University Extension and Pine Rest Mental Health Services so Michigan fish producers can now take advantage of critical online counseling services.

The MISG COVID-19 Rapid Response team’s quick actions and assessments of the issues the pandemic was having on the fishing industry helped pave the way for the businesses to eventually receive both financial and moral support, making the team a worthy recipient of the MSU Extension Emerging Issues/Rapid Response Award.

4-H Face-to-Face Taskforce

Lisa Bottomley, Jill Connin, Jacob DeDecker, Norma Lundeen, Erin Moore, Laurie Rivetto, Sienna Samp, Edward Scott, Matthew Shane, Janelle Stewart, Beth Stuever, Jamie Wilson

The MSU Extension 4-H Face-to-Face Taskforce was created in November 2020 to discuss the necessary steps for a safe return to in-person 4-H programming after the COVID-19 pandemic. The taskforce includes professionals from various levels of Extension to ensure that all aspects of in-person programming and engagement were considered.

The taskforce explored and re-explored many avenues during the six months of weekly meetings and sub-committee meetings. MSU Extension and Michigan 4-H programs were unable to meet in person for 426 days due to multiple layers of epidemic orders. The team needed to sort through the epidemic orders at all levels of jurisdictions and find the pathway to in-person programs again. The team diligently worked together to review protocols, create resources and templates, and assess guidance, following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, and MSU policies.

The team created the “Michigan 4-H Volunteer Approved Activities” webpage, which later became the “Approved Activities for MSU Extension Volunteers in 2021” webpage. The webpage houses the majority of the resources this taskforce created – from step-by-step instructions for volunteers to follow to become fully renewed in Volunteer Central and 4-H Online, to signs with public health reminders and attendance logs, to the survey where volunteers could request in-person programming opportunities housed in Qualtrics. The Qualtrics survey provided a robust check-and-balance process for reviewing and approving requests. It included a two-level submission and approval process as well as a database that contained all of the communication for the purpose of tracking staff actions.

The 4-H Face-to-Face Taskforce developed a strong, detailed, supported process to create a smooth transition to face-to-face programs for the youth of Michigan while continuing to promote public health. Team members provided a rapid yet thoughtful and methodical response to this issue and are deserving of the Emerging Issues/Rapid Response Award.

OUTSTANDING SERVICE TO MSU EXTENSION AWARD

Beth A. Clawson

Beth A. Clawson, Michigan State University Extension educator, exemplifies Extension leadership through her years of continued contribution to developing and delivering programs that both train potential volunteers and train the volunteer coordinator in signature program areas. Beth developed and delivered upgraded programming including Michigan Master Composter, Michigan Clean Boats Clean Waters, and the Michigan Master Naturalist program. She also created a successful webinar series for backyard conservation in response to COVID-19 lockdowns.

Beth consistently approaches her programming from a developing leader's perspective and her programming increases the capacity of knowledge and skill for organizations and individuals. She was tasked with developing the Michigan Master Naturalist certificate program into a statewide certification course while simultaneously creating curriculum, delivering quality education, and self-funding the program. It has grown from one pilot course in 2019 to five host regions in 2021.

In addition to negotiating for substantial hosts for the Michigan Master Naturalist program, Beth facilitates a solid 13-member advisory committee for the program. Other contributions to program development are also donated by many of the speakers represented.

Beth creates legacy programming and services through each person or organization trained through any of the train-the-trainer (T3) programs or trained by people who received the T3. The new Michigan Master Naturalist certification program creates a cadre of individuals who implement sound conservation practices on their own properties to create a natural space for wildlife preservation. These individuals share their knowledge with others.

Beth Clawson has dedicated her life's work to educating Michigan's communities on how to implement, promote, and pass on sustainable living practices to improve the current and future status of Michigan's natural resources. She truly deserves this highest honor given to MSU Extension professional staff members.

GORDON GUYER COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMMING AWARD

MSU Extension 4-H Virtual Showcase and Auction Taskforce

Nick Babcock, Marianne Buza, Jacob DeDecker, Kathryn Fischer, Thomas Guthrie, Sara Lewis, Debra Morgan, Alan Pilkenton, Sienna Samp, Matthew Shane, Gwyn Shelle, Janelle Stewart, Jacob Stieg, Janice Zerbe, Peggy Zettle

When in-person fairs were canceled in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Michigan State University Extension 4-H Virtual Showcase and Auction Taskforce worked with partners to support the thousands of youth who had already invested time and hard work into their projects. The result of the team's collaboration was a groundbreaking platform allowing 4-H youth to showcase their skills and auction their projects through the MSU Extension 4-H Virtual Showcase and Auction.

The team's diversified skill set and solution-driven approach were critical to the success of this endeavor. They collaborated closely with 4-H youth and alumni, industry experts, health departments, food banks, livestock processing facilities, the Michigan Association of Fairs and Exhibitions, and over 50 fair boards.

Fifty-eight counties offered a virtual showcase experience that brought in 2,600 youth exhibitors and over 7,200 project evaluations statewide, and 17 virtual auctions engaged over 3,700 registered donors who purchased approximately \$1.4 million of 4-H projects in support of 4-H'ers.

In addition, the team enhanced MSU Extension's partnership with the Michigan State Fair to offer a first-of-its-kind virtual state fair showcase. This involved 428 youth exhibitors from 63 different counties who submitted over 2,000 entries to the virtual showcase, nearly doubling the number of counties previously reached by the state fair. Scholarships in the amount of \$50,000 were awarded to 61 individual youth. The team helped raise an additional ten \$1,000 scholarships awarded to youth participating in the virtual showcase.

This virtual platform reimagines a fair model that is more than a century old. This new opportunity provides more classes for youth to showcase their learning, allowing participation from different areas, abilities, and interests. Several county fairs as well as the Michigan State Fair will continue offering a 4-H virtual showcase in conjunction with in-person fairs in 2021. The impact of this team's unique collaborative efforts will influence fairs and 4-H partnerships for years to come.

MCEA JOHN A. HANNAH AWARD FOR PROGRAM EXCELLENCE

Emergency Response to Accidents Involving Livestock

Nick Babcock, Madonna Benjamin, Tina Conklin, Elizabeth Ferry, Sarah Fronczak, Kevin Gould, Thomas Guthrie, Michael Metzger, Erica Rogers, Dale Rozeboom, Paola Bacigalupo Sanguesa, Gwyn Shelle, David Thompson Zachary Williams, Casey Zangaro

The Michigan State University Extension Emergency Response to Accidents Involving Livestock (ERAIL) program focuses on supporting a safe and secure food chain, has direct benefits to the agriculture industry, and expands MSU Extension programming and partnerships to a new audience of first responders, emergency managers, and law enforcement officials.

Responding to an accident that involves large trucks, people, and animals can turn into a chaotic event if the local response team is not prepared or trained to handle it. The number of livestock in Michigan combined with an expanding processing industry and several large market facilities were key factors leading the ERAIL team to identify the need to prepare those involved to deal with livestock transportation accidents.

The ERAIL program provides in-person training for first responder professionals and others involved in transporting animals; virtual training modules; education through individual consultations for organizations, locations, and units; and establishment of a fleet of emergency response trailers in Michigan.

Team members work to familiarize participants with different types and styles of transport vehicles, to get inside them to see how they work. The team also focuses on training the attendees so that they are comfortable handling and moving animals. Humane euthanasia training is also provided. Three fully funded and operational response trailers are deployed to three counties with plans to find funding to eventually deploy a fleet of 28 response trailers in Michigan.

Past program participants of this training indicate that they are more comfortable and feel better able to work through an emergency situation that involves animals directly because of this experience. More than 140 responders representing 36 Michigan counties and seven other states have completed the program. The ERAIL program showcases MSU Extension at what it does best, providing relevant education and creating awareness using multiple outreach channels, which helps people improve their lives by bringing knowledge and resources directly to individuals, communities, and businesses.

MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARDS

Community Nutrition Instructor

Kendra Gibson

Kendra Gibson, Michigan State University Extension community nutrition instructor, provided assistance, knowledge, and experience during the development of the Lakeshore Food Club (LFC) in Mason County, a grocery store-style food resource for low-income families. Kendra's generous spirit, warm personality, and technical expertise greatly added to the sense of community at the food club. Taste a Rainbow was a youth summer gardening and nutrition series located at LFC in 2019. When the COVID-19 pandemic occurred in March 2020, concern rose for the fate of the garden as well as its related social connections. Kendra helped the program switch to a virtual offering and rebranded it as Deep Roots, which has expanded to include more partners with a community-wide presence. Throughout the summer lockdown, this program kept people connected through a shared interest in growing and preparing healthy food.

Kendra assisted Ludington High School through implementing Smarter Lunchroom initiatives. This also led the school to receive recognition with the 2020 Michigan School Wellness Gold Award. While working to implement menu changes, Kendra's kind spirit encouraged even the most reluctant teenagers to evaluate how they could make healthier choices.

In Baldwin, she was part of a project bringing multiple funders and volunteers to build accessible, raised beds to Grand Oaks Nursing Home residents. She provided community coaching in Lake County to create the Lake County Food Policy Council and assisted the Bread of Life Pantry to transition to a MyChoice pantry. One result of this project is a toolkit that is now available nationwide.

She has been invited to share the programs and work she has done locally in Lake and Mason counties at national and state conferences. Her consistent and committed presence in the community has led MSU Extension to be the partner of choice in Mason County. She is a community connector, bringing people and partners together to be part of many community projects. Kendra Gibson's passion, knowledge, and positivity have made a lasting impact on individuals and families in Mason County.

Program Instructor

Nicole Persing-Wethington

Nicole Persing-Wethington, Michigan State University Extension health and nutrition program instructor, has been an integral part of the Health Work Team. Nicole's expertise and skills with technology are essential to the success of the team's virtual programming.

Nicole played a huge role in re-launching the virtual Wellness Initiative for Senior Education (WISE) program and continues to make updates to ensure our participants are getting the best experience. She redesigned all of the RELAX handouts into fillable PDFs to make them accessible to participants without access to printers. She has developed pictorial slides to help participants new to Zoom. These slides have been shared both inside and outside MSU Extension with community and statewide partners.

Nicole's breadth of programming capabilities makes her an asset to Extension and the communities she serves. She co-facilitates several programs with community partners and has continued her co-facilitation even during the pandemic. She is well-versed in her community's needs and is quick to offer MSU Extension programs and materials to partners statewide.

She was already a strong program instructor, but her technology skills allowed her to adapt quickly and thrive in the pandemic programming atmosphere. She shared her expertise with the entire work team, working to provide tech support, instructional videos and resources, and to answer questions her teammates had regarding remote programming. Whether as lead teacher or tech support, Nicole always made the programs enjoyable, interactive, and smooth.

She has opened doors for building new partnerships through securing service agreements with the Michigan Library Association and Barton Malow to provide mindfulness classes for their worksite wellness programs. In addition, she helped organize a co-presented program with the Michigan Alzheimer's Association, blending MSU Extension's mindfulness programs with their caregiver education programs.

Patient with staff and participants, she is willing to help with any technology issues. Her professionalism and compassionate, thoughtful, fair, innovative, creative, humble, and composed qualities are seen in the way she interacts with those inside and outside of MSU Extension. We celebrate Nicole Persing-Wethington with the Meritorious Service Award.

4-H Program Coordinator

Lori Warchuck

Lori Warchuck, Michigan State University Extension St. Clair County 4-H program coordinator, is instrumental in maintaining one of Michigan's largest county 4-H programs. She manages more than 300 volunteers who help facilitate the program. Lori's relationship with volunteers enables the program to serve over 1,000 youth in 4-H clubs and contributes toward the 6,000 additional youth reached annually in the county. She approaches her work with volunteers as a leader and a teammate, creating a positive and inspiring atmosphere.

The county fair board hosted a virtual showcase in 2020. With Lori's help and support, the virtual showcase engaged more than 300 participants. Beyond providing an opportunity to exhibit in this format, Lori engaged participants throughout the week with educational offerings and Facebook Live posts. She partnered with the fair board to secure funding for a part-time staff member who provided a variety of educational activities to attract new audiences to the program.

When MSU pivoted to virtual programming, Lori was creative in employing multiple approaches to keep 4-H members engaged and grow her audience. These included Zoom presentations, educational kits, Kahoot games, and Facebook Live videos.

The 4-H Council is active in supporting the program through fundraising, leader training, and youth educational programs. Lori works with the 4-H Council to plan and execute an annual auction to provide financial support to the county program. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, she helped the committee pivot their 2021 auction to an online format. The 2021 auction was a success, and the 4-H Council opted to donate 50% of the profits from the auction to the food pantry this year. She also worked with the 4-H Council to recognize volunteers through a virtual recognition celebration.

Lori Warchuck's leadership in St. Clair County drives the 4-H program to be successful year after year.

Administrative Leadership

Jacob DeDecker

Jacob (“Jake”) DeDecker, state leader of Michigan 4-H Youth Development and associate director of Michigan State University Extension Children and Youth Institute, has consistently served as a strong leader and advocate. During the transition from face-to-face to virtual program delivery due to the COVID-19 pandemic, he supported the development of action teams, including one focused on providing a virtual showcase and auction to support county and state fairs.

Jake has successfully managed difficult conversations and provided a consistent and thoughtful approach to the transitions faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. He has masterfully communicated with staff and served as a key point of contact with volunteers and families to ensure they felt heard and supported. He has also advocated and voiced the impacts of the pivot to virtual education to key legislative stakeholders.

Over his tenure, he has secured several key resources and partners to support the growth of Michigan 4-H. He has developed strong relationships with key 4-H donors and has provided consistent support to the Michigan 4-H Foundation. His work has extended internationally, developing key partners to bring 4-H to other countries, and he has continued to position Michigan 4-H as a leader nationally.

Jake’s humble leadership style enabled him to build bridges and maintain relationships. He has worked to demonstrate clear communication, vision, empathy, accountability, and gratitude to staff, participants, and partners. He understands the value of 4-H partnerships in communities and has dedicated himself to maintaining and strengthening those partnerships while at the same time supporting staff and organizational objectives.

While Jake DeDecker has provided many significant contributions, his ability to maintain a consistent and supportive approach has been key to his success and the success of 4-H and the Children and Youth Institute, making him deserving of the Meritorious Service Award.

Extension Educator

Laurie Rivetto

Laurie Rivetto, Michigan State University Extension educator, has championed LGBTQIA+ and inclusion of all youth since 2017. To support these efforts, she co-developed the *Guide for Inclusion of Individuals of All Gender Identities, Gender Expressions, Sexual Orientations and Sexes*, delivered statewide in February 2021.

Her inquisitive approach to the service of youth and community has guided Laurie in the development of several well-respected and widely used curricula. In addition, Laurie has designed, facilitated, and taught using online platforms across counties. Topics included, but were not limited to, careers, youth business, 4-H market animal projects, horse science, photography, communication, and 4-H finances.

She co-led Action Team #2, created in response to the need to provide virtual programming for Michigan residents, families, and youth caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The team created criteria and a checklist for effective programs and program fidelity including best practices for program design using a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens and providing recommendations for website and social media promotion and marketing. Laurie supervised the creation of more than 10 documents including a Roadmap to Virtual Programs for 4-H staff and a general version for all MSU Extension staff, as well as for the public to use. She directed the development of trainings and materials for volunteers and staff including on-demand videos.

Laurie has cultivated numerous partnerships, among them school districts, library systems, city governments, state agencies, and nonprofits. She has secured or been on teams that brought in over \$100,000 in grant funding during her MSU Extension career.

Laurie excels in planning and program implementation. Her organizational and partnering skills allowed her to reach approximately 5,000 youth participants in the 2019 reporting year. She works to hold MSU Extension accountable to the residents it serves and to help create paths to belonging in 4-H for all. She continues to strive for excellence in programming, viewing our work through a lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion, so MSU Extension fulfills its mission, making Laurie Rivetto's service worthy of the meritorious distinction.

Extension Educator

Vivian Washington

Vivian Washington has been a dynamic Michigan State University Extension children and youth educator, serving her local community.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, while some staff struggled, Vivian and her colleagues within her team thrived and quickly pivoted to the online learning environment. As team co-chair, Vivian provided leadership in helping her team shift to respond to the growing needs of parents during the pandemic. They coordinated daily social media messages, providing families and caregivers important media messages, and supportive webinars to assist families.

Vivian has also exhibited success as an educator this past year. Due to her quick efforts, she conducted 46 programs, reaching 2,136 participants, featuring programming in multiple modalities, including several one-time parenting education programming, caregiver education, and parenting education series. In addition, she supported social media posts (including managing the Thinking Thursday posts for the Child and Family Development team each week). This weekly Facebook post has an amazing reach.

Her efforts provided needed professional development to the child care industry in a virtual setting that allowed providers to maintain their state-required development hours. She also provided parents important educational best practices in a variety of trainings.

Vivian has also led in the area of diversity, equity, and inclusion. With a colleague, she has co-developed Including All of Us, which is a training focused on early childhood educators to reduce implicit bias in the classroom. This cutting-edge training will be important as Extension continues to infuse this topic into programming efforts.

Vivian Washington has demonstrated meritorious service through all of these efforts.

Support Staff Off-Campus

Rebecca Sova

Rebecca Sova has made significant contributions through her work with Michigan State University Extension as support staff for both the MSU Extension Roscommon County office and the Roscommon County Gypsy Moth Suppression Program.

As a result of Rebecca's work, the capacity and attendance for programs in the county have greatly improved. She efficiently addresses the day-to-day operations yet still finds time to make outstanding contributions. When her position expanded to include support for the gypsy moth program in January 2020, she took the time to self-educate and provide professional assistance. She works to gain visibility for both MSU Extension and the gypsy moth program in Roscommon County. Her past career as a teacher with proofreading and editing skills, and expertise with marketing and design helps to increase the visibility and credibility of both initiatives in our local communities. Despite COVID-19 pandemic restrictions that limited in-person appearances, her work ensured visibility through social media, articles, flyers, and our presence at Board of Commissioner virtual meetings.

One of her key accomplishments was to inventory all community-related entities and track this information so these new potential partners and audience members can be reached. This has led to a surge in new relationships where MSU Extension remains visible. She recognizes and, in some cases, facilitates new partnership and audience opportunities. She also sends weekly communications to the local newspapers and has arranged for MSU Extension staff to make regular radio talk show appearances.

One of her most significant impacts has been promoting awareness about chemical-free landowner controls for gypsy moth. Rebecca created a "Gypsy Moth Management Strategy" flyer frequently distributed throughout gypsy moth-infested counties in Michigan. The well-designed resource provides a comprehensive, research-based list of strategies for landowners to employ to suppress gypsy moth populations on their own properties.

For her outstanding contributions to both the Roscommon County office and the gypsy moth program, Rebecca Sova is honored with the Meritorious Service Award.

Support Staff On-Campus

Mindy Tape

Mindy Tape, Michigan State University Extension communications manager, is a gifted communicator, using her talents to enhance the visibility of Extension programming for 11 years. Mindy has provided communication and marketing support to hundreds of educators. Her strategic approach has put staff at the forefront of digital platforms, consistently elevating their work. Mindy also supports broad organizational efforts such as overseeing the growth of the MSU Extension News Digests and serving as lead strategist for the Extension website.

Her counsel and expertise have been pivotal in helping staff navigate challenges including the 2015 avian influenza outbreak, the launch of Ag Innovation Day, the delayed planting crisis in 2019, and the N95 mask decontamination website last year. Mindy has also pulled double duty for the past 15 months, serving as communications manager for the Community, Food and Environment Institute as well as the Agriculture and Agribusiness Institute.

She helps to synergize efforts for shared resources, outreach efforts, and expertise throughout the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. She has also leveraged her vast personal and professional networks to support Extension, using her connections with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and commodity groups to support the Farm Stress Management program, to include MSU Extension in Michigan Ag Month, and more.

Her out-of-the-box thinking has led to vast improvements in dotCMS expert profiles, a streamlined impact report process, and the expanded use of course content. She developed a marketing checklist for staff promotion of programs and events, resulting in many successfully attended Extension offerings.

The role Mindy plays in helping Extension educators to promote their programs is critically important to their ability to reach Michiganders statewide. Her strategic direction and committed efforts are pivotal to ensuring Extension education is delivered to those who need it most, when they need it most. Mindy Tape's years of work and dedication, in particular her service in dual roles the past 15 months, is deserving of the Meritorious Service Award.

Academic Specialist

Phyllis J. Higman

Phyllis J. Higman, senior conservation scientist and botany heritage lead, provides leadership for Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI). Her programming includes conservation education, invasive species management, and rare plant species conservation.

She has developed and delivered classroom and field-based training sessions on Michigan's rare ecosystems. In doing so, she has mastered the art of communicating complex scientific information to a diverse audience with clarity and passion, engaging them with her wit, passion, and intellect. Her comprehensive knowledge was attained through tireless study and slogging through swamps, marshes, and forests, locating and documenting occurrences of rare plants.

Her success as a conservation scientist is linked to partnerships developed and nurtured over two decades with local, state, federal, and tribal agencies; land conservancies; academics; and conservation organizations. She motivates thousands of partners, colleagues, and residents to act to protect our natural heritage.

Since MNFI joined Michigan State University Extension in 2000, she secured over \$9.1 million in grant funding. This funding and her leadership have been critical to MNFI's mission.

She has led MNFI's collaboration with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources' Forest Resources Division and the U.S. Forest Service to conduct rare plant surveys on the Huron-Manistee National Forest. She was a founding member of the Michigan Invasive Species Coalition, organized to coordinate and collaborate on invasive species initiatives across the state. Her seminal work on invasive species has resulted in an early detection and response strategy, a framework and field guides for addressing invasive plants, support for an online or phone app system for mapping invasive occurrences (Midwest Invasive Species Information Network, or MISIN), current distribution maps, best treatment strategies, and a network of partners statewide. She was essential to the development and adoption of the MISIN. She has played a critical role in the conception, development, and expansion of the Conservation Stewards Program.

Phyllis Higman works for the conservation of Michigan's biodiversity while being an effective and empathetic colleague, mentor, and collaborator lending meritorious service to MNFI and Extension.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION IMPACT AWARD

Melissa Elischer, Laurie Rivetto

Melissa Elischer and Laurie Rivetto are Michigan State University Extension educators: Melissa in the area of 4-H dairy cattle and Laurie in 4-H career exploration and workforce preparation.

To support MSU Extension's efforts to be inclusive and affirming to LGBTQIA+ adults, youth, and families in programming, Melissa and Laurie were champions of the endeavor to create the Guide for Inclusion of Individuals of All Gender Identities, Gender Expressions, Sexual Orientations and Sexes, beginning in 2017 and delivered statewide in February 2021. More than 300 MSU Extension staff members participated in 19 Inclusion Guide Dialogues facilitated by Melissa and Laurie. These dialogues help us support and welcome all MSU Extension programs. Champions (co-facilitators) discussed specific examples within the organization of discrimination or nonaffirming behavior. Dialogues were limited to 25 participants with small groups in breakout rooms. Large group discussion rounded out the dialogues.

Many positives resulted from these dialogues. One included the creation of a common language and base for learning across MSU Extension. Melissa and Laurie heard from members of the LGBTQIA+ community that the inclusion guide and conversations around pronouns, gender identity, and related topics increased their comfort in the workplace, allowing them to more fully be their authentic selves.

The guide was initially created to advise 4-H and the Children and Youth Institute. Laurie and Melissa saw that this guide could in turn be effective in all institutes and by partnering with institute champions, they were able to roll it out Extension-wide. This has created a sustained interest in LGBTQIA+ inclusion in those institutes, many creating additional professional development opportunities for their staff.

Melissa Elischer and Laurie Rivetto are committed to seeing the important element of inclusion woven into the fiber of MSU Extension. Their professionalism and approach to the development of the guide and their continued perseverance is a true example of the influence that staff can have in ensuring change within an organization. They are deserving of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Impact Award.

INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY AWARD

Norma Lundeen

Norma Lundeen, Michigan State University Extension planning and reporting project manager, started as a project coordinator working on the multi-state Voices for Food research grant in September 2017. She also assisted in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) and Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) reporting and was instrumental in onboarding the new Program Evaluation and Reporting System (PEARS). As part of the PEARS release, Norma did critical training for SNAP-Ed staff in 2019. In addition to PEARS training, she also assisted with the web-based Nutrition Education Evaluation and Reporting System (WebNEERS) training for EFNEP staff. In April 2019, she was hired as the planning and reporting project manager for Extension and provided oversight for the Michigan Planning and Reporting System (MiPRS). In January 2020, Norma rolled out the use of PEARS Extension-wide. She was instrumental again in onboarding the system and subsequently developing extensive training opportunities. Norma continues to help staff transition to PEARS. She has developed numerous training videos to guide them through various processes.

She collaborated with the MSU Extension director's office, MSU Extension Human Resources, and all institutes to come up with unique solutions to various reporting topics including how to report time off. She was invaluable in developing surveys and forms that captured data specific to the reporting needs of MSU Extension. This included capturing youth data required for the Extension ES-237 report.

Norma is also proficient in Qualtrics survey technology and has provided support and training to staff who request surveys. She empowers staff to learn and use the technology provided for them to complete their job duties. Not only does she help staff think of innovative ways to use Qualtrics to capture data, but she also helps build their capacity on how to use Qualtrics to their advantage.

Norma Lundeen is patient, thoughtful, and responsive to staff needs throughout the state. Her input and insight have been invaluable. Her work with technology has been indeed innovative, making her worthy of receiving the Innovative Technology Award.

INSTITUTE TEAM AWARDS

State Opioid Response Team

Tracie Abram, Anita Carter, Dawn Contreras, Abigail Cudney, Pamela Daniels, Christi Demitz, Cheryl Eschbach, Kai Gritter, Sheilah Hebert, Hanna Hotchkiss, Naomi Hyso, Elizabeth Josaitis, Lauren Kennedy, Sean Knurek, Lauryn Lin, Georgina Perry, Jade Richards, Kristina Swartzendruber, Holly Tiret, Nicole Persing-Wethington

The State Opioid Response (SOR) team is a group of Michigan State University Extension health educators and program instructors led by senior Extension specialist Dawn Contreras. In 2018 and 2019, the SOR team received two grants totaling \$391,104 to help prevent opioid misuse among Michigan's older adults by educating them on nonpharmacological approaches to pain management. Over the past 2.5 years, a team of 20 staff within the Health and Nutrition Institute has provided educational programming to 2,860 older adults. Program participants developed their skill base and confidence in using self-management strategies to overcome pain and manage their chronic diseases. Example strategies included use of mindfulness techniques, medication management, and assertiveness and communications skills development. The project's success allowed the team to receive a new \$350,000 grant in 2020 to continue and expand opioid misuse prevention education to rural Michigan residents of all ages.

The SOR team collaborated extensively with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Recovery-Oriented Systems of Care (OROSC) and the Prevention Networks who receive funding from OROSC. Prevention Networks helped promote the programs for older adults in their regions. Many Prevention Networks members became certified to implement the programs locally, helping to sustain the programming past the grant period. Prior to this initiative, no other entity in Michigan was providing opioid misuse education to older adults. OROSC reached out to MSU Extension to fulfill this need.

Participants received a locked medication box after completing the post-survey for the self-management classes. This item helped participants to keep opioids safe. The project uses three methods of delivering education: face-to-face, Zoom delivery, and mailed toolkit combined with conference calls.

The impressive work of this team assisted older adults in feeling more confident and capable in managing their chronic pain.

Michigan Water School Team

Bindu Bhakta, Mary Bohling, Katelyn Brolick, Erick Elgin, Terry Gibb, Harmony Gmazel, Cindy Hudson, Bradley Neumann, Vanessa Pollok, Emily Proctor, Heather Triezenberg, Eric Walcott

Michigan State University Extension's Michigan Water School: Essential Resources for Local Officials is an innovative program, modeled after a University of Florida initiative, and developed to help elected and appointed officials implement Michigan's Water Resources Strategy. Many communities do not have capacity to educate local officials, and state legislators' term limits make ongoing education about water resource issues necessary. The policy-neutral, fact-based program provides decision-makers with information, tools, and resources needed to understand water management. The Water School team developed the curriculum and additional resources through collaborations beginning in 2015. In 2017, a pilot program took place, and in 2018-19, four two-day in-person workshops were held around the state. In 2020, plans underway to host additional three in-person workshops halted with the COVID-19 pandemic. The team reorganized, holding a series of online webinars with virtual audiences. These webinars were then recorded, closed captioned, and made available free online. The no-cost option has made it possible for small communities to take advantage of the training and expertise offered. By pivoting to the webinar format, the team has been able to expand their reach.

The Erb Family Foundation provided nearly \$300,000 for development and implementation of the program. Pure Oakland Water provided an additional \$15,000 to offer participant scholarships and other support. An Advisory Council with 16 external partners provides guidance for the program.

An online toolkit gives in-depth information for officials seeking additional information about water management issues. In early 2021, the Water School team organized a series of legislative visits with watershed partners and state representatives. The visits created and strengthened the relationship between watershed groups and legislators in addition to promoting participation in and increasing visibility of the Water School program.

Through the Michigan Water School, the Water School team, members of the Community, Food and Environment Institute, provide solutions to issues and help participants make sound decisions regarding hydrology issues.

MSU DISTINGUISHED ACADEMIC STAFF AWARDS

The following MSU Extension staff members have been awarded the MSU Distinguished Academic Staff Award during the calendar year noted. We thank each of them for their significant contributions to MSU Extension.

2021 – Stanley Moore, Daniel O’Keefe

PROMOTIONS

The following MSU Extension staff members have earned promotions during this calendar year. Congratulations and thank you for your significant contributions to MSU Extension.

Earning Senior Status

Dawn Earnesty, Philip Kaatz

MILESTONE YEARS OF SERVICE WITH MSU

The MSU Extension staff members listed in this section have marked employment milestones during this calendar year. We thank them all for their years of dedicated service to the organization.

40 or More Years of Service

Dawn Contreras, Roy Allen Prentice

35 or More Years of Service

Luke Reese, Ann Marie Smith, Christine Venema

30 Years of Service

Paul Gross, Amy Irish-Brown, Glenda Kilpatrick, Stanley Moore, Laura Sears

25 Years of Service

Ronald Bates, Janis Brinn, Patrick Cudney, Michael Metzger, Jean Schueller, Kristina Swartzendruber

20 Years of Service

Valerie Albright, Beth Clawson, Frank Cox II, Heather Hampel, Corissa Harris, Saneya Moore, Michelle Neff, Catherine Patterson, Rochelle Sturtevant, Marilyn Thelen, Yolanda Thrash, Holly Tiret, Roxanne Turner, Roxanne White, Wendolyn Wieland

15 Years of Service

Mary Bohling, Julia Darnton, Jacob DeDecker, Joseph Hammontree, Sheilah Hebert, Holly Lacina, Latoyia LeRoux, Stephanie Marino, Jacqueline Marks, Jackelyn Martin, Kea Norrell-Aitch, Liana Pepin, Karen Powers, Insa Raymond, Amy Refior, Laurie Rivetto, Renee Sanders, Carrie Shrier, Candis Thick

10 Years of Service

Veronica Bolhuis, Betsy Braid, Nonie Gross, Robert Krusky, Leah LaVanway, Heidi Locke, Sabrina McGee, Margie Peck, Shirley Ringler, Staci Starck, Mindy Tape, Leigh Ann Theunick, Heather Triezenberg

5 Years of Service

Ashley Adkins, Madeline Bielecki, Heather Borden, Calli Brannan, Rosali Collier, Jill Connin, Jessica Coron, Mark Cowan Jr., Eric Dobbrastine, Madge Dougherty, Erick Elgin, Tammy Fletcher, Jae Gerhart, Kristin Havelka, Nichole Hersch, Hanna Hotchkiss, Naomi Hyso, LaShanda Jackson, Kathryn Jacques, Cecilia Jaime Gutierrez, Monica Jean, Sean Knurek, Ellen Koehler, Anne Kretschmann, Nancy Latham, Caitlin Lorenc, Seth Martin, Jennifer McNamara, Aaron Myers, Elliot Nelson, Abbey Palmer, Lindsey Pung-Terry, Tara Roberson, Keri Rowley, Karie Saxton, Kristi Schreiber, Alexandria Schunk, Anne Sheltrown, Tyler Tulloch, Eric Walcott, Elizabeth Wiener, Kevin Zoromski

MSU EXTENSION ASSOCIATION AWARDS

MSU Extension's professional associations have presented an array of annual awards to their members this year. We're pleased to recognize and congratulate these award winners again in this program.

EPSILON SIGMA PHI AWARDS

Administrative Leadership

Ron Bates

Ronald ("Ron") O. Bates is an accomplished researcher, professor, and Extension administrative leader. He arrived at Michigan State University in 1996 starting as an assistant professor and achieving full professor status in 2011 in the MSU Department of Animal Science. Prior to coming to MSU, he was a tenured professor at the University of Missouri.

Ron is well known for his research in swine genetics. In his scholarship pursuits, he has worked closely with MSU Extension educators to provide leadership on educational programs relating to genetic programs for commercial and seedstock producers, as well as the transition to housing sows in groups. He has served as director of the MSU Extension Agriculture and Agribusiness Institute since 2015. In his role as an Extension leader, he supervises agriculture and agribusiness professionals working statewide for Cooperative Extension. He promotes scholarship of Extension and provides training and mentorship to new and emerging professional staff.

His current Extension efforts include farm stress outreach, supporting extension efforts in international settings, and AgrAbility. He has been a co- and principal investigator on 17 grants totaling over \$4.6 million since 2013. When he stepped into the institute director role, he developed the initial structural outline and functional roles of work teams. Ron Bates has hired over 30 MSU Extension employees and has been a driving force behind changing the demographics within the institute.

Distinguished Service

Jennifer Weichel

As the MSU Extension volunteer specialist, Jennifer Weichel builds the framework that allows MSU Extension to effectively work with staff and volunteers. Throughout Jennifer's more than 22-year career, she has held a wide variety of roles ranging from program assistant, Extension educator, supervisor, and coach. She has worked to develop the potential of youth and adult volunteers by writing curriculum, producing resources, conducting programs, sharing activities, and hosting opportunities. These resources have also been critical in supporting MSU Extension staff and other administrators that support volunteers. Over the years, she has developed over 200 workshops and 150 webinars for professionals, partners, and volunteers.

Jennifer's interest in national background checks resulted in bringing efficiency and consistency to volunteer screening. This work in turn contributed to the centralization of the Volunteer Selection Process. She is a member of the Volunteer Excellence Support Team and was an integral part of the design and launch of MSU Extension's Volunteer Central. She is also part of the North Central Region Volunteer Specialist Team and coordinates the Achieving the Extension Mission Through Volunteers online course.

MAE4-HYS and NAE4-HA have recognized Jennifer with the Distinguished Service, Meritorious Service, and Educational Technology awards as well as the Team Award for Volunteerism. She also received the MCEA John Hannah Award for Program Excellence for her role in developing the Achieving Success Through Volunteers curriculum. Because of her dedication to MSU Extension and ESP, Jennifer Weichel is deserving of the Distinguished Service Award.

Distinguished Team

VOLUNTEER EXCELLENCE SUPPORT TEAM (VEST)

Bindu Bhakta, Lisa Bottomley, Frank Cox, Joseph Hammontree, Christine Heverly, Amber Joseph, Jodi Schulz, Jennifer Weichel, Mary Wilson

Early Career Service

Kristi Evans

International Service

Dixie Sandborn

Retiree Service

Stephen Lovejoy

MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF EXTENSION 4-H YOUTH STAFF AWARDS

Achievement in Service Award (State and National)

Elizabeth Wiener

In the four and a half years Elizabeth (“Liz”) Wiener has worked for MSU Extension and 4-H, she has grown her program to 16% of eligible youth participating in 4-H club activities. If you count youth reached by MSU Extension employees, the number hovers near 80%. She offers a variety of SPIN (special interest) and traditional clubs and is constantly striving to be better, never settling for anything.

Achievement in Service Award (State and National)

Sara Lewis

Sara Lewis has served as a 4-H program coordinator in Monroe County for six years. During this time, she focused her efforts on building alternative program delivery models to meet the ever-changing needs and availability of current and prospective members and volunteers. Working with the largest traditional club-based 4-H program in Michigan, Sara relies on the support of volunteers to assist in the management and coordination of engaging learning opportunities for the 5- to -19-year-old population in Monroe County. Sara has worked hard to build partnerships and develop funds to support the large program. In addition to her local role, Sara is a member of several statewide committees including the Capitol Experience steering committee, State Awards committee, and most recently the 4-H Virtual Showcase and Auction team.

Meritorious Service Award (State and National)

Debra Barrett

Debra Barrett began her service to MSU Extension more than 25 years ago as the Berrien County 4-H program assistant in October 1995. She became a 4-H agent in 1997 and maintains Berrien County as her home office location. In 2010, her role changed to provide expertise on the Career Exploration and Workforce Preparation work team while she coached and supervised children and youth staff in five southwestern Michigan counties. As a senior Extension educator, Deb currently provides career exploration and workforce development support statewide. Highlights of Deb's career include co-authoring the Build Your Future and Youth Business Guide to Success curriculums; facilitating Real Colors workshops; receiving the Kathryn S. Rossow Professionalism in Volunteer Management community award, which included State of Michigan Special Tribute; and programming with individuals with disabilities and youth in alternative education. She is an advocate for teamwork and values her children and youth teammates that have contributed to her success.

MSU EXTENSION ASSOCIATION AWARDS

4-H Innovator Award

Angela Cook, Elizabeth Wiener

Distinguished Service Award (State and National)

Debra Morgan

Michigan 4-H Excellence in Animal Science

Nikki Hersch

Michigan 4-H Excellence in Communication and Expressive Arts

Laurie Platte Breza

Michigan 4-H Excellence in Educational Technology

Angela Cook

Michigan 4-H Excellence in Environmental Education

Alex Schunk

Michigan 4-H Excellence in Global Citizenship

Melissa Preston

Michigan 4-H Excellence in Healthy Living

Geep Charlebois, Jill Connin, Angela Cook, Karie Saxton, Elizabeth Wiener

Michigan 4-H Excellence in STEM

Christine Miller

Michigan 4-H Excellence in Volunteerism

Christine Heverly, Jodi Schulz, Jennifer Weichel

MAE4-HYS Notable Service Award

Katelyn Golembiewski

MAE4-HYS Partnership Award

Shelly Krueger, Norma Lundeen, Gwyn Shelle

Michigan Communicator Package Award

Elizabeth Wiener

Michigan Communicator Piece Award

Jill Connin

MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF EXTENSION AGENTS AWARDS

National Achievement Award (NACAA)

Benjamin Phillips

Benjamin (“Ben”) Phillips works with commercial field and greenhouse vegetable growers in the Bay and Thumb areas of Michigan. Ben’s pioneering spirit, creative ideas, and zest for learning are infectious. He is greatly appreciated by his colleagues and growers, and the Michigan Association of Extension Agents is thrilled to award Ben with the National Association of County Agricultural Agents Achievement Award. This national award recognizes excellence in the field of professional Extension for members with less than 10 years of service.

National Distinguished Service Award (NACAA)

Phillip Tocco

Phillip (“Phil”) Tocco has served as an Extension educator in Jackson County for over 17 years. He currently serves as a farm food safety educator for fruit and vegetable growers statewide. He was instrumental in guiding specialty crop growers as the Food Safety and Modernization Act was implemented and is an early adopter of new educational tools, most recently podcasting. Phil is an excellent educator and prized collaborator among his colleagues. The Michigan Association of Extension Agents is proud to recognize his stellar years of service and award him the National Association of County Agricultural Agents Distinguished Service Award. This national award recognizes excellence in the field of professional Extension for members with more than 10 years of service.

MICHIGAN EXTENSION ASSOCIATION OF FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES AWARDS

Early Childhood Child Care Training Award

1st Place National, 1st Place Central Region & Michigan

Kara Lynch, Laurie Messing, Lisa Treiber

Michigan State University Extension's *Safe Food=Healthy Kids* (SFHK) curriculum is a comprehensive food safety education program for child care providers. The curriculum combines direct education to promote safe food handling, with technology to extend education.

SFHK educates child care providers regarding best practices for food safety, enabling them to keep the children they care for healthy. The goals of SFHK are to reduce the incidence of foodborne illness in children and the accompanying health disparities. The program provides PowerPoint slides and supporting food safety resource materials. Participants can subscribe to a supplemental, optional weekly texting program, which shares food safety messages and may include links and videos.

SFHK classes were offered as in-person classes in 2019 and early 2020 reaching 117 providers. MSU Extension started 2020 with a new partnership with the Association of Child Development (ACD) to provide an online session for child care providers in Michigan, Illinois, and Indiana. Using online technology as a platform to provide SFHK, the ACD class paved the way for SFHK to be offered virtually for the rest of 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. In March when the stay-at-home order began in Michigan, SFHK quickly pivoted from an in-person training to a virtual three-hour training. During 2020, there were 18 SFHK online classes reaching 932 child care providers including participants from over 70 of the 83 counties in Michigan.

Evaluation data show improved food safety knowledge and practices. The total number of children served by class participants was 23,293.

Educational Curriculum Package Award

3rd Place National, 1st Place Central Region

Deanna East, Terry Lindsey-Pung

The *Cooking for One* curriculum was created to make healthier lifestyles for one person easier. The participant handbook contains six unique lessons that focus on everything from the basics of MyPlate to shopping, food safety, and more. Two primary goals anchor each lesson: one related to a food group and one related to practical cooking and preparation skills.

The *Cooking for One* curriculum helps participants learn tips and tricks to make nutritious meals and snacks for one person. It was developed for face-to-face instruction and delivered as a series consisting of six 2-hour lessons in six weeks. The first half of each lesson is a facilitated discussion around two objectives. It also includes many interactive components, such as Myth Busters and a capstone trivia game. For the second half of the lesson, the class moves into a kitchen setting for a demonstration and hands-on experience preparing one or two recipes from the curriculum.

Cooking for One was adapted for online programming in April 2020 due to restrictions in face-to-face programming because of COVID-19. The curriculum was converted to six 1-hour lessons in six weeks, with a primary focus on the nutrition education content, and delivered via Zoom.

In 2019, 3,547 Michiganders in 21 counties were served and in 2020, 4,780 Michiganders (of which 634 attended online) in 32 counties were served. In 2020, at least 40% of participants reported improvements in meal planning, not thawing food on the counter, fruit consumption, and using a meat thermometer.

Social Media Education Award

2nd Place National, 1st Place Central Region

Courtney Aldrich, Danielle Melching, Michelle Neff, Kylie Rymanowicz, Carrie Shrier, Vivian Washington, Kevin Zoromski

As families across Michigan suddenly found themselves home full time, Michigan State University Extension staff in child and family development knew it was critical to pivot rapidly to online programming. Families were experiencing an unprecedented situation and needed support quickly. The MSU Extension Child and Family Development team launched a social media campaign “Extension Extras” on their Facebook page, MiStrongerFamily, on March 30, 2020. The campaign targeted parents of children ages birth through age 8 who suddenly found themselves without school or child care for their children amid a changing work environment.

The MiStrongerFamily page grew in the early days of the pandemic from 395 followers on March 10 to 678 followers on March 16, when the first livestreamed program began, to 1,499 on March 29, the day before Extension Extras was started. By April 15, two weeks after the team launched the Extension Extras campaign, the Facebook page had 2,001 followers. Views jumped rapidly from average daily post views of less than 10 people, to a peak post reach on March 19 of 76,986 views and 2,975 on a video about the need for parents to manage their own stress during the pandemic. Extension Extras posts had a strong organic reach, with a peak post reach the first week in April of 17,720.

The MiStrongerFamily Extension Extras campaign has been an effective tool for MSU Extension to provide parenting education and supports during the pandemic.

Florence Hall Award

2nd Place Central Region & Michigan

Courtney Aldrich, Patti Mars, Danielle Melching, Michelle Neff, Anne O'Rourke-Bean, Kylie Rymanowicz, Jodi Schulz, Kevin Zoromski

Food Safety Award

3rd Place Central Region & Michigan

Karen Fifield, Kellie Jordan, Kara Lynch, Joyce McGarry, Laurie Messing, Mary Morris-Donaldson, Stephanie Ostrenga-Sprague, Wade Syers, Lisa Treiber, Christine Venema, Beth Waitrovich

Innovation in Programming Award

3rd Place Central Region & Michigan

Courtney Aldridge, Patti Mars, Danielle Melching, Anne O'Rourke-Bean, Kylie Rymanowicz, Jodi Schulz, Carrie Shrier, Kevin Zoromski

Program Excellence Through Research Award

2nd Place National, 1st Place Central Region & Michigan

Kendra Moyses, Kylie Rymanowicz



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