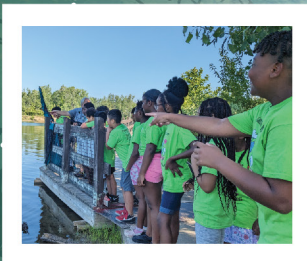
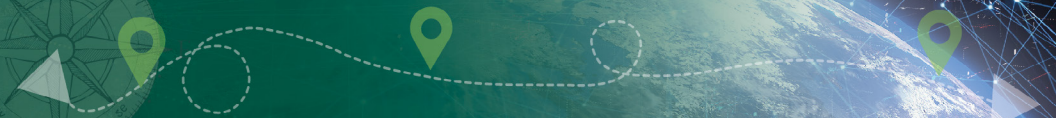




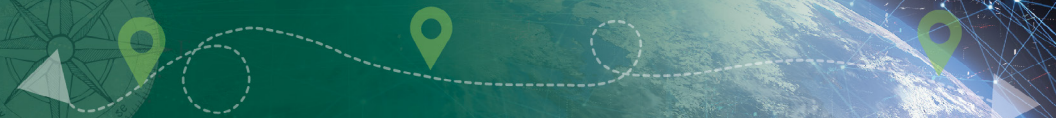
LEARNING FROM THE PAST, PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE



MSU EXTENSION AWARDS PROGRAM
FALL EXTENSION CONFERENCE
SEPTEMBER 26, 2023



NOTES



CONTENTS

About the Awards Program 3

MSU Extension Administration Awards 4

Michigan Council of Extension Associations John A. Hannah Award for Program Excellence..... 4

Gordon Guyer Collaborative Programming Award..... 5

Emerging Issues/Rapid Response Team Award..... 6

Institute Team Award..... 7

MSU Extension Director’s Award of Distinction..... 8

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Impact Award..... 10

Innovative Technology Award..... 11

Meritorious Service Awards..... 12

MSU Distinguished Academic Staff Award..... 19

Milestone Years of Service With MSU..... 19

Extension Association Awards 21

Epsilon Sigma Phi Awards 21

Michigan Association of Extension 4-H Youth Staff Awards..... 22

Michigan Association of Extension Agents Awards 24

Michigan Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences Awards 26

Several attendees have severe allergies related to nuts, mint, menthol, and eucalyptus. Please be mindful of these allergies by not bringing or consuming any of these items during conference sessions. Thank you for being considerate.



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 winner of the John A. Hannah Award for Program Excellence is presented as part of MSU Extension administration awards, it is chosen by the Michigan Council of Extension Associations, as the State Friend of Extension Award is chosen by Epsilon Sigma Phi. 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
- Michigan Association of Extension Agents
- Michigan Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences



MCEA JOHN A. HANNAH AWARD FOR PROGRAM EXCELLENCE

The John A. Hannah Award recognizes superior Extension programs developed and carried out by Michigan State University Extension professional staff members (campus, district, and county) appointed by the MSU Board of Trustees. This most prestigious of MSU Extension awards recognizes the excellence of programs, not just individuals.

MSU Extension Housing Policy Team

Tyler Augst, Craig Carpenter, Kambriana Crank, William Cronin, Karly Creguer, Julia Darnton, Audrey Gagner, Lindsey Gardner, Harmony Gmazel, David Ivan, Holly Madill, Brad Neumann, Andy Northrop, Mary Reilly, Eric Walcott

The MSU Extension Housing Policy Team launched the Michigan Housing Education Initiative Project (Attainable Housing Program) to meet the challenge of safe, affordable, quality housing. It featured lectures, group discussions, scenario-based activities, and examples of best practices to help build participant skills and confidence. Participants included local and regional appointed and elected officials, concerned citizen groups impacted by the state of housing in their community, and housing agencies. The program highlighted recent trends based on state and national socioeconomic research. Additionally, research driving the understanding of the long-term effects of redlining led to a discussion of relevant policy options for the creation of more inclusive communities. This research component, centered around the specific context to Michigan, sets this initiative apart from traditional outreach.

Funded through a partnership with the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), regional conversations engaged community leaders and local housing agencies in identifying needs and establishing regional housing plans. As a result of these conversations, 18 regional housing agencies have received \$175,000 each to further their local housing goals. Additionally, MSHDA's first Statewide Housing Plan cites the program as motivational and informative in the pursuit of racial justice in housing. The MSU Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion has integrated elements of the program into MSU Extension's Multicultural Self-Awareness Workshop. This program and its components have now received four national awards, indicating the program's excellence on a national stage.



GORDON GUYER COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMMING AWARD

The Gordon Guyer Collaborative Programming Award was created in 2014 to honor teams that conduct high-quality, collaborative programming that contributes to the mission of Michigan State University Extension. The award is named for former MSU Extension director Gordon Guyer who encouraged MSU Extension staff at all levels to develop evidence- and research-based, collaborative, and interdisciplinary programs to meet the needs of Michigan residents.

MSU Product Center 2023 Making It In Michigan Conference and Trade Show Team

Katje Armentrout, Trina Bierschbach, Rebecca DeYoung, Mary Dunckel, Dave Ellis, Sheena Fate, Kailey Grooms, Parker Jones, William Knudsen, Jennifer Labun, Diane Longanbach, Jamie Rahrig, Clarence Rudat, Megghan Seidel, Shelby Warner, Aaron Weiner, Wendy Wieland, Kendra Wills, Mollie Woods, Larry Zink

The MSU Product Center's counseling sessions and 2022 annual survey of specialty food processors identified a need for increased industry knowledge and buyer networking. The product center's 2023 Making It In Michigan Conference and Trade Show connected specialty food processors to store buyers and distributors in Michigan. The 2023 event provided a key opportunity for networking with over 30 buyers. The conference's education tracks inspired specialty food processors as they learned from their peers and stakeholders in the food systems. Educational panels featured experts in co-packing, finance, distribution, retail, and entrepreneurship.

To improve diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, the trade show was powered by partnership with Pure Michigan Business Connect and the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, who paid half of each vendor's booth fee to increase affordability. In addition, they provided a Buyer-Supplier Matchmaking Event to match 110 specialty food manufacturers to one or more of the store buyers. The Michigan Good Food Fund provided a Pitch Competition, increasing the financial capital available to small businesses. Sponsors contributed to significantly reduce the cost of registration to enable more participation from specialty manufacturers. The team included members from two institutes, two colleges, and two administrative units working together to make this event a success.



EMERGING ISSUES/RAPID RESPONSE TEAM AWARD

This award recognizes an outstanding emerging issue/rapid response team contribution. It was first created in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and Michigan State University Extension's quick response to the N95 mask shortage. Teams composed of MSU Extension staff members from multiple MSU Extension institutes are eligible for nomination.

MSU Extension Soil Testing Team

Brent Crain, Christina Curell, Jon Dahl, Becky Heim, Christopher Imler, James Kelly, Kelli Kolasa, Mallory Marienfeld, Marge Peck, Amber Pumford, Amy Refior, Mindy Tape, Nathaniel Walton

In fall 2022, the MSU Soil and Plant Nutrient Laboratory announced it was closing and no longer providing soil-testing services. MSU soil-testing results provide important fertility recommendations customized for the diversity of Michigan's crops, follow the latest science, and meet regulatory requirements. Losing this service would be a loss to residents as well as to commercial agricultural, turf, and wildlife clientele. The MSU Extension Soil Testing Team was assembled and charged with finding a third-party lab to partner with and develop a system to deliver results. The team identified A & L Great Lakes Laboratories as a partner for the soil testing. Then they implemented a process for obtaining results from the lab, using them to make MSU recommendations and return those recommendations to the customers.

The team exceeded all expectations by not only developing a new system for consumer samples but also developing a new system for commercial growers without missing a growing season for clientele. Throughout the process, the team provided regular updates to leadership, found solutions for many barriers, and developed processes that made the soil testing more efficient than the previous system. This included making sure that clientele who had previously purchased sample mailers from MSU Extension were provided refunds and that no samples were missed.

The team's efforts embody the MSU Extension spirit of meeting community needs and continuing to provide critical educational information. The high level of teamwork, collaboration, communication, and results achieved make this team deserving of this award.



INSTITUTE TEAM AWARD

The Institute Team Award recognizes an outstanding team contribution to Michigan State University Extension. Nominees must possess the highest standards of integrity and character to positively reflect and enhance the reputation of MSU Extension.

Rural Health and Safety Education Grant - Opioid Misuse Prevention Team

Tracie Abram, Judith Arnetz, Anita Carter, Dawn Contreras, Danielle Dalimonte-Merckling, Christi Demitz, Cheryl Eschbach, Georgina Guzman, Sheilah Hebert, Naomi Hyso, Lauren Kennedy, Holly Tiret, Nicole Persing Wethington

The COVID-19 pandemic worsened physical and mental health problems and accelerated rates of problematic opioid and substance use. In 2020, the MSU Extension Rural Health and Safety Education team received a two-year U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture grant of nearly \$400,000 to provide rural residents with evidence-based opioid misuse prevention (OMP) education, with an emphasis on non-pharmaceutical pain management. Clientele participated in three OMP programs: Chronic Pain/Disease Self-Management Education, Stress Management with Mindfulness, and RELAX. The team aimed to teach rural residents healthy ways of managing pain. Health and nutrition staff, in partnership with the MSU Department of Family Medicine, created and implemented a referral system to promote OMP classes among rural residents. Since the start of the project, health and nutrition staff have taught OMP education to over 3,600 rural residents through 128 series of classes and 228 one-time presentations. They taught programs virtually to reduce transportation barriers within rural environments. Following the program series, participants have reported statistically significant increases in self-efficacy for implementing pain self-management strategies. Rural residents have also reported a high degree of acceptability and satisfaction with the distance-learning format. The success of the project allowed the team to receive a new nearly \$600,000 grant to expand chronic pain and disease self-management education to Michigan's Spanish-speaking rural residents.

The team members deserve recognition for their sustained and innovative programming during a challenging time. The project's outcomes show the power and influence of the creative team's accomplishments. Their work can ultimately reduce the risk of opioid misuse, abuse, and opioid overdose in Michigan communities.



MSU EXTENSION DIRECTOR'S AWARD OF DISTINCTION

The Director's Award of Distinction is presented to an individual or team who has brought outstanding service, achievement, and most importantly, distinction, to Michigan State University Extension. Created in 2023, this is the highest accolade awarded by the director of MSU Extension.

MSU Extension Human Resources Team

Anne Baker, Gina Henry, Kaylee Joyce, Rachel Kramer, Jessica Nakfour, Karlana Rajel, Keri Rowley

The MSU Extension Human Resources (HR) team is committed to the organization's shared values and dedication to diversity, equity, and inclusion while understanding the complexities employees face on a day-to-day basis.

Since May 2021, HR has onboarded over 250 positions. Additionally, they were integral in expediently implementing compensation and classification strategies. These strategies include the exceeds ratings acknowledgement, base salary and compression adjustments, increased tuition reimbursement, and conferral of degree increases. These processes required focused time and effort in addition to their daily work. The HR team collaborated with leaders to move all components forward promptly. They identified areas needing additional support and worked with other departments to convey the organizational needs and gain approval for various processes to address the priorities. Without these substantial efforts, hiring processes and compensation plans would not have been implemented as swiftly and smoothly as realized. Additionally, the HR team ensured all were informed of the plans of action. The team created new mechanisms to support those involved in the onboarding process. These include increased trainings, creation of a position posting calendar, institute check-ins discussing position requests, development of a supervisors' onboarding site, and various onboarding process maps.

The MSU Extension HR team lives out the mission of Extension by positively and thoughtfully influencing the lives of those they serve: the staff of MSU Extension. Through their commitment to excellence, they maintain integrity and high ethical standards as they support staff across the state.



Laurie Sears

Laurie Sears has provided remarkable service to Michigan State University for 32 years. Since 2016, she has been the executive assistant to the director of MSU Extension. Laurie's extensive and dependable support—from meticulously planning complex travel to seamlessly coordinating schedules—represents the very best of our organization. She takes on every task, big or small, with an unparalleled sense of warmth and professionalism.

Recognizing that the details make all the difference, Laurie expertly manages day-to-day and long-term logistics to help ease the heavy workload of MSU Extension's administrative team and ensure that the entire organization is positioned for success. She is a true example of what it means to serve others. Therefore, we are proud to recognize Laurie Sears' tremendous contributions and achievements with the inaugural MSU Extension Director's Award of Distinction.



DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION IMPACT AWARD

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Impact Award is presented to individuals or teams that have made exceptional efforts in supporting or fostering excellence in reaching new or underrepresented audiences, promoting inclusion in program content or delivery, working in partnership with diverse communities or constituents, or performing other efforts that promote sustained relationship-building across differences.

Gina Henry

Gina Henry, Michigan State University Extension human resources (HR) administrator, is a sought-after confidant on HR issues across the organization. Many people reach out to her for guidance on DEI matters. She is a respected colleague in many discussions related to DEI.

She actively participated in the monthly 2020-22 Director's Sessions on Race and Racism. Together with the MSU Extension DEI specialist, she developed processes, created training, and rolled out the MSU Extension Non-Academic Staff DEI Dedication and Core Competency Self-Review document, which is now a required component of the annual review/performance planning and evaluation for all MSU Extension staff. She is providing leadership for the design and implementation of resources for Phase II of the DEI in performance evaluations including designing the DEI assessment tool. She released instructions for staff to review and update personal demographic data directly in the MSU HR Systems. In 2021, she was a Champion for the Inclusion Dialogues for administrative staff. In 2020, she co-facilitated and co-designed a session on unconscious and implicit bias. She has led and participated in numerous workshops, seminars, discussions, programs, and groups pertaining to DEI and related areas.

Most significantly, she serves as the coordinator and facilitator for the Supervising for Success (S4S) sessions. Under her leadership, many of the sessions have focused on DEI issues and support of an inclusive organizational culture. Gina Henry makes an intentional and concerted effort to encompass all the MSU Extension DEI commitments into her work and the way she approaches her job. Her commitment to DEI is an inspiration to all.



INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY AWARD

The Innovative Technology Award recognizes an individual or team that has demonstrated creative uses of technology through one or more of the following ways: creative program delivery using innovative practices or tools, responsiveness in MSU's eXtension Ask an Expert Service, and use of technology in educational programming resulting in documented positive response by participants.

Younsuk Dong

Younsuk Dong, Michigan State University assistant professor and Extension specialist, leads the MSU Irrigation Program, which helps farmers improve irrigation water use efficiency and maximize crop production while conserving fresh water and energy. His lab created LOCOMOS (Low-Cost Sensor Monitoring System), a sensor monitoring technology that helps farmers make better decisions on irrigation and fungicide application. Over 80 LOCOMOS stations have been installed across Michigan. LOCOMOS is an affordable technology allowing real-time monitoring of infield soil and environmental conditions. The sensor website and smartphone app of LOCOMOS plays a key role in its adoption. Growers are pleased to see their field information in real time.

Younsuk has developed productive partnerships with several federal and state government departments, commodity groups, and societies. These partnerships have helped him conduct innovative on-farm research and deliver information to stakeholders. He works with irrigation industries to understand and identify stakeholders' needs.

He leveraged LOCOMOS technology to receive funding from several grants. In 2022, he used LOCOMOS technology in on-farm consultations and demonstrations to growers on irrigation and plant disease management. This involved over 50,000 farming acres.

An on-farm demonstration study found that LOCOMOS helped save up to 2 inches of water application while maintaining the same yield as the farmer's existing irrigation strategies, a potential water savings of up to 14.9 billion gallons of freshwater, representing about 12% of Michigan's total agricultural water use.

Younsuk Dong's passion for helping farmers in improving irrigation management coupled with the creation of LOCOMOS marks him as a true innovator of technology.



MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARDS

The Meritorious Service Awards recognize outstanding individuals from each Michigan State University Extension employee group. Nominees must possess the highest standards of integrity and character to positively reflect and enhance the reputation of MSU Extension. Awards are given in the following categories: administrative leadership; educators and supervising educators; Extension or academic specialists; program instructors, community nutrition instructors, and 4-H program coordinators; and support staff and supervisors.

4-H Program Coordinator

Seth Martin

Seth Martin is a Michigan State University Extension Macomb County 4-H program coordinator. He oversees the animal project areas, many 4-H clubs, and the Armada Fair partnership. He serves on the statewide 4-H Shooting Sports Committee. He typically takes the lead on county reports and financial accounts. Under his leadership, 4-H Exploration Days registration has grown.

Seth's background in natural resources and environmental education has helped contribute to his thriving in this program area. He became a member of the national Wild Spartans 4-H program team. This natural resources career exploration program has reached youth across Michigan as well as out of state. In its third year, diverse speakers reached more than 70 registered youth monthly.

He teamed up with the St. Clair 4-H program coordinator for their Lake to Table event. Fifteen volunteers as well as community partners worked with youth to catch, fillet, and cook fish. He worked to obtain an agreement to allow 4-H horse clubs to use the Macomb County Metro Parks facility for horse events. Seth launched a new partnership at Parkway Christian High School in Sterling Heights getting students involved with embryology. He conducted a lesson about pecking order, which he related to school bullying. He and his colleague created a Kickstart 4-H Club for new 4-H'ers. He was also involved in the St. Keiran Easter Event in which two 4-H clubs brought animals to interact with the public.

Seth Martin has built strong relationships with 4-H volunteers and community partners, brought stability to the program, and taken on additional roles to support statewide program areas. In all areas, he has exhibited meritorious service.



Administrative Leadership

Dr. Ronald Bates

Ronald (“Ron”) Bates is the director of the Michigan State University Extension Agriculture and Agribusiness Institute (AABI) and assistant dean of agriculture outreach and extension in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (CANR). In his eighth year as director of AABI, he is intentional about improving the teams’ trust and ability to work through conflict. He created work teams that have standardized planning and reporting to help staff improve their impacts and meet the changing needs of agricultural stakeholders through traditional and innovative outputs.

Ron has worked to move AABI’s diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts forward. His efforts to improve recruiting and retention of staff have resulted in a more diverse group of educators that capably serve the needs of Michigan agriculture.

He has led efforts to increase external funding and has been instrumental in fostering Project GREEN (Generating Research and Extension to meet Economic and Environmental Needs) and the Michigan Alliance for Animal Agriculture funding. Collaboratively, he obtained funding for the farm stress program and AgrAbility. He strives to maintain and grow partnerships with all of the Michigan agriculture commodity groups.

He has responded to a host of emerging and challenging issues agriculture has faced in recent years (the COVID-19 pandemic, farm stress, a new soil testing program, and weather-induced delayed planting). His efforts are foundational to the ability of Michigan agriculture to withstand current and future challenges (climate change, labor shortages) and increase its commitment to environmental sustainability.

Ronald Bates lives out MSU Extension’s Shared Values through his work and commitment to leadership. His passion for advancing AABI staff and Michigan agriculture highlights his dedication and meritorious service to MSU Extension.



Extension Educator

Philip Kaatz

Philip ("Phil") Kaatz, Michigan State University senior Extension educator, has served as work team leader, mentor, president of the Michigan Association of Extension Agents, Lapeer County Extension director, and interim District 10 director. He has championed many successful programs over the years.

He developed Bridging the Gap to expose agribusiness employees to modern agricultural production practices. He partnered with several educators to create curriculum and tours that highlighted agriculture production, food processing, finance and banking, and more.

In 2019, wet weather created unprecedented planting delays causing a high stress level among farmers and others in the industry. Phil met with leaders from Michigan Farm Bureau and GreenStone Farm Credit Services to plan and conduct a meeting to help producers respond to the crisis. The success of the meeting led to its replication at four additional locations across the state.

In 2018, he created the Field Crops Virtual Breakfast for producers and agribusiness personnel to stay connected to emerging issues and weather impacts related to field crop production, along with timely and relevant in-season crop and pest management information. The series consists of weekly Zoom sessions broadcast live at 7 a.m. each Thursday from April through September. The Field Crops Virtual Breakfast is still going strong in 2023 and has reached over 10,400 live views.

Philip Kaatz understands the short- and long-term impacts of issues and imparts quality programming and resources to positively influence the lives of those in agriculture. He embraces change while positively changing the lives of those he serves and works alongside. He exemplifies what it means to be an MSU Extension educator.



Senior Extension Specialist

Dr. Nikki Rothwell

Nikki Rothwell, Michigan State University senior Extension specialist, provides leadership for the tree fruit research and extension program as the coordinator of the Northwest Michigan Horticulture Research Center (NWMHRC).

Nikki is internationally known for her work in invasive species, specifically spotted wing drosophila (SWD). She and her colleagues have brought in more than 30 grants and gifts totaling more than \$1.9 million. Over a five-year period, the percentage of farmers that were using MSU recommendations to manage SWD went from 17% to 97% of those surveyed. She developed pruning techniques that degrade the tree environmental conditions for SWD and reduce their infestation in trees and fruit. Nearly 50% of growers surveyed were adopting those techniques. Results from her research were used to develop the model to predict when fruit would be most vulnerable to SWD. This model is included in the MSU Enviroweather tools farmers use daily to make management decisions. She developed the annual SWD Summit at which MSU scientists provide the latest research and interact with farmers to discuss farm management changes.

She uses multiple communication tools to inform farmers about new techniques and methodologies. Tools include Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram as well as newsletters, news articles, and bulletins. The use of social media allows her to show farmers real-time information in the orchard, which she ties to internet links for MSU resources.

Nikki Rothwell effectively balances the demands of research and management of the NWMHRC while prioritizing the needs of growers. A model of effective interaction with partners and the community, she is a standard for others to emulate.



Senior Academic Specialist

Dr. Lois Wolfson

Lois Wolfson, Michigan State University senior academic specialist, is dedicated to serving the people of Michigan and regionwide. She has co-developed and taught water resource programs, including Introduction to Lakes Online, Michigan Lake and Stream Leaders Institute, Michigan Conservation Stewards Program, and Michigan Water School. She also led or co-led the Great Lakes Conference, Michigan Shoreline and Shallows Conference, and Michigan Inland Lake Convention.

Responsiveness to emerging water quality issues is a hallmark of Lois' outreach. During the Flint Water Crisis, she co-authored home water treatment resources. She facilitated MSU Extension's initial response to the PFAS threat and continues to lead PFAS outreach. She co-leads a 10-state Extension and Research Algal Bloom Action Team. She is co-principal investigator on a grant focused on innovative phosphorus reduction in Lake Erie.

Lois plays a pivotal role in statewide partnerships including the Michigan Inland Lakes Partnership, the Michigan Natural Shoreline Partnership, and the Michigan Chapter of the North American Lake Management Society. Regionally, she is the Michigan liaison to the North Central Region Water Network. She partners with diverse communities to address water quality concerns, including outreach on groundwater arsenic contamination with Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College.

She also co-authored two volumes on invasive aquatic plants, used to train citizen scientists, as well as a publication on developing a watershed management plan for water quality. She co-developed a multi-state program using citizen scientists to help evaluate E. coli test kits on the market to determine readability and reliability.

Lois Wolfson has been a champion for water resources in Michigan and beyond, advancing the understanding of water resource protection and management.



Support Staff Off-Campus

Kelli Headley

Kelli Headley is the Michigan State University senior Extension clerk in Ottawa County. She has been instrumental in marketing programs and resources in District 7 as well as within numerous work teams across institutes. In addition, she creates monthly digests with a total combined outreach of more than 24,000 recipients. She also assists with article review and online posting. She volunteered to develop social media graphics and corresponding descriptions that promote 36 quarterly financial and homeownership webinars.

Kelli has promoted worksite wellness, staff cohesion, and morale. She implemented regularly scheduled fun activities in the Ottawa County Extension office. She had a main office wall painted Spartan green, and applied for and received an MSU Extension worksite wellness grant to purchase artificial lights for staff.

She provides support during times of transition. She oversaw the pesticide review registration process in Allegan County when they lost their support staff person and provided onboard training for new support staff in two counties.

To boost engagement on the MSU Extension District 7 Facebook page, Kelli initiated targeted personalized marketing strategies. This increased the number of Facebook followers, which expanded the opportunity to promote organizational programs and resources. She also worked with District 7 administrative colleagues to organize an interactive civil rights training that emulated trivia game-show formats.

Kelli Headley's pro-active approach is a valuable asset as she helps to ensure that program resources and processes are in place prior to program delivery. Her efforts strengthen our programs and enhance customer satisfaction. The Meritorious Service award is an opportunity to acknowledge her numerous contributions.



Support Staff On-Campus

Becky McKendry

Becky McKendry is the Michigan State University Extension communications manager in the Health and Nutrition Institute (HNI). A proficient leader and skilled follower, she inspires others to take the lead and helps them realize their full potential.

A champion for diversity, equity, and inclusion, she ensures that materials are accessible to all audiences, such as those with hearing disabilities and vision impairments, as well as gives guidance on appropriate reading levels.

Becky was a driving force behind the creative presentation of Bury Seeds, Not Stress and the Think Food Safety media campaign. She is a steward of HNI grants, verifying that communication and marketing dollars are spent wisely. She worked closely with a design company to ensure that the Think Food Safety campaign stayed on track and on budget. Becky makes sure that our news and public relations platform stays up to date with trade publications and small news outlets that may otherwise be overlooked. Her diligence over time leads to greater productivity, better fiscal management, and increased awareness.

She updated the media training to reflect the specific needs of those who work in health and nutrition. She created a three-part webinar series that helped them learn how to create digital content and build confidence in their skills.

Her media training program and her willingness to work with HNI educators and community nutrition instructors has helped raise the knowledge and reputation of MSU Extension among residents. She helps all communicators seek appropriate outlets to make certain that science-based information reaches appropriate audiences. The Meritorious Service Award is a recognition Becky McKendry has well earned.



MSU DISTINGUISHED ACADEMIC STAFF AWARD

The following MSU Extension staff member has been awarded the MSU Distinguished Academic Staff Award during the calendar year noted. We thank him for his significant contributions to MSU Extension.

2023 - Michael Staton

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

Connie Demars, Roger Betz, Dawn Contreras, Roy Prentice

35 or More Years of Service

Mary Brooks, Deborah Clark

30 Years of Service

Zelda Felix-Mottley, Gerrylynn McNeal, Diane Wilson

25 Years of Service

Kathy Bauer, Christina Curell, Mary Dunckel, Karen Fifield, Dorothy Munn, Curtina Mysliwicz, Dixie Sandborn, Janelle Stewart, Kable Thurlow, Jennifer Weichel

20 Years of Service

Frances Adelaja, Jordan Burroughs, Deanna East, Thomas Guthrie, Kelli Kolasa, Kendra Moyses, Lisa Tams, Frank Wardynski



15 Years of Service

**Vicki Ballas, Leah Christie, Dawn Earnesty,
Cheryl Eschbach, Maxine Lynette Kaiser, Jennifer Labun,
Erin Lizotte, Emily Proctor, Joanne Silvia, Thomas Smith,
Sheryl Michilli**

10 Years of Service

**Nicholas Adkins, Julie Crick, Aprile Davis, Ashley Decker,
Bonnie Hardies, Gina Henry, Dolores Howe,
Rebecca Hulbert, Jesse Lincoln, Heidi Lindberg,
Kristy Oosterhouse, Janelle Palmer, Georgia Peterson,
Benjamin Phillips, Laura Potter-Niesen, William Russell**

5 Years of Service

**Tyler Augst, Corey Clark, Florencia Colella,
Ashley Cole-Wick, Angela Cook, Katie Cooper,
William Cronin, Naim Edwards, Sarah Fronczak,
Marie Garcia, Lindsey Gardner, Meaghan Gass,
Katelyn Golembiewski, Rachel Hackett, Julie Hultzsch,
Parker Jones, Barslund Judd, James Kelly, James Monahan,
Erin Moore, Victoria Newcomb, Mark Rankin, Mary Reilly,
Logan Rowe, Sarah Schaner, Quentin Tyler,
Courtney Weatherbee, Alison Work, John Wurm,
Casey Zangaro**



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 in this program.

EPSILON SIGMA PHI AWARDS

Early Career Service

Sarah Eichberger

Sarah Eichberger is a public health nutritionist at Michigan State University Extension where she works to provide statewide leadership in the area of public health nutrition interventions within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) program and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education programs. Sarah provides leadership for policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) education efforts. She has built out training materials and instructional aids, and she creates a robust PSE presence within MSU Extension SNAP-Ed work. She serves as the trainer and main coach for staff implementing PSE interventions. She has created written and recorded instructional aids, including recorded trainings on each PSE intervention, and written articles and Powtown success story videos with staff highlighting best practices. She provides one-on-one support for staff navigating the PSE coaching process. Sarah can be best described as a visionary, thoughtful, and passionate public health educator who strives to support healthy eating and active living.



MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF EXTENSION 4-H YOUTH STAFF AWARDS

Achievement in Service Award

National, Michigan

Kelly Stelter

Kelly Stelter has been a Michigan State University Extension staff member and a Michigan Association of Extension 4-H Youth Staff member for five years. Through her work, she exemplifies an individual devoted to lifelong learning and a passion for coordinating opportunities for youth throughout her county. In service to Michigan 4-H and Berrien County 4-H, Kelly has been instrumental in developing key partnerships as well as coordinating dynamic innovative programs to engage youth with learning life skills and finding their passions.

Michigan 4-H Military Partnership Innovating for Success

National, Michigan, North-Central Region

**Veronica Bolhuis, Angela Cook, Katelyn Golembiewski,
Kathy Jamieson, Talynn Johnson, Katelyn King,
Lori Warchuck**

This team developed the Month of the Military Child GooseChase in 2021 during the time of virtual programming to help youth learn about military life and to connect with 4-H families. Finding success in the first year, the team continued building and delivering this program in 2022 and 2023. This month-long event has helped youth learn about military life, its history, and the impact of the military around the world. It has also allowed military families to connect to each other and to learn more about 4-H through short videos and photos, and short-answer and select-an-answer responses. The 2022 weekly themes included missions related to the Michigan military, celebrating military children and families, Space Force using 4-H STEM kits, and careers in the military. Military partners throughout Michigan promoted this event to their families and helped acquire prizes. These prizes were given away through a weekly drawing and grand prizes were given to youth who earned the most points throughout the month.



Notable Service Award

Michigan

Autumn Converse

Since June 2022, Autumn Converse has served as the Michigan State University Extension 4-H livestock and veterinary science educator. Her statewide program areas include beef, sheep, swine, goats, and veterinary science. She began working with MSU Extension in August 2021 in St. Joseph County, where she served as the 4-H program coordinator. She was no stranger to Extension, though, having worked with Ohio State University (OSU) Extension in a county office before moving to Michigan. Autumn is an Ohio 4-H alum, and her favorite projects during her 4-H experience were, of course, livestock projects. She is a two-time Buckeye graduate, earning both her bachelor's degree in animal science and her master's degree in agricultural and extension education from OSU.

Excellence in Camping

Kaelie Fessler

Michigan Communicator

Angela Cook

Michigan Excellence in 4-H Volunteerism

Jean Genaw

Michigan Excellence in Natural Resources/Environmental Education Programming

Maggie Merchberger



MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF EXTENSION AGENTS AWARDS

National Achievement Award (NACAA)

Monica Jean

With six years of service and two peninsulas, Monica Jean has developed a robust and well-funded Extension program featuring conservation agronomy, climate adaptation, soil health, and cover crops to build financial and agronomic farm resilience. She enjoys conducting practical, on-farm research with growers and is the Michigan chair for the Midwest Cover Crop Council and the North Central Climate Collaborative. She hosts the In The Weeds podcast and contributes to the national-award-winning MSU Field Crops Team's Virtual Breakfast Series.

National Distinguished Service Award (NACAA)

Jeannine Schwehofer

As the senior Michigan State University Extension meat quality educator and adjunct associate professor in the MSU Department of Animal Science, Jeannine Schwehofer assists livestock producers and meat processors throughout Michigan. Her programming and applied research enhance meat quality, food safety, direct marketing, and regulatory compliance. Jeannine developed online and in-person training for meat cutters, humane animal handling and stunning, food safety, and processed meats. She currently serves as associate institute director of agriculture and agribusiness at MSU Extension.



National Search for Excellence in Crop Production National Winner (NACAA)

Michigan State University Virtual Breakfast Series

**Eric Anderson, Christina Curell, Jenna Falor,
Sarah Fronczak, Paul Gross, Monica Jean, Philip Kaatz,
Lyndon Kelley, Bruce MacKellar, Michael Staton**

When the COVID-19 pandemic started in March 2020, extension programming went from primarily a face-to-face format to all virtual programs. Stakeholder focus groups asked Michigan State University Extension to provide relevant, timely, up-to-date education in short interactive sessions. The MSU Field Crops Team planned and implemented online Zoom meetings for field crops producers, agribusiness professionals, governmental agency personnel, and others interested in field crops. Throughout the growing season, timely and relevant crop and pest management topics were identified and strategically scheduled. Following the presentations, a 25-minute question-and-answer session was allotted for participants. A rapid response for agriculture is necessary in times when extreme weather occurs, and the series was nimble and flexible, pivoting to help navigate situations.

At the onset of the pandemic, producers and agribusiness pesticide applicators also struggled to obtain recertification credits for restricted use pesticides (RUP). The Virtual Breakfast Series provided an avenue for obtaining RUP and Certified Crop Advisor recertification credits during those lean times.

Between 2020 and 2022, there were 9,183 live participants for the series. Every major crop-producing area of Michigan representing 58 out of 83 counties had participation. Additionally, 13 different states and 11 foreign countries had participants. Participants completed online evaluations annually and based on the respondents an average of 97% increased knowledge.

National Communications Award Finalist (NACAA) - Feature Story Category

Jonathan LaPorte



MICHIGAN EXTENSION ASSOCIATION OF FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES AWARDS

Diversity Award

1st Place Michigan

Bundled Programming Approach With Refugee and Immigrant Populations

Ghaida Havern, Sulaiman Mansour

Bundled programs including topics in nutrition and food safety are offered as one package to better meet the needs of the rising refugee and immigrant population in Michigan, one of the top destinations for refugee resettlement in the U.S. Many nonprofit organizations across the state work with refugee groups to help them adapt to their American system, culture, and way of life while still holding on to their heritage and culture. The MSU Extension Refugee Health Task Force members collaborate to serve the immigrant and refugee population in Southeast Michigan through education tailored to meet their unique needs. Bundled programming has been successful during the 2022-23 period, with the delivery of four bundled series implemented in Southeast Michigan at partner sites including the Arab American and Chaldean Council, the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services, the Hispanic Cultural Center of Ferndale, and Zaman International. Staff shared information about nutrition and food safety programs at a 2022 outreach event at the Chaldean Community Foundation. They distributed factsheets in Arabic and English on preserving blueberries, keeping the kitchen safe, and keeping food out of the danger zone. The total reach to date is approximately 67 immigrant and refugee participants from Middle Eastern, Ukrainian, African, and Hispanic backgrounds.



Excellence in Multi-State Collaboration Award

2nd Place National, 2nd Place Central Region

Fit and Healthy Kids Multi-State ECE Collaboration

Courtney Aldrich, Carrie Shrier

Fit and Healthy Kids is an early childhood platform for families and care providers across the U.S. The platform's base is a website: fitandhealthykids.unl.edu. The multi-state collaboration involving Michigan State University, Kansas State University, South Dakota State University, the University of Arizona, the University of Georgia, and the University of Nebraska started in 2021 for online trainings and resources from around the country. Training opportunities include a monthly series of classes, on-demand lessons, a virtual conference, and learning circles. Among the trainings are social media posts for early childhood professionals to use to promote early childhood and many resources for both families and early childhood professionals. What makes this program unique is the collaboration from six states to pool together their early childhood and family resources in one location. Through this partnership and collaboration, the Fit and Healthy Kids series brings in professional development opportunities for all six states.



Innovation in Programming Award

1st Place Michigan

Michigan/Wisconsin: Preserving Together

Charlee Brissette, Dawn Doperalski, Karen Fifield, Kellie Jordan, Kara Lynch, Laurie Messing, Kim Nagel, Stephanie Ostrenga Sprague, Wade Syers, Lisa Treiber

Michigan State University Extension Food Safety Team members, in partnership with University of Wisconsin (UW) Extension educators, adapted food preservation education when travel was not recommended. Food preservation education has been a landmark service provided by Extension nationwide. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, all MSU Extension food preservation programs were offered in person. When programming shifted to remote virtual education, MSU Extension developed *Preserving MI Harvest*, weekly online food preservation educational webinars. UW Extension and the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin identified a need for food preservation education for UW staff and Tribal members who help with community outreach. MSU Extension facilitated food preservation education and training sessions to UW Extension educators and 10 local Tribal leaders who will in turn share the education and resources with their members. MSU Extension received a subaward from UW's *Kemamaceqtaq: We're all Moving*, a five-year grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. MSU Extension educators lectured and demonstrated the first week of a two-week format that included preservation education. UW participants presented using live Zoom, hands-on demonstrations the following week. Evaluation data revealed the following results: 88% feel comfortable facilitating food preservation workshops independently; 100% have a better understanding of how to safely process foods; 100% felt confident in their ability to identify safe food preservation resources; and 100% felt this training format was sufficient.

Florence Hall Award

2nd Place National, 2nd Place Southern

Mentoring and Leadership Committee National Member Resources

Christi Demitz



Innovation in Programming Award

3rd Place National, 1st Place Western

**Mentoring and Leadership Committee National Member
Resources**

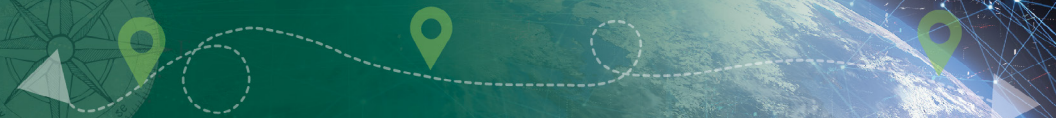
Christi Demitz

Marketing Award

1st Place Central Region

**Mentoring and Leadership Committee National Member
Resources**

Christi Demitz



NOTES



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