2026 FALL EXTENSION CONFERENCE



MSU EXTENSION AWARDS PROGRAM

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MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension

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ABOUT THE AWARDS PROGRAM

MSU Extension presents a variety of awards at Fall Extension Conference (FEC) to recognize outstanding staff, programs, key partners, and friends. This award cycle covers nominations submitted since the 2024 deadline through the 2026 nomination deadline. For MSU Extension-specific awards, recipients are selected by a committee consisting of the director, associate directors, institute directors and associate directors, and two district directors.

For awards given in partnership with MSU Extension by external associations, the awards selection committees includes members chosen by the respective association. These awards include the Epsilon Sigma Phi (ESP) State Friends of Extension award and the Michigan Council of Extension Associations (MCEA) John A. Hannah Award for Program Excellence.

Staff and team awards are kept confidential until FEC. Nominators were notified but asked to keep all awards information confidential until FEC.

MSU Extension staff members who have reached significant years or service milestones, achieved promotion or status changes, or received shared values awards since the last FEC are included for recognition..

Professional associations have provided a list of award recipients recognized since the last Fall Extension Conference.

- Community & Natural Resources Development Association (CNRDA)
- Epsilon Sigma Phi, Alpha Psi Chapter
- Michigan Association of Extension 4-H Youth Staff
- Michigan Association of Extension Agents
- Michigan Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences

CULTURE, ACCESS, AND BELONGING AWARD

The Culture, Access, and Belonging Award is presented to an individual or team that has made exceptional efforts in supporting or fostering excellence in reaching new or under-represented 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.

MSU Jr. MANRRS Leadership Symposium Committee Team

The MSU Jr. MANRRS Leadership Symposium Committee Team exemplifies the purpose of the Culture, Access, and Belonging Award through its intentional efforts to expand educational opportunities, foster inclusion, and create meaningful pathways for youth who have been historically underrepresented in agriculture, natural resources, and related sciences. Through collaborative leadership and a shared commitment to student success, the team has created a welcoming environment where participants feel valued, supported, and empowered to pursue their educational and career aspirations.

Since the inaugural symposium in 2024, the planning team has played a central role in developing and delivering a transformative leadership event that connects middle and high school students with higher education, professional networks, and career exploration opportunities. Through trusted partnerships with schools, community organizations, collegiate MANRRS, industry professionals, and MSU's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, the team has successfully reached new audiences and expanded access to experiences students may not otherwise have encountered.

The symposium's programming reflects a strong commitment to inclusion and belonging. Interactive workshops on leadership development, financial literacy, mental health, agricultural careers, and personal growth are designed to engage students from diverse backgrounds while highlighting a broad range of career pathways and leadership opportunities. Participants interact with Extension educators, university faculty and staff, alumni, and professionals whose experiences help students see themselves reflected in future academic and professional roles.

The impact of this work has been substantial. Over the past three years, more than 300 students have participated in the symposium, gaining leadership skills, confidence, professional connections, and greater awareness of higher education opportunities. The symposium has also become an effective recruitment pipeline for future Spartans, with 13 former participants currently enrolled at MSU, including four incoming students this year. Participant evaluations consistently demonstrate increased knowledge of agricultural careers, greater awareness of scholarship opportunities, and an enhanced sense of belonging.

By building inclusive learning environments, strengthening community partnerships, and creating sustainable pathways to higher education and leadership, the MSU Jr. MANRRS Leadership Symposium Committee Team has made an enduring contribution to culture, access, and belonging. Their dedication continues to inspire and prepare the next generation of diverse leaders in agriculture, natural resources, and beyond.

CULTURE, ACCESS, AND BELONGING AWARD

Beginning Farmer Resource & Decision-Making Guide Team

The Beginning Farmer Resource & Decision-Making Guide Team has expanded access to educational resources, mentorship opportunities, and practical guidance for one of agriculture's most underserved audiences: beginning farmers. Recognizing that new and aspiring farmers often face significant barriers to entering and succeeding in agriculture, this team developed a comprehensive, accessible resource and decision-making guide that helps individuals navigate the complex decisions involved in launching and managing a farm business.

The project emerged from a shared commitment among MSU Extension, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and industry partners to address the widespread and diverse challenges beginning farmers often face. Led by Extension and supported by more than 50 contributors, the guide was developed over two years to provide a clear pathway of information and support for individuals entering agricultural production. The guide recognizes that every beginning farmer starts from a different place and requires different resources, knowledge, and connections to be successful.

Designed to be both educational and accessible, the guide provides practical introductions to a variety of production topics, outlines key decision-making considerations, answers common questions, and connects users to trusted educational programs, publications, mentors, and agricultural partners. Its innovative format allows users to access the entire guide as a single publication or explore specific topics through downloadable, linked sections based on their individual needs.

Since its launch at the 2025 Great Lakes Expo, the guide has been accessed more than 1,370 times, with 683 full-guide downloads and hundreds of additional chapter-specific downloads. The project also led to the creation of a statewide Beginning Farmer Workgroup, bringing together Extension educators and industry partners to continue addressing beginning farmer needs through ongoing collaboration.

By providing equitable access to information, fostering connections among farmers and agricultural partners, and creating opportunities for participation in Michigan agriculture, the Beginning Farmer Resource & Decision-Making Guide Team has strengthened opportunities for a new generation of producers. Their collaborative and inclusive approach has created a lasting resource that supports success, builds confidence, and helps ensure the future vitality of Michigan agriculture.

EMERGING ISSUES / RAPID RESPONSE AWARD

The Emerging Issues Rapid Response Team Award recognizes the outstanding response of an MSU Extension team to an emerging issue. Teams must include members from at least two MSU Extension programming areas to be eligible.

Box Tree Moth Response Team

Through innovation and science-based education, the Box Tree Moth Response Team helped Michigan respond to one of the state's most challenging invasive species issues. Since the initial detection of the box tree moth (BTM) in Michigan in 2021, this interdisciplinary team has brought together MSU Extension educators, campus specialists, state and federal regulatory agencies, industry partners, and community stakeholders to address a rapidly evolving challenge impacting residential landscapes, commercial nurseries, and communities across the state.

As BTM populations became established and expanded into a 13-county quarantine area, the team quickly adapted from early detection efforts to long-term management, containment, and public education strategies. Through strong partnerships with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD), the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), the Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association, local governments, Extension Master Gardeners, and industry professionals, the team ensured coordinated messaging and consistent guidance for stakeholders navigating complex regulatory and management requirements.

A hallmark of the team's response has been its commitment to timely, accessible, and actionable education. The team developed and continuously updated Extension

articles, diagnostic guides, alerts, identification resources, and multilingual materials while leveraging social media, community presentations, webinars, and an online information hub to reach diverse audiences. Public engagement continues to demonstrate the value of these efforts, with BTM resources receiving tens of thousands of views and generating significant interaction across digital platforms. Educational programming has reached homeowners, growers, landscapers, and community members, increasing awareness of identification, reporting, treatment options, and quarantine compliance.

The team's impact is reflected not only in educational reach but also in stakeholder action. Growers and retailers have adopted monitoring and treatment protocols, residents are more frequently identifying and reporting infestations, and communities are better equipped to slow the human-assisted spread of the pest. By bridging research, regulation, industry needs, and public engagement, the Box Tree Moth Response Team has guided Michigan's transition from emergency response to coordinated long-term management. Their collaborative leadership, innovation, and measurable impact serve as a model for Extension-led responses to emerging issues and demonstrate the critical role MSU Extension plays in protecting Michigan's agricultural, environmental, and economic resources.

EMERGING ISSUES/RAPID RESPONSE AWARD

Brad Neumann

When Public Act 58 of 2025 amended Michigan's Land Division Act, it substantially increased the number of parcels that could be created from a property. Local governments were faced with complex implementation questions with little guidance on how to prepare. As Michigan communities worked to understand the most significant changes to the Land Division Act in decades, Brad Neumann delivered the leadership, education, and practical guidance needed to support informed local decision-making. Recognizing the immediate need for education and support, Brad rapidly mobilized Extension resources to help local officials understand the law's implications.

As a senior educator and recognized leader in community planning and land use education, Brad leveraged existing program materials, legal expertise, and strong relationships with local government leaders to develop Public Act 58 Amendments to the Land Division Act Explained, a comprehensive educational program and resource package. His efforts provided clear, practical guidance on a complex legal issue that affects housing development, land use planning, zoning, and community growth throughout Michigan.

Equally important was Brad's collaborative approach. He engaged the entire MSU Extension Land Use Team in understanding and responding to the legislative changes, strengthening Extension's statewide capacity to address local questions and support communities as implementation deadlines approached. By quickly developing educational materials and outreach opportunities, he ensured local officials had access to research-based information when they needed it most.

On the day the law took effect, 165 participants attended an MSU Extension webinar which explained the amendments and outlined practical next steps for communities. An additional 120 participants received information through the Central Upper Peninsula Housing Summit. Evaluation results demonstrated the program's effectiveness, with 79% of respondents reporting the program as valuable or very valuable, and 69% indicating they planned to make changes to local planning or development policies as a result of what they learned.

Through his leadership and commitment to delivering actionable education during a period of significant policy change, Brad Neumann helped communities across Michigan prepare for implementation of a landmark law. His work strengthened local decision-making capacity and demonstrated the critical role MSU Extension plays in responding to emerging issues that affect communities statewide.

INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY AWARD

The Innovative Technology Award recognizes an individual or team that has used technology creatively and innovatively in delivering educational programs, in answering questions through the MSU Extension Ask an Expert service, or in other educational efforts

Apple Community Education Initiative

A leader in innovative educational programming, the Apple Community Education Initiative (CEI) Team has leveraged technology to make science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) learning more accessible, engaging, and relevant for youth throughout Michigan. By using inventive teaching methods, focused partnerships, and cutting-edge Apple technology, the team has transformed how young people engage with STEAM topics while building the skills needed for future academic and career success.

With support from Apple and in collaboration with schools, 4-H programs, homeschool cooperatives, libraries, and community organizations, the CEI Team integrated iPads, Sphero robotics, coding applications, digital content creation tools, and entrepreneurship-focused technologies into educational programming delivered throughout the state. These technologies provided hands-on, project-based learning experiences that encouraged creativity, problem-solving, and collaboration. Rather than relying on traditional instruction, participants actively explored concepts through experimentation, iterative learning, and real-world applications of technology.

One of the initiative's greatest strengths has been its ability to improve access to technology education, particularly in rural and underserved communities where opportunities for hands-on STEAM learning may be limited. By providing

equipment, curriculum, and trained facilitators, the team reduced barriers to participation and created equitable opportunities for youth—regardless of location or prior experience. Coding and robotics programs allowed students to design, test, and refine solutions while receiving immediate feedback, helping them build confidence and technical skills in an engaging environment.

The impact of the CEI Team's work has been significant. In 2025 alone, the team delivered 147 programs reaching 7,181 participants, while engaging thousands more through outreach activities. Evaluation results showed that 88% of participants reported increased confidence using an iPad, and educators consistently reported high levels of student engagement. Participants not only strengthened coding and technology skills but also developed resilience, communication abilities, and a willingness to tackle new challenges.

Through innovative technology, community partnerships, and learner-centered design, the Apple CEI Team expanded access to technology education and inspired confident, curious lifelong learners. Their work serves as an outstanding example of how technology can be used creatively and effectively to enhance educational outcomes and broaden opportunities for youth across Michigan.

INSTITUTE / SERVICE UNIT TEAM AWARD

The Institute Team Award recognizes the contributions to MSU Extension of an outstanding team from a single institute.

Community Change Hub Team

When the SNAP-Ed program concluded at MSU Extension, the Community Change Hub Team saw not an ending, but an opportunity to preserve and strengthen decades of community change for the future. Their vision, innovation, and dedication transformed a period of uncertainty into a lasting resource that continues to serve communities and Extension educators across Michigan—making them highly deserving of the Institute Team Award.

Faced with the loss of a program that had supported community-driven health and wellness initiatives for more than 30 years, the team recognized a critical need to retain the knowledge, tools, and proven strategies that had helped communities address issues such as food access, school wellness, active living, and nutrition education. Rather than limiting their efforts to program closeout activities, the team took a proactive approach to ensure that this valuable expertise would remain accessible and useful long after SNAP-Ed funding ended.

Beginning in late 2025, team members engaged statewide partners, including farm-to-institution networks, community health worker collaboratives, and regional health coalitions, to better understand ongoing community needs. These conversations confirmed a significant gap in support for local leaders seeking to create sustainable community change. In response, the team undertook a comprehensive review of decades of SNAP-Ed resources, evaluation tools, curricula, and community engagement frameworks.

Their work resulted in the creation of the Community Change Hub: a user-friendly digital platform built around a newly designed six-step community change model. The hub provides practical guidance, curated resources, self-paced learning opportunities, nutrition education tools, and community change strategies that can be used by Extension staff, community organizations, coalitions, and local champions throughout the state.

Despite being newly launched, the Community Change Hub has already been recognized for addressing an important statewide need. By preserving institutional knowledge and translating complex community change processes into accessible, actionable resources, the team has extended the reach and impact of MSU Extension far beyond the lifespan of a single program. Their commitment, creativity, and collaboration have ensured that communities continue to benefit from a legacy of evidence-informed practice while positioning Extension as a long-term leader in community change facilitation. Through their resilience, teamwork, and innovative thinking, the Community Change Hub Team has contributed a resource that will benefit Michigan communities for years to come.

GORDON GUYER COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMMING AWARD

The Gordon Guyer Collaborative Programming Award honors teams that conduct high-quality, collaborative programming that contributes to the mission of MSU Extension, is developed through a process of issue and opportunity identification and clientele needs analysis, and demonstrates positive programming outcomes.

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.

Agritourism Summit Team

By bringing together farmers, entrepreneurs, policymakers, tourism professionals, and community leaders, the MSU Extension Agritourism Summit Team has created a model of evidence-based programming that strengthens Michigan's agritourism industry and advances the mission of MSU Extension. Their interdisciplinary approach, innovative program design, and commitment to addressing stakeholder needs make them a highly deserving recipient of the Gordon Guyer Collaborative Programming Award.

Building on the success of the inaugural 2024 event, the team developed and expanded the 2026 Agritourism Summit through a rigorous process of issue identification, stakeholder engagement, and continuous program improvement. Community partners and participants identified ongoing challenges related to zoning, land use, regulatory navigation, and economic sustainability. In response, the planning team conducted needs assessments, facilitated dialogue among key stakeholders, and translated those findings into relevant, practical educational

programming designed to address real-world challenges facing agritourism operators and rural communities.

The summit reflects exceptional collaboration across MSU Extension institutes and external partners, integrating expertise in agriculture, agribusiness, community development, land use planning, tourism, and business innovation. Strategic partnerships with industry leaders, statewide organizations, and government agencies have strengthened program content and expanded its reach and credibility.

A defining feature of the summit is its innovative, learner-centered design. Participants engage in a Pre-Summit Farm Tour that provides experiential, place-based learning; an Evening Networking Soirée that fosters relationship-building and cross-sector collaboration; and a full day of educational sessions featuring applied research, policy expertise, and real-world case studies. The addition of new breakout sessions and expanded programming in 2026 demonstrates the team's commitment to using evaluation data and participant feedback to continuously improve the program.

Evaluation results highlight the summit's impact. Participants consistently report increased knowledge, stronger decision-making capacity, and intentions to implement new practices and strategies within their businesses and communities. High satisfaction ratings, strong levels of intended behavior change, and growing sponsorship support demonstrate the program's value and sustainability.

Through collaborative leadership, innovative programming, and meaningful stakeholder partnerships, the MSU Extension Agritourism Summit Team has created a statewide forum that strengthens agritourism, fosters economic resilience, and exemplifies the interdisciplinary spirit championed by Gordon Guyer.

GORDON GUYER COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMMING AWARD

Empowering Entrepreneurs Collaborative

The Empowering Entrepreneurs Collaborative (EEC) has created a powerful, interdisciplinary model for supporting Michigan's food entrepreneurs by combining expertise in food safety, regulatory compliance, agricultural production, and business development into a coordinated educational effort. Through strong partnerships among MSU Extension, the MSU Product Center, MDARD, and industry experts, the collaborative has helped thousands of entrepreneurs launch, grow, and sustain successful food businesses while advancing the Extension mission.

The collaboration began in response to the growing need for education surrounding Michigan's Cottage Food Law following its passage in 2010. Recognizing that food entrepreneurs needed more than just an understanding of regulations, the team developed a comprehensive educational approach that integrates evidence-based food safety practices with practical business guidance. By bringing together food safety educators, Product Center innovation counselors, Extension apiculture educators, and MDARD food inspectors, participants receive well-rounded, reliable information that addresses both regulatory requirements and entrepreneurial success.

As participant needs evolved, the team expanded its programming to include Moving Beyond Cottage Foods, designed for entrepreneurs transitioning into licensed food production, and Selling Honey and Maple Syrup Safely!, which helps producers understand exemption guidelines and food safety considerations specific to their products. Together, these programs provide educational pathways for

entrepreneurs at various stages of business development and across diverse food production sectors.

The EEC has had a remarkable effect. Since 2020, more than 132 classes have reached 13,114 entrepreneurs through online, in-person, and self-paced learning formats. Evaluation data demonstrate strong outcomes, with 92% of participants reporting improved understanding of what is required to operate a successful cottage food business and 87% expressing interest in continuing their education through advanced programming. Participants also gain access to educational videos, fact sheets, guides, and other resources that support continued learning and business growth.

Beyond individual educational outcomes, the collaborative has strengthened statewide resources and partnerships. It contributed to improvements in MDARD's Cottage Food Law website, supported the development of the Selling Food in Michigan: Quick Reference Guide, and expanded educational opportunities for both adults and youth across Michigan. The EEC has created lasting value for Michigan entrepreneurs while exemplifying the interdisciplinary programming and measurable impact celebrated by the Gordon Guyer Collaborative Programming Award.

OUTSTANDING SERVICE TO MSU EXTENSION AWARD

The Outstanding Service to Extension Award is the highest honor given to MSU Extension professional staff members. Nominees must have consistently exhibited leadership, service, and excellence in program planning, delivery, evaluation, or administration. This award is open to professional staff members who have had MSU Extension careers lasting at least 20 years

Patrick Cudney

Throughout a distinguished 30-year career spanning roles as a 4-H youth agent to director of government and stakeholder relations, Patrick Cudney has consistently demonstrated exceptional leadership, service, and commitment to the MSU Extension mission. His lasting impact on the organization, its partners, and the communities it serves exemplifies the qualities recognized by the Outstanding Service to Extension Award.

Patrick's career reflects a deep commitment to strengthening the ability of Extension to meet the evolving needs of Michigan residents. Early in his career, he was recognized for his leadership potential when he became the organization's youngest county extension director. He later served in a succession of key leadership roles, including regional director, district director, associate director, acting director, and director of government and stakeholder relations. In each position, he provided vision, stability, and strategic direction while ensuring that Extension remained grounded in its mission and responsive to stakeholder needs.

A hallmark of Patrick's leadership has been his remarkable ability to cultivate meaningful relationships that advance Extension's work. He has successfully connected legislators, community leaders, university administrators, industry

partners, and citizen advocates to the land-grant mission, which strengthen support for Extension programs statewide. His leadership of the MSU Extension and AgBioResearch State Advisory Council has empowered citizen advocates to effectively communicate the value and impact of Extension, while initiatives such as the Expect to Connect tool have strengthened staff engagement with elected officials and stakeholders across Michigan.

Patrick's influence is evident in both organizational and programmatic outcomes. He helped expand critical programs such as Michigan Better Kid Care and strengthened organizational culture through improvement initiatives . He has played an instrumental role in securing significant public investments as well, including $53 million for dairy and greenhouse facilities, as well as continued support for Project GREEEN, the Michigan Alliance for Animal Agriculture, and other priorities. He also championed stronger relationships with Michigan Tribal Nations through support of the Michigan Inter-Tribal Land Grant Extension System.

While his accomplishments are substantial, Patrick's greatest legacy is the trust, credibility, and goodwill he has built throughout his career. His unwavering commitment to service, visionary leadership, and the people of Michigan has strengthened MSU Extension's impact for generations and positioned the organization for continued success. Few individuals have contributed more consistently or effectively to advancing the MSU Extension mission, making Patrick Cudney a truly deserving recipient of this highest honor.

MCEA JOHN A. HANNAH AWARD FOR PROGRAM EXCELLENCE

The John A. Hannah Award recognizes superior Extension programs developed and carried out by MSU Extension professionals (campus-, district-, and county-based) appointed by the MSU Board of Trustees. This most prestigious award, named for the late MSU President John Hannah, recognizes the excellence of programs, not just individuals.

Supporting Ukraine's Dairy Industry

Phil Durst and Barry Bradford

In the face of one of the most significant agricultural and humanitarian crises of our time, the Supporting Ukraine's Dairy Industry Program demonstrates the power of Extension education to transcend borders and provide meaningful, research-based support where it is needed most. Led by Phil Durst and Barry Bradford, this innovative program has connected MSU Extension expertise with Ukrainian dairy professionals striving to sustain and modernize their industry amid the ongoing impacts of war.

What began in 2023 as a conversation between long-standing professional colleagues evolved into a highly collaborative international educational initiative. Working closely with the Ukraine Association of Milk Producers (AMP) and its Consultancy Center, the team designed a webinar series tailored to the specific needs identified by Ukrainian dairy advisors and producers. Rather than relying on predetermined content, topics were selected through ongoing dialogue with Ukrainian partners, ensuring the program addressed immediate challenges and long-term opportunities facing the industry.

Since 2023, the team has coordinated and delivered 25 educational webinars, engaging consultants who collectively advise farms representing more than 80,000 dairy cows.

Topics have ranged from dairy economics, genetics, forage management, labor efficiency, and animal health to organic production, manure management, cooperatives, and dairy marketing. To meet these needs, the program brought together experts from MSU and other universities across the United States, as well as industry organizations, dairy producers, and even international specialists. Each webinar was translated into Ukrainian, recorded for future viewing, and made accessible to a wider audience beyond live participants.

The program's impact is reflected in the enthusiastic feedback from Ukrainian partners, who describe the training as highly relevant, practical, and valuable to their work with producers. Beyond education, the initiative has fostered international partnerships, strengthened professional networks, and created opportunities to pursue larger collaborative projects focused on dairy production and processing. The team has also expanded efforts to include dairy processing professionals, engaging experts from leading institutions across North America to support continued modernization throughout the supply chain.

By combining scientific expertise, responsiveness to stakeholder needs, and extensive interdisciplinary collaboration, the Supporting Ukraine's Dairy Industry Program embodies the principles of the John A. Hannah Award. More importantly, it demonstrates how Extension can make a meaningful difference, helping agricultural communities around the world build resilience, pursue innovation, and maintain hope during extraordinary circumstances.

MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARDS

The Meritorious Service Awards (MSA) recognize outstanding individuals from each MSU 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.

MSA - Administrative Leadership
Adam Koivisto

For more than 20 years, Adam Koivisto has provided outstanding service to MSU Extension and Michigan communities, consistently demonstrating the leadership, integrity, and commitment to excellence embodied by the Meritorious Service Award for Administrative Leadership. As District 14 Director, Adam has earned the trust and respect of colleagues through his steady guidance, professional judgment, and unwavering dedication to supporting staff and advancing the mission of MSU Extension.

Over the course of his career, Adam has created a work environment grounded in fairness, respect, and collaboration. Known for his calm and approachable demeanor, he consistently provides thoughtful guidance and practical support to employees across the district. Staff members value his accessibility, responsiveness, and ability to navigate challenges with professionalism and discretion. Whether addressing operational questions, supporting employees through complex situations, or helping teams

adapt to organizational changes, Adam brings a reassuring presence that fosters confidence and trust.

A key strength of Adam's leadership is his commitment to employee development and organizational excellence. He works diligently to ensure that staff remain informed about policies, procedures, and professional opportunities, regularly sharing resources and information that strengthen individual and team success. He also places strong emphasis on accountability and compliance, ensuring that required training is completed and understood. His proactive approach reinforces Extension's commitment to equity and public service.

Beyond his administrative responsibilities, Adam invests in relationships. Through regular office visits and personal engagement with staff, he creates opportunities for meaningful conversation, encouragement, and connection. His willingness to listen and support employees has helped foster a positive workplace culture where people feel valued and empowered to do their best work.

The impact of Adam's leadership can be seen in the strong communication, collaboration, and professionalism that characterize District 14. By building trust, supporting employee growth, and maintaining a steadfast commitment to Extension's mission and values, Adam has made lasting contributions to both the organization and the communities it serves. His leadership exemplifies the highest standards of service and makes him a highly deserving recipient of the Meritorious Service Award.

MSA - Educator & Supervising Educator

Elizabeth (Beth) Ferry

Protecting Michigan's animal agriculture industry from emerging threats requires foresight, collaboration, and trusted leadership, and Elizabeth (Beth) Ferry has consistently provided all three throughout her Extension career. With her expertise in emergency preparedness, livestock transportation safety, and animal disease response, Beth has strengthened the resilience of Michigan's livestock industries while building partnerships that have become models for Extension programming nationwide.

Beth's work focuses on some of the most complex and high-consequence challenges facing animal agriculture. Recognizing the need for specialized training in livestock transportation emergencies, she helped develop and lead the Emergency Response to Accidents Involving Livestock (ERAIL) program, a statewide initiative that equips first responders with the knowledge and skills needed to safely manage livestock transportation incidents. Working with Extension educators, faculty, emergency responders, and industry partners, Beth helped create a comprehensive program that combines classroom instruction, hands-on animal handling experience, and access to specialized response equipment. Her leadership also helped secure a $600,000 grant from MDARD, supporting the deployment of nine ERAIL response trailers strategically located across Michigan.

Beth has also been a driving force behind Michigan's Secure Pork Supply initiative, leading efforts to prepare producers and industry stakeholders for potential foreign animal disease outbreaks. Through close collaboration with MDARD, USDA-APHIS, the Michigan Pork Producers Association, and regional partners, she has helped adapt national preparedness plans to Michigan conditions;

implement biosecurity verification systems; and coordinate multistate preparedness exercises. When Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza emerged as a significant concern, Beth quickly expanded her efforts to develop biosecurity training, educational materials, and Extension resources that served producers, allied industries, and traditionally underserved farming operations.

The impact of Beth's work is measurable and far-reaching. More than 800 first responders have completed ERAIL training, with evaluations showing successful application of program skills during real livestock emergencies. The Secure Pork Supply program has supported enhanced biosecurity plans covering 75% of Michigan's pork production, significantly improving statewide disease preparedness. Participant evaluations consistently demonstrate increased knowledge and strong intentions to implement new safety and biosecurity practices.

Through innovative programming, exceptional partnerships, and a steadfast commitment to serving Michigan agriculture, Beth Ferry has elevated the capacity of producers, emergency responders, and industry stakeholders to prepare for and respond to critical challenges. Her leadership, professionalism, and measurable impact exemplify a superior level of service and make her a remarkably deserving recipient of the Meritorious Service Award.

MSA - Extension Specialist

Dawn Earnesty

Few individuals have had a greater impact on strengthening the quality, credibility, and effectiveness of MSU Extension programming than Dawn Earnesty, Ph.D. Throughout 16 years of service as a senior extension evaluation specialist, she has helped ensure that Extension programs are grounded in evidence, responsive to community needs, and positioned to achieve meaningful outcomes for Michigan residents. Her expertise, leadership, and commitment to continuous improvement have made her an invaluable resource to colleagues across the organization and a greatly deserving recipient of the Meritorious Service Award.

Dawn's contributions extend far beyond traditional program evaluation. She has played a central role in designing statewide evaluation systems that support rigorous program planning, implementation, and reporting. Her expertise in logic modeling, indicator development, survey design, data collection methodologies, and impact assessment helps program teams translate educational efforts into measurable outcomes. Through these efforts, she has strengthened organizational accountability while ensuring that Extension programs remain aligned with strategic priorities and the evolving needs of Michigan communities.

A hallmark of Dawn's work is her commitment to building evaluation capacity across MSU Extension. She regularly mentors and trains staff in evaluation methods, data collection practices, and the use of findings to guide decision-making and program improvement. Her emphasis on evaluation ethics, stakeholder engagement, and community-responsive design ensures that programs not only measure results but also reflect the voices and priorities of the people they serve.

Dawn's leadership has been particularly influential in the areas of nutrition education, early childhood health, policy systems, and environmental change initiatives. In fiscal year 2025, she co-led the Growing Healthy Eaters initiative, a farm-to-early-childhood project implemented across 32 counties, which connected 125 childcare providers with 21 farmers and reached more than 1,200 youth and adults. Evaluation findings demonstrated meaningful behavior change, including increased use of locally grown produce and sustained commitments to local purchasing.

Her contributions also strengthened statewide SNAP-Ed evaluation and reporting systems, helping document broad-reaching impacts that improved food access, nutrition environments, physical activity opportunities, and community wellness across Michigan. Dawn Earnesty's scholarship, leadership, and dedication to evidence-based practice have elevated Extension's ability to demonstrate impact and improve lives. Her work has strengthened both organizational capacity and community outcomes, reflecting the very best of MSU Extension.

MSA - Program Instructor, Program Coordinator, Community Nutrition Instruction

LilyRose Arriaga

Building strong youth programs requires trusted relationships, community engagement, and a genuine commitment to helping young people feel supported and empowered. LilyRose (Lily) Arriaga has demonstrated these qualities throughout her service as a 4-H program coordinator, leading a thriving program that continues to expand opportunities for youth, volunteers, and families throughout Barry County.

In a relatively short period of time , Lily has established herself as an exceptional leader within MSU Extension and the Barry County community. She oversees a large and complex 4-H program serving more than 900 youth and 350 volunteers, while maintaining high standards of organization, responsiveness, and program quality. From volunteer onboarding and compliance requirements to financial oversight and club support, she consistently ensures that essential program functions are completed accurately and efficiently.

One of Lily's greatest strengths is her ability to build meaningful partnerships and foster strong community connections. She has developed and maintained relationships with schools, libraries, local organizations, and community leaders, expanding the visibility and reach of 4-H throughout the county. Her involvement in community events, resource fairs, and local initiatives has strengthened public awareness of MSU Extension while creating new opportunities for youth engagement.

Lily is equally committed to creating welcoming and inclusive environments where all young people can thrive. Through her involvement in the CHISPA 4-H initiative and the development of a Day of the Dead 4-H

program, she has intentionally broadened access to 4-H by creating culturally relevant experiences that resonate with participants and families. Her leadership helps ensure that youth from diverse backgrounds see themselves reflected in Extension programming and feel a sense of belonging within the 4-H community.

The impact of Lily's work is evident in both program growth and community trust. Under her leadership, volunteer participation increased from 247 to 309 volunteers, while direct educational programs reached hundreds of youth and outreach efforts engaged thousands of community members. She is widely recognized by volunteers, community partners, and colleagues as dependable, thoughtful, and deeply committed to youth success.

Through her professionalism, integrity, and dedication to service, LilyRose Arriaga has strengthened the quality, accessibility, and long-term sustainability of 4-H programming in Barry County. Her leadership reflects the values of MSU Extension and makes her an especially deserving recipient of the Meritorious Service Award.

MSA - Program Instructor, Program Coordinator, Community Nutrition Instruction

Curtina Mysliwiec

Throughout her career with MSU Extension, Curtina Mysliwiec has built a reputation as a trusted educator, dedicated community partner, and passionate advocate for the health and well-being of Michigan families. Her exceptional programming and commitment to inclusive outreach have enriched the lives of individuals, families, and communities throughout the Lansing area, and distinguished her as an outstanding recipient of the Meritorious Service Award.

Curtina's success is rooted in her ability to connect with people and build partnerships that create meaningful opportunities for learning and growth. She has established strong, long-standing relationships with schools, community organizations, service providers, and families, becoming a valued resource for nutrition education throughout Ingham County. Her warm, authentic approach helps participants feel welcomed and supported while making nutrition concepts practical, relevant, and applicable to everyday life.

Her programming reaches a wide range of audiences, including students, Head Start families, refugee and immigrant communities, youth involved in the justice system, and individuals experiencing housing instability. Through partnerships with organizations such as Holly Park Academy, Holt Junior High School, the Refugee Development Center, Cristo Rey Community Center, Lansing Area AIDS Network, Highfields, and other community agencies, Curtina has expanded access to evidence-based nutrition education for populations that may otherwise face barriers to participation. She ensures that programs are inclusive, responsive, and welcoming to all participants.

During the current program year, she reached 457 participants and delivered educational programming to 436 youth, while maintaining strong completion rates among both youth and adult learners. Evaluation results demonstrate significant behavior changes, with 100% of adult participants improving diet quality, 95% improving food resource management practices, and 89% improving food safety behaviors. Youth participants also reported improved diet quality and increased physical activity behaviors, reflecting the effectiveness of her educational approach.

Beyond the numbers, Curtina's greatest contribution is the trust she builds within the community. Schools and organizations consistently invite her back because of the positive experiences participants have with her programs. Her ability to foster genuine relationships, strengthen partnerships, and create lasting connections has expanded MSU Extension's presence and impact throughout Ingham County.

Her professionalism, compassion, and unwavering commitment to improving lives exemplifies the greatest standards of service and continues to enhance the reputation and reach of MSU Extension in the communities she serves.

MSA - Support Staff & Supervisors

Ian Sawyer

Behind every successful organization are professionals who bring structure, efficiency, and excellence to the work of others. Ian Sawyer has distinguished herself as one of those exceptional professionals, strengthening MSU Extension's operations, developing the capacity of colleagues, and improving systems that support employees and communities across the state. Her combination of technical expertise, leadership, and commitment to service makes her an excellent recipient of the Meritorious Service Award.

As a member of the District Support Team serving both District 11 North and District 4, Ian operates in a complex environment that demands precision, adaptability, and exceptional organizational skills. She consistently manages critical administrative functions, including scheduling, onboarding, hiring processes, fiscal monitoring, and operational coordination, with a level of accuracy and professionalism that ensures programs and staff can succeed. Over the past two years alone, she has coordinated at least nine search committees, helping districts maintain staffing continuity while ensuring hiring processes remain efficient, compliant, and organized.

Ian's impact extends well beyond administrative responsibilities. She possesses a unique ability to recognize opportunities for improvement and develop practical solutions that strengthen organizational effectiveness. Her expertise in budget management, data systems, and financial processes has improved fiscal accountability and helped districts identify and resolve issues before they become larger challenges. Colleagues rely on her insight, attention to detail, and proactive approach to problem solving.

A defining characteristic of Ian's leadership is her commitment to building capacity in others. She has stepped

forward to create communication processes and productive meeting spaces that strengthened collaboration across the District Support Team. Rather than maintaining sole responsibility, she intentionally fostered a shared leadership model that empowered colleagues, encouraged professional growth, and created a more sustainable support network. She also mentors staff members each year, serving as a trusted resource and helping others develop confidence and expertise in their roles.

Ian's influence reaches statewide through her service on civil rights and compliance committees, where she helps ensure support staff perspectives are represented in policies. Her unwavering commitment to excellence has strengthened systems, enhanced employee effectiveness, and contributed significantly to the success of MSU Extension. A truly deserving recipient of this recognition, she exemplifies professionalism, integrity, and dedication, reflecting the very best of the organization.

MSA - Support Staff & Supervisors

Amy Baker

With more than 37 years of dedicated service to MSU, Amy Baker has provided steady leadership, institutional knowledge, and unwavering professionalism to help Extension operate at an unparalleled level. Through her commitment to excellence and her ability to support some of the organization's most visible priorities, Amy has earned the trust and respect of colleagues, stakeholders, and leadership alike, making her certainly deserving of the Meritorious Service Award.

Amy serves as an indispensable organizational partner whose impact extends far beyond the tasks and responsibilities associated with her role. Throughout her career, she has provided coordination and support for numerous high-profile initiatives, including the MSU Extension and AgBioResearch State Advisory Council; the Council for Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching (CARET); Public Issues Leadership Development (PILD); legislative engagement activities; and visits involving federal, state, university, and industry leaders. Her ability to manage complex priorities while maintaining exceptional attention to detail ensures that these important relationships and events reflect the professionalism and credibility of MSU Extension.

Amy's sound judgment, problem-solving skills, and commitment to excellence allow her to navigate challenges seamlessly while ensuring priorities move forward efficiently and effectively. Colleagues consistently describe her as reliable, responsive, approachable, and deeply committed to helping others succeed. Whether supporting executive leadership, coordinating stakeholder engagement activities, or assisting colleagues across the organization, Amy approaches every interaction with professionalism, integrity, and a genuine desire to contribute to the success of others.

Amy's contributions have been especially valuable during periods of organizational transition. Her deep institutional knowledge has provided continuity and stability as leadership, priorities, and programs have evolved over time. She has helped preserve important relationships, maintain organizational momentum, and ensure that critical work continues without interruption. In doing so, she has strengthened Extension's effectiveness while helping safeguard the reputation and credibility that stakeholders have come to expect from the organization.

Perhaps Amy's greatest contribution is her embodiment of the "One Team" philosophy. She creates an environment of trust and support that enables leaders, colleagues, and partners to do their best work. Through nearly four decades of service, Amy Baker has consistently helped others succeed while advancing the mission of MSU Extension. She represents the excellence of the organization and is a most deserving recipient of this recognition.

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 for contributing to MSU Extension in a positive way by exceeding expectations to better the organization's ability to fulfill its purpose, mission, goals, and objectives.

Strategic Directions Action Teams

The MSU Extension Strategic Direction Action Teams are recognized with the Director's Award of Distinction for their exceptional leadership, collaboration, and commitment to advancing the organization's Strategic Direction Plan. Representing diverse roles, program areas, and perspectives from across MSU Extension, four Action Teams were formed around the strategic initiatives of Thriving Michigan Food Systems; Strong Michigan Communities; Healthy, Empowered and Fulfilled Michiganders; and Resilient Michigan and Great Lakes Environments. Their charge was to help translate these strategic priorities into meaningful action while strengthening alignment, collaboration, and impact across the organization.

Over the course of their work, team members conducted a comprehensive examination of MSU Extension's programmatic efforts, identifying existing strengths, opportunities for greater alignment and collaboration, emerging needs, and gaps where the organization could strengthen its response. The teams considered current programming, data and evaluation needs, organizational resources, partnerships, and opportunities for innovative, evidence-based approaches that are relevant and responsive to Michigan communities.

Their work culminated in reports that provide recommended actions, implementation strategies, evaluation considerations, and supporting evidence to help guide MSU Extension's continued progress. More importantly, their collective efforts created a foundation for moving from strategic direction to strategic action. Through thoughtful analysis, a willingness to work across traditional boundaries, and a deep commitment to MSU Extension's land-grant mission, these team members have helped shape a path forward for an organization that remains mission-driven, adaptive, and well-positioned to make a meaningful difference across Michigan.

COMMUNICATIONS CONNECTOR

New beginning in 2026, the MSU Extension Communications Connector Award recognizes a staff member whose primary responsibilities are not in communications, but who demonstrates exceptional commitment to sharing the story of MSU Extension. Recipients actively support communications efforts by identifying impactful stories, contributing content, and promoting programs in ways that advance organizational visibility, reach, and community impact. Moving forward the Communications Connector Award will be included in the awards nomination process.

Wade Syers

When Michigan's 2026 Cyclospora outbreak generated widespread public concern and intense media attention, Wade Syers, Ph.D., stepped forward as a trusted voice, helping translate complex food safety science into clear, practical information for the public while elevating the visibility and credibility of MSU Extension. His willingness to embrace opportunities, partner with communications professionals, and serve as a public-facing expert exemplifies the qualities recognized by the MSU Extension Communications Connector Award.

Since joining MSU Extension in 2019, Wade has consistently demonstrated a commitment to sharing the impact and expertise of Extension with audiences far beyond traditional educational settings. Known for his responsiveness and professionalism, he is often among the first to volunteer when media opportunities arise, recognizing that effective communication plays a critical role in helping communities make informed decisions about food safety and public health.

During the Cyclospora outbreak, Wade's contributions became especially significant. As media requests increased and guidance from public health agencies continued to evolve, he worked closely with communications staff and

university partners to ensure accurate, timely, and research-based information reached the public. Whether participating in interviews, providing expert commentary, or appearing in Ask Extension videos, he consistently made complex scientific topics understandable and relevant to everyday audiences.

Wade's efforts resulted in extraordinary visibility for both MSU Extension and its food safety programming. Over the course of the outbreak, he participated in more than 25 media placements, potentially reaching millions of people through television, print, radio, and digital platforms. His expertise was featured by major national and international outlets including NBC News, ABC News, "Good Morning America," TIME magazine, Food & Wine magazine, Health magazine (health.com), Prevention magazine, Iowa Public Radio, and the BBC, helping establish MSU Extension as a trusted source of information during a rapidly developing public health issue.

Beyond the numbers, Wade's greatest contribution is the confidence and credibility he brings to every interaction. Through his calm demeanor, scientific expertise, and dedication to public service, he helps audiences understand emerging issues while strengthening public trust in MSU Extension. His consistent partnership with communications staff and commitment to telling the story of Extension's impact make him a notably deserving recipient of the inaugural MSU Extension Communications Connector Award.

MSU DISTINGUISHED ACADEMIC STAFF AWARD

Staff listed below received the MSU Distinguished Academic Staff Award since the last Fall Extension Conference. Thank you for your significant contributions to MSU Extension and to the university.

2025

Phillip Katz

2026

Bindu Bhakta

Rebecca Henne

MSU EXTENSION SHARED VALUES AWARDS

The MSU Extension professionals listed in this section received Shared Values Awards during MSU Extension's monthly all-staff webinars from November 2024 through September 2026.

2024

Paola Bacigalupo Sanguesa, Stephanie Domke, Cindy Anderson, Heather Hampel, Renae Siler, Kendra Wills

2025

Laura Sears, Leah Christie, Caitlin Splawski, Mariel Borgman, Crystal White, Melissa Gillespie, Leena Abouzahr, Sandra Westover, Teagen Lefere, Jinnifer Ortquist, Sheila Salo, Ronda

Tousciuk, Dawn Earnesty, Audrey Etzin-Gagner, Katelyn Brolick, Wendy Martin, Adriana Sierra Ramirez, Paige Filice, Matt Shane

2026

Brittany Schultz, Jamie Wilson, Julie Ford, Anne Walacavage, Roxanne Turner, Liz Williams, Paty Monterrosa, Kelly Vogelheim, Phil Durst, Melanie Fuhrman, Veronica Dragovich, Sue Beerens, Dan O'Keefe, Liz Antvelink, Frank Cox, Rochelle Sturtevant

PROMOTION

The MSU Extension staff members listed in this section received Senior Status Promotions since the 2024 Fall Extension Conference. Congratulations and thank you for your significant contributions to MSU Extension.

2025 – Janis Brinn, Eric Walcott

2026 – Rebecca Krans, Heather Triezenberg

The MSU Extension staff members listed in this section received Advanced Status Promotions since the 2024 Fall Extension Conference. Congratulations and thank you for your significant contributions to MSU Extension.

2025

Paola Bacigalupo Sanguesa
Tyler Bassett
Martin Carrasquillo-Mangual
Ashley Cole-Wick

Erick Elgin
Lindsey Gardner
Rachel Hackett
Monica Jean
Parker Jones
Jeremy Jubenville
Jonathon (Jon) LaPorte
Elliot Nelson
Stephanie Ostrenga Sprague
Clay Wilton
Kevin Zoromski

2026

Tyler Augst
Naim Edwards
Meaghan Gass
Ana Heck
Naomi Hyso
David Lowenstein
Abbey Palmer
Mary Reilly
Logan Rowe
Diane Wisnewski
Casey Zangaro

MILESTONE YEARS OF SERVICE WITH MSU

The MSU Extension staff members listed in this section have marked employment milestones since the 2024 Fall Extension Conference. We thank them all for their years of dedicated service to the organization.

40 Years of Service

Lori Martin
Rebecca McKee

35 Years of Service

Diane Longanbach

30 Years of Service

Ronald Bates
Mark Breederland
Janis Brinn
M. Charles Gould
Michael Metzger
Jean Schueller
Kristina Swartzendruber

25 Years of Service

Laura Anderson
Peter Badra
Lisa Bottomley
Joshua Cohen
Frank Cox
David Cuthrell
Helen Enander
Corissa Harris
Amanda Hulet
Adam Koivisto
Kraig Korroch
Yu Man Lee
Jane Love
Laurie Messing
Michelle Neff
Rebecca Rogers
Yolanda Thrash
Roxanne Turner
Wendolyn Wieland

20 Years of Service

Bindu Bhakta
Mary Bohling
Ryan Coffey Hoag
Julia Darnton
Elizabeth Ferry
Sheilah Hebert
Betty Krosnicki
Stephanie Marino
Kea Norrell-Aitch
Katie Ockert
Liana Pepin
Karen Powers
Laurie Rivetto
Renee Sanders
Carrie Shrier
Tiffany Stevens
Erin West

15 Years of Service

Alissa Berry
Veronica Bolhuis
Betsy Braid
Nonie Gross
Rachel Hiatt
Rachel Kramer
Robert Krusky
Leah LaVanway

Margie Manning
Mallory Marienfeld
Alan Pilkenton
Richard Price
Erin Ross
Mindy Tape
Heather Triezenberg

10 Years of Service

Eric Anderson
Heather Borden
Anita Carter
Jill Connin
Erin Daines
Ashley Dennis
Erick Elgin
Kristin Havelka
Jason Hofman
Emily Hoover
Cindy Hudson
Naomi Hyso
Cecilia Jaime Gutierrez
Monica Jean
Amber Joseph
Anne Kretschmann
Teagen Lefere
Patricia Marrs
Sheryl Moll
Elliot Nelson
Stephanie Ostrenga Sprague
Abbey Palmer
Sarah Rautio
Keri Rowley
Clarence Rudat
Nicole Smith
Martina Valdez
Eric Walcott
Kevin Zoromski

5 Years of Service

Talynn Akermann
Cindy Anderson
Kelsey Bockelman
Katelyn Brolick
Sarah Carter
Tanner Derror
Jenna Falor
Sarah Faubert
Julie Ford
Ashley Freed
Audrey Gagner
Stacie Gath
Jean Genaw
Tara Hovis
Jerad Jaborek
Kara Kelly

Lauren Kennedy
Emily Lavely
Nicole Lehr
Esmaeil Nasrollahiazar
Rachel Ochylski
Allison Olson
Tracy Reed
Remington Rice
Courtney Ross
Amy Safaoui
Ashley Schwieterman
Cheyenne Sloan
Nathaniel Walton
Scott Warner
Aaron Weiner
Autumn Williams
Mollie Woods

EXTENSION PROFESSIONALS ASSOCIATION AWARDS

MSU Extension's professional associations present annual awards recognizing outstanding achievements and contributions by their members. The recipients listed in this program were identified and provided by their respective associations, and we are pleased to recognize and congratulate them. Because award timelines vary among associations and some 2026 award processes are still underway, not all annual award recipients are represented at the time of the Fall Extension Conference.

COMMUNITY & NATURAL RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (CNRDA)

Award cycle in process as of FEC program printing

EPSILON SIGMA PHI (ESP)

Award cycle in process as of FEC program printing

MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF EXTENSION 4-H YOUTH STAFF AWARDS (MAE4-HYS)

Achievement in Service Award
Jenny Speyer

Distinguished Service Award
Sheryl Moll

Meritorious Service Award
Darren Bagley

Communicator Award – Feature Story
Jennifer Payne

Communicator Award – Promotional Package
Jennifer Payne & Team

Communicator Award – Promotional Piece
Alexis Wheeler

Communicator Award – Radio/Audio
Jenny Speyer & Amy Harris

Communicator Award – Social Media Package/Campaign
Kendra VanOrder

Communicator Award – Educational Piece
Katlynn VanDouser

Excellence in Ag Literacy Award
Kendra VanOrder

Excellence in Animal Science Programming
Kendra VanOrder & Dave Radloff

Excellence in 4-H Club Support
Veronica Bolhuis

Excellence in Educational Technology
Jenny Speyer

Excellence in Geospatial Programs
Jordan Hewitt

Excellence in Global Citizenship
Maggie Merchberger

Excellence in Healthy Living
Health Rocks! Michigan Team

Excellence in STEM
Jennifer Payne

Excellence in Teamwork
Aurora Patricia, Monterrosa Castillo & Team

Excellence in Volunteerism
Betty Jo Krosnicki & Team

Excellence in Workforce Development
Veronica Bolhuis & Team

Colleague Award
Kathy Walicki

Partnership Award
Artisan Acres

Notable Service Award
David Lindsay

Friends & Family Service Award
Margretta "Maggie" Lundquist

MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF EXTENSION AGENTS (MAEA)

2025

Hall of Fame Award
Stan Moore

Distinguished Service Award
Ben Phillips

Achievement Award
Florencia Colella

2026
Distinguished Service Award
Lyndon Kelley

Achievement Award
Florencia Colella

MICHIGAN EXTENSION ASSOCIATION OF FAMILY & CONSUMER SCIENCES (MEAFCS)

2025
Communications Internet Technology Award
Chris Venema

Distinguished Service Award
Dawn Contreras

Family Health and Wellness Award
Holly Tiret & Team

Human Development and Family Relationships Award
Michelle Luttrell & Team

Program Excellence through Research Award
Christi Demitz & Team

2026

Communication Written Media Award

Kara Lynch

Distinguished Service Award

Karen Fifield

The Distinguished Service Award recognizes Extension FCS Educators for leadership, outstanding programs, and personal & professional growth. Karen Fifield is Michigan's 2026 award winner. Karen is currently a Food Safety Educator located in Montmorency County. She has worked for Extension for 19 years acting in a variety of areas such as 4-H, Better Kid Care, Parenting, Sustainable Communities, Snap-Ed and special projects. Food Safety is one of her favorite areas. Her philosophy is to work with individuals by bringing them in and participating in the process. She lets her participants know they're going to be active in her programs! Currently she teaches ServSafe, Food Preservation, Cottage Foods, and is involved in several other projects.

Educational Curriculum Package Award

Karen Fifield, Kellie Jordan, Kara Lynch, Laurie Messing, Stephanie Ostranga Sprague, Mary Donaldson

Florence Hall Award

Dawn Contreras, Carrie Shrier, Cheryl Esbach, Erin Moore, Maggie Magoon, Jim Monahan, Becky McKendry, Alan Pilkenton, Alyssa Picone, Maribel Richards, Jael Tombaugh, Angela Cook, Megan Wilczynski, Joshua Reiss, Ellish McGhee, Corinne Lopez, Katie Parr, Madee Thorbum,

Alyssa Maturen, Brenna O'Kane, Sylvia Benavidez, Amanda Smith, Yoland Thrash

The Florence Hall Award recognizes an individual or team that has been alert in recognizing emerging issues or new concerns and interests of families or individuals and have planned and implemented programs and involved people in planning and implementing programs that benefit families/individuals. The 2026 national winner is the Michigan Vaccine Project. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the public faced a never-before-seen health threat with little knowledge and skills to protect themselves. The need was particularly critical for rural families who often lack ready access to medical care, transportation, and health-related resources. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services reached out to Michigan State University (MSU) Extension to educate rural families about immunizations, including the COVID-19 vaccine, and the Michigan Vaccine Program (or MVP) was created. The team moved forward on this statewide effort, with a focus on rural individuals throughout Michigan.

Human Development and Family Relationships Award

Carrie Shrier, Courtney Aldrich, Anne O'Rourke-Bean, Patti Marrs, Katie Parr, Kevin Zoromski

Innovation in Programming Award

Laura Anderson, Anita Carter, Dawn Contreras, Christ Demitz, Zelda Felix-Mottley, Sheilah Hebert, Naomi Hyso, Nicole Persing-Wethington, Jacqui Rabine, Kris Swartzendruber, Liz Williams

Mary W. Wells Memorial Award

Mary Morris-Donaldson

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