

MSU EXTENSION KALKASKA COUNTY 2023 - 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension

I'm delighted to share the results of another successful year of partnership between Kalkaska County and Michigan State University (MSU) Extension. Because of your continued support, we've been able to make a difference in the lives of youth, families, businesses and communities.

MSU Extension offers a broad range of research-based educational outreach to county residents. Over this past year, we've empowered families and individuals to live healthier lives, supported new and local businesses, created opportunities for youth leadership development and career exploration, helped farmers with business management and mental health, and much more. Our staff live and work alongside county residents, are rooted in community relationships and are responsive to community needs.

We continue to provide our programs in a variety of spaces and delivery methods that are convenient for our participants to engage in and access. Our partnership with you makes this all possible. On behalf of the MSU Extension team serving Kalkaska County, thank you for another great year. We look forward to your continued support and hope you will be able to join us during one of our upcoming programs.

~ Jennifer Berkey District 3 Director

187

Programs accessed
by residents

10,900

Reached by
social media

1,706

Reached through
programming

2,936

Reached indirectly



NORTHWEST MI ORCHARD & VINEYARD SHOW



NW MI ORCHARD & VINEYARD SHOW

NORTHWEST MI ORCHARD & VINEYARD SHOW 2024

The annual Northwest Michigan Orchard and Vineyard Show was another great success with over 310 tree fruit and wine grape producers in attendance and 48 vendor booths at the Grand Traverse Resort. Dr. Brent Black and members of his team from Utah State University (USU) joined us again to provide an update on the Specialty Crop Research Initiative project in collaboration with MSU on precision orchard management. This year he was joined by Dr. Alfonso

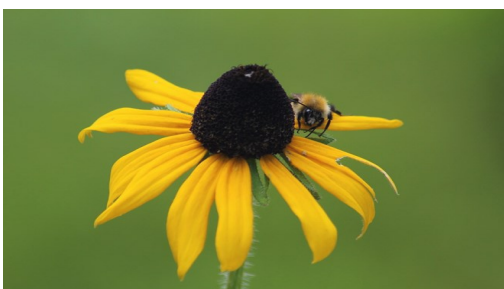
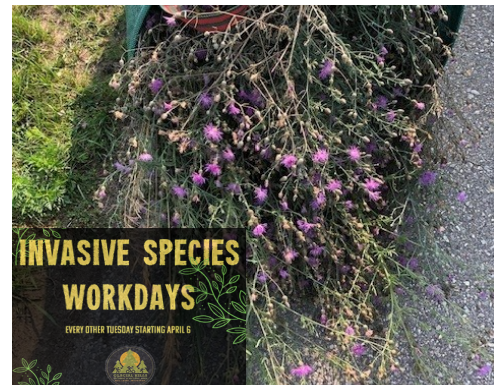
Torres-Rua, an expert on irrigation and water management, who discussed new technologies for mapping and remote sensing of irrigation needs and water stress. Richard Price and Dr. Todd Einhorn presented some of the MSU side of the research project on remote sensing for yield estimations and

Over **310** tree fruit & wine grape producers



NORTHWEST MICHIGAN ORCHARD AND VINEYARD SHOW

experimenting with variable rate irrigation in tart cherries. The 2024 tree fruit educational sessions featured other new topics and speakers including a talk on forest carbon offsets by Daphna Gadoth-Goodman from the MSU Forest Carbon and Climate Program and a segment by Parker Jones from the MSU Product Center on agritourism and cost studies for value-added products to help growers see ways to diversify their income streams. This year's program also featured a section on agritourism, including a panel of local and statewide growers who have integrated agritourism in diverse ways on their farms.



MASTER GARDENER IMPACTS

MASTER GARDENER

MSU EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

In Kalkaska County, Extension Master Gardener volunteers reported 24 hours serving and leading multiple projects valued at \$804. These hours were dedicated to educating residents, improving food security, and protecting the natural resources in Kalkaska County. MSU Extension collaborated with Kalkaska High School Conservation Science students, their instructor, Mr. Wright, the Kalkaska Conservation District, and Quality Thyme Garden Club. They worked on three gardens near the high school, pulling weeds, trimming trees

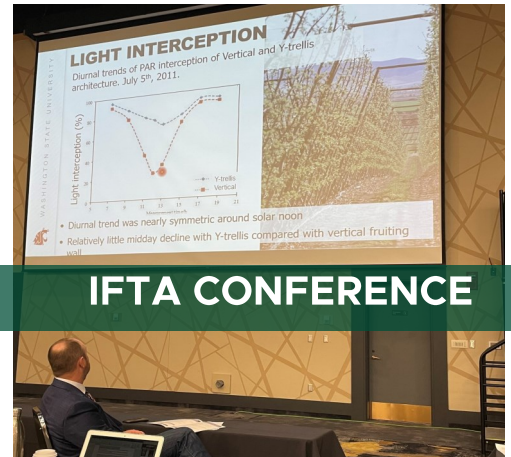
24 Extension Master Gardener Hours volunteered, valued at **\$804.**

These hours were dedicated to educating residents, improving food security, and protecting the natural resources of Kalkaska County.

and shrubs and spreading three yards of mulch. All of the club members appreciated the help of the younger volunteers. Volunteers also worked with Kalkaska Middle School on a similar collaborative event during which they removed two truck loads of knapweed from the gardens along the KART Trail on M72 in Kalkaska. This project was completed by July 31st, 2024. Kalkaska County MSU Extension Volunteers tended to native plant and pollinator gardens, while

sharing information with students through educational programming about the importance of pollinator conservation and native flowering plants. During invasive species removal events, participants were educated on the importance of native plant habitat for wildlife conservation and environmental stewardship in the region.

12 area farms representing nearly **\$6** million dollars in revenue in 2023.



IFTA CONFERENCE

Year-end tax estimate meetings provided farmers with the opportunity to save over **\$119,000**, resulting in savings to allow for investment back into the farm business to help build farm resilience.



FARM BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

TEL-FARM

Farm Business Management educator Chris Bardenhagen assists farmers, businesses, families and individuals to improve lives and achieve goals through an educational process that applies management, production and economic knowledge to critical issues in our area. Working with 12 area farms, Chris helped farmers complete a business analysis using MSU Extension's Tel-Farm Record system to manage their taxable income. Farmers who participate in the program gain a greater understanding of their farm's financial strengths and weaknesses, and how they can improve upon their financial standing. These

farms represent nearly \$6 million dollars in sales in 2023. Year-end tax estimate meetings provided farmers with the opportunity to save nearly \$119,000 this year. These savings are often put back into the farm business for upgrading of new equipment and help build farm resilience.

Bardenhagen was also able to attend the International Fruit Tree Association Conference (IFTA), held this year in Yakima, Washington. He learned about Washington's apple production volumes and economic trends that also affect Michigan. He and other MSU Fruit Team members visited several apple orchards, investigating production practices and apple training systems to inform work here in Michigan. Participation in the IFTA Conf-

-erence enabled Chris to work with local farmers on enterprise analysis and provide cost of production estimates for apples to help area growers strategize for the coming season.

FARM STRESS

MANAGING FARM STRESS RESOURCES

Farming can be an incredibly unpredictable, dangerous, and stressful occupation. MSU Extension is committed to supporting agricultural professionals as they navigate tough times and make decisions that impact their families, livelihoods, operations, and farms. Combining farm business management guidance with mental and behavioral health expertise, MSU Extension's team of more than 20



FARM STRESS PROGRAM



dedicated professionals provides innovative resources and support to the agriculture community—from teletherapy and financial services to free online education and community presentations.

In 2023, the MSU Extension Farm Stress team delivered the most programs ever, reaching a record number of participants including 68 unique direct program activities, which spanned 169 distinct sessions with 5,657 participants. 103 individuals enrolled in the Rural Resilience online Desire2Learn (D2L) training course and 35 farmers and farm family members were referred to counseling services. This is a 52.17% increase compared to 2022. MSU Extension’s farm stress specialist Dr. Remington Rice also appeared in

key media outlets to promote resources for farmers, including Michigan Ag Today, UpNorth-Live, WPBN-TV, the AgriSafe Network’s Talking Total Farmer Health podcast, among others. As a result of this publicity, several new farmers have

reached out to access MSU Extension’s resources. Dr. Rice cherishes many of the stories of individual farmers he and other educators have helped over the years, including this recent meeting with a Michigan fruit farmer:

“I journeyed to his farm, expecting a brief conversation, but what unfolded was a three-hour revelation. This farmer, disenchanted with his vocation and contemplating selling his farm, was recently divorced, and felt hopelessly adrift. We explored the roots of his passion for farming – pride in his work, cherishing public interactions at his farm stand and stewardship of the land. As he recounted his story, he rekindled his love for farming and found new meaning and purpose. Today, his farm flourishes, and he passionately advocates for the MSU Farm Stress Program, sharing history at Research Station events and among fellow farmers. His transformation is a beacon of hope for all.”

-Dr. Remington Rice



11 Teams comprised of 80 Youth



Archery teaches growth mindset. Young archers learn not to get too emotional when they make a bad shot. Instead of attaching their self-worth to their performance, they will learn to analyze their shots with a cool mind and improve in the next rounds.

- www.astraightarrow.net



4-H

2023-2024 4-H SOCCER

Our Kalkaska 4-H Youth Soccer program continues to grow! The 2023-2024 season saw 80 youth, ages five-ten years old, participating on nine teams. The Kalkaska County soccer fields were buzzing with activity Monday through Friday throughout the fall and spring seasons for practices and were packed with spectators for games on Saturdays. The dedication of our 11 volunteer coaches helped make this season a huge success! This year, we added jersey and advertisement levels of sponsorship options for local businesses. The support from our generous community helped us to keep the cost of the program

affordable for all and provided scholarships to eligible youth to participate at no cost. Youth in this program learn soccer skills, teamwork, sportsmanship, and healthy habits. We look forward to another great season starting Fall 2024!

4-H Soccer enrollment increased by nearly **15%** from last year!

2024 4-H ARCHERY

Kalkaska 4-H Archery Club was a success again this year, with 25 youth participating in the club led by instructor Ray Farrier. Throughout the months of January and February, a dedicated group gathered weekly at

Evergreen Bible Baptist Church. Participants engaged in hands-on learning, focusing on the proper handling of archery equipment and essential range rules. In addition to technical skills, the program emphasized important life skills such as patience, concentration, and goal setting. We want to thank Ray for volunteering his time and expertise to instruct each year and Evergreen Bible Baptist Church for providing their facility, making it possible to hold this club in the winter. The club has fostered not only archery skills, but also a sense of community and camaraderie among participants.

2024 MAPLE SUGARING

Once again, 4-H staff took students from Forest Area Community Schools in Kalkaska



Kalkaska County Fair



County out to the sugar bush this spring! 45 students from the high school and the SEEDS after school program took part in this experience, immersing themselves in the art of syrup making. This engaging program walked students through the entire process, from the initial step of tapping maple trees all the way to bottling the finished syrup. Students trudged through snow and mud to collect the sap and hauled firewood for the evaporator in this hands-on learning experience that reinforced teamwork and perseverance. It was hard work that came with a sweet reward when students enjoyed a pancake dinner at the end of the season to enjoy and celebrate the fruits of their labor.

2024 4-H LIVESTOCK

The 2024 Kalkaska County Fair featured many returning participants and first-time exhibitors, showcasing the county's pride in supporting 57 youth exhibitors with over 202 individual entries in categories including swine, sheep, cattle, rabbits, and poultry. 4-H youth participated in multiple classes, competing in both market and showmanship events. The 4-H livestock market auction garnered strong community support, with local businesses and new bidders participating. The auction resulted in the sale of two heifers, 13 market poultry, four lambs, 38 swine, and several rabbits.

4-H youth are required to understand the business, science, and management of market live-

-stock prior to bringing their animals to the fair. Each youth selling an animal outlines what they have learned and their goals in a market workbook. The workbooks include research on species and breed, records of feed, expenses, animal weight, and projected income versus expenses. Prior to fair, participants attend a 4-H project planning meeting, specialty livestock clinics, and fairground work bees. At the fair, 4-H youth are responsible for guest education and barn cleanliness. Kalkaska 4-H is fortunate to have a dedicated group of community volunteers who partner with the MSU Extension 4-H Program Coordinator to create memorable and educational experiences for our community!



BIRCH STREET ELEMENTARY

NUTRITION & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

KALKASKA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Birch Street Elementary's second grade and preschool classrooms participated in monthly Show Me Nutrition's age-appropriate nutrition and physical activity lessons. This year, nutrition lessons went from a weekly experience to monthly in order to incorporate health throughout the year instead of a six-week program. Students learned about the five food groups, how their bodies use the food they eat, the importance of getting at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily and explored tasting a variety of foods. More than 150 youth

were reached through these lessons.

"Many of the students are bringing up connections between foods and lessons. They are applying what they learn in health lessons to the lunch line and specialty units. {We} notice them discussing nutrition without being prompted."

-Kalkaska Preschool Teacher

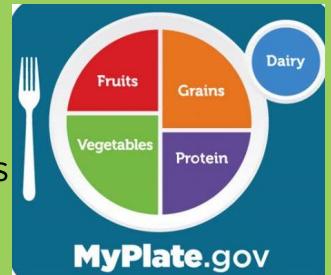
MSU Extension collaborated with teachers to align nutrition lessons with unit lessons. For example, during the "Show Me Nutrition" lesson on whole grains and their seed parts, students also explored

germination and plant life cycles. While studying ancient Greece, students participated in a taste test featuring feta cheese and hummus, traditional foods still enjoyed in Greece today. Teachers continued the lessons even when MSU Extension was not present. During the ancient Greece unit, teachers brought in pomegranates and olives for the students to try. The four preschool classrooms began incorporating nutrition into their activities throughout the year in various ways.

During the first lesson with MSU Extension, kids colored their own MyPlate page which was then laminated and used as placemats for the rest of the



“These placemats were a great way to get our preschoolers discussing foods in a casual way.”



way, It really helped them understand the food groups”, one teacher noticed. Before classes began for the year, the teachers asked MSU Extension to bring in foods that students might not typically encounter.

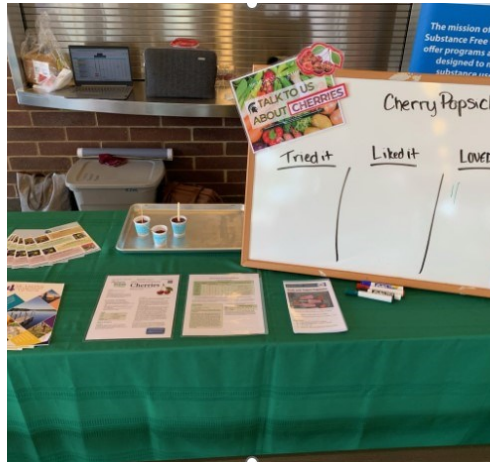
incredibly adventurous! The students ended up enjoying nearly everything that was brought into the classroom, but two fruits, in particular, stood out as favorites: kiwi and dragon fruit. Students enjoyed these tropical fruits so much that the school received several calls and emails asking how to select tropical fruit from the store. It was so highly requested that Community Nutrition Instructor Lanae Bump attended a parent night where she provided valuable insight on choosing ripe and flavorful tropical fruits that would be available in Kalkaska stores, helping parents feel more confident in their selections. All participants were sent home with a resource to help them when shopping.

Kalkaska County
 Show Me Nutrition Impacts
87 second grade students
65 preschool students

Their reasoning was that parents expressed a desire for their children to try new foods, but they were hesitant to spend money on items that will go to waste if they don't enjoy the taste. The class this year was

year. Preschool students eat all their meals and snacks within their classroom. Students were able to practice their understanding of the food groups by sorting food items into the appropriate MyPlate categories during each meal and snack time, reinforcing healthy eating lessons at each encounter. “These placemats were a great way to get our preschoolers discussing foods in a casual

The goal of Project Fresh is to increase fruit and vegetable consumption and decrease the risk of preventable chronic disease.



SENIOR PROJECT FRESH

Senior
Project FRESH
Market Fresh Food



NUTRITION & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY CONT'D

SENIOR PROJECT FRESH

MSU Extension served close to 125 older adults in partnership with Kalkaska Commission on Aging and District Health Department #10 through a program called Senior Project Fresh. This program's goal is to increase fruit and vegetable consumption and decrease the risk of preventable chronic disease while also supporting local agriculture. Seniors receive \$25 worth of coupons to be spent on Michigan grown produce after attending an educational session with Commission on Aging and MSU Extension. Participants learn about food safety, how to pick the best produce and benefits of

incorporating a variety of fruits and vegetables into their diets. One participant shared how receiving these vouchers are encouraging her to make a point of purchasing and eating vegetables. While \$25 may not seem like a lot of money, it can make a world of difference to older adults and farmers who supply the produce. During educational and farmer's market events, educators from MSU Extension informed participants how they could pair the Senior

Many participants look forward to spending their vouchers on local produce like apples, green beans, or peaches to preserve and enjoy all year.

Project Fresh coupons with programs such as Double Your Dollars to maximize their benefits to get \$50 in fresh produce.

DISCOVER MICHIGAN FRESH

Nutrition education was available at the farmer's market this year through a program called Moms & Tots Partnership Discover Michigan Fresh. This program focuses on highlighting benefits of eating local produce and showcasing preparation ideas. A few highlighted foods include radishes, cherries, corn and zucchini. Many farmers market attendees visited the food demonstration table and shared some variation of "I never thought to use [insert produce item here] like that! I am going to get some and try that at home!" Buying produce is great,



These food demonstrations provide inspiration to home cooks, encourage produce consumption and bring a fun experience to market goers. This series is a unique way to engage the population.



KALKASKA FARMER'S MARKET



but shoppers must know how to prepare and consume it to reap the benefits. July's food demonstration was a simple cherry popsicle made from dark sweet cherries, cherry juice, and vanilla yogurt. All 75 samples made

veggie pancakes being made in front of them and got to eat them hot off the griddle. One woman ran off to a vendor to purchase zucchini immediately after trying the pancake. These food demonstrations provide inspiration to home cooks, encourage produce consumption and bring a fun experience to market goers. This series is a unique way to engage a wide spectrum of the population.

POLICY, SYSTEM, AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

Nutrition education is just the first step in creating healthy communities. Environments and policy must also align with educational messages. This effort to create supportive environments and policy often takes the longest time to accomplish, but is the most impactful for residents. Currently, MSU Exten

Buying produce is great, but shoppers must know how to prepare and consume it to reap the benefits.

were handed out within three hours and people were coming up asking for samples for the rest of the market. August's demonstration of corn and zucchini pancakes was also a huge success. Shoppers watched the





196 Surveys were collected from Kalkaska residents sharing their views on accessibility and walkability in the downtown area.

NUTRITION & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY CONT'D

-sion is engaged in a significant project aimed at enhancing mobility and addressing safety concerns within Kalkaska. This project, called Kalkaska Walkability Action Initiative is in its second year of implementation and involves a dedicated team of local representatives. This collaborative effort aims to implement a “road diet” that will reduce traffic speeds and improve pedestrian safety along the main stretch of downtown Kalkaska.

The project team includes members from District Health Department #10, Kalkaska County Commissioners, Downtown Development Authority, Health Board, Commission on Aging,

Michigan Department of Transportation, Kalkaska Public Schools and local safety. The team is continually growing to ensure a wide range of perspectives and expertise to reflect and speak on Kalkaska’s needs. This project continues to be guided by national experts in mobility, accessibility, transportation, traffic safety, engineering, public health and real estate. The team has applied for multi-

A “walkable” community is built with activity-friendly routes that connect people to everyday destinations. The 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act allocated \$6.1 billion for walkable communities.
-USAFacts.org

-ple grants throughout the past year and has partnered with Progressive AE to develop a comprehensive plan and timeline for public input sessions. This planning firm has already conducted a walking audit of the proposed area and has committed to attending local events including the Kalkaska Public Schools back to school event, Blazer Bash. This project will create an inclusive environment in which people with varying abilities can safely access key community resources such as downtown shops, schools, farmers markets, parks, the library, and healthcare by foot, bike, or car. This environmental change is in the early stages of progress but will impact the health of Kalkaska residents and visitors for generations.



MSU Product Center
Kalkaska County Impacts
4 Client Businesses Reached
20 Hours of Counseling
1 License Obtained

PRODUCT CENTER

MSU PRODUCT CENTER BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

The MSU Product Center hosted a marketing workshop at the Great Lakes Incubator Farm (GLIF) in Traverse City. After a presentation, beginning farmers applied their new knowledge to decipher marketing signals from real food brands in a facilitated discussion.

Parker Jones, MSU Product Center Innovation Counselor, was elected by a body of over 10,000 member owners to serve on the Oryana Board of Directors. In this role, he helped onboard a new CEO for the first time in 12 years and to update the organization's

bylaws to foster a high-functioning board.

MSU Extension staff presented to the Community Development Coalition of Northwest Michigan on the current state of local agriculture. Regional economic and community developers learned about the growing need for agricultural businesses to differentiate and expand upon offerings to stay viable and profitable. One of the routes discussed was agritourism. The Coalition is developing an agricultural health index to channel financial resources to this sector.

NORTHERN MICHIGAN COUNTIES ASSOCIATION

Northern Michigan Counties Association (NMCA) includes Kalkaska County and exists as a local forum for commissioners and administrators to learn about and discuss topics of particular interest or concern to county government in the northern lower peninsula. Approximately 30 counties in the northern lower peninsula are members and participate regularly. The group meets nine times per year to learn about and discuss issues that affect our counties. Association support service is provided by MSU Extension.

STAFF HOUSED IN KALKASKA COUNTY

NAME	ROLE	PHONE	EMAIL
Jennifer Berkey	District Director	231-922-4821	berkeyj@msu.edu
Lanae Bump	Community Nutrition Instructor	231-258-3320	hannalan@msu.edu
Joe Kreider	Natural Resources & Outdoor Educator	231-258-3320	kreider4@msu.edu
Bethany Prykucki	Leadership & Community Engagement	231-258-3320	prykucki@msu.edu
Stacey Sanford	4-H Program Coordinator	231-258-3320	regulast@msu.edu
Kim Tanner	Office Manager	231-258-3320	kim.tanner@affiliate.msu.edu

MSU EXTENSION STAFF SERVING KALKASKA COUNTY

NAME	ROLE	PHONE	EMAIL
Chris Bardenhagen	Farm Business Management	231-256-9888	bardenh1@msu.edu
Terra Bogart	Nutrition & Physical Activity	231-922-4630	bogartte@msu.edu
Mark Breederland	Sea Grant Coast Communities Dev.	231-922-4628	breederl@msu.edu
Julie Crick	Forestry & Natural Resources	989-275-7179	crickjul@msu.edu
Christina Curell	Cover Crop & Soil Health	231-745-2732	curellc@msu.edu
Mary Dunckel	Agriculture Literacy	989-354-9875	dunckelm@msu.edu
Phillip Durst	Beef	989-345-0692	durstp@msu.edu
Sarah Eichberger	Nutrition & Physical Activity	231-922-4836	eichber2@msu.edu
Charles Gould	Bioenergy & Conservation	616-994-4547	gouldm@msu.edu
Kevin Gould	Food & Animal Systems	616-527-5357	gouldk@msu.edu
Tom Guthrie	Pork/Equine	517-788-4292	guthril9@msu.edu
Parker Jones	Product Center Innovation Counseling	231-922-4621	jonesp28@msu.edu
Philip Kaatz	Forage/Commercial Agriculture	810-667-0341	kaatz@msu.edu
Heidi Lindberg	Greenhouse & Nursery	616-994-4701	wollaege@msu.edu
Erin Lizotte	Integrated Pest Management	231-944-6504	taylo548@msu.edu
Caitlin Lorenc	Food Access & Older Adult Nutrition	231-882-9671	lorencca@msu.edu
Kara Lynch	Food Safety	989-317-4079	lynchka4@msu.edu
Michael Metzger	Small Ruminants & Foragers	517-788-4292	metzgerm@msu.edu
Esmail Nasrollahiazar	Wine Grapes	231-256-9888	nasroll2@msu.edu
Kristy Oosterhouse	4-H Supervising & Staff Dev.	231-533-8818	oosterh6@msu.edu
Dennis Pennington	Wheat Systems	269-832-0497	pennin34@msu.edu
Emily Proctor	Tribal Governance	231-439-8927	proctor8@msu.edu
Mary Reilly	Government & Public Policy, Land Use	231-889-4277	reillym8@msu.edu
Remington Rice	Health & Farm Stress Educator	231-882-0025	riceremi@msu.edu
Nikki Rothwell	Commercial Fruit	231-946-1510	rothwel3@msu.edu
J Robert Sirrine	Community Food Systems/Hops	231-256-9888	sirrine@msu.edu
Michael Staton	Soybeans	269-673-0370	staton@msu.edu
Nate Walton	Home Horticulture/Master Gardener	231-256-9888	waltonn2@msu.edu
Benjamin Werling	Vegetable Crop Production	231-873-2129	werlingb@msu.edu
Wendy Wieland	Product Center Innovation Counseling	231-348-1770	wieland5@msu.edu
Zac Williams	Poultry	517-355-8383	will3343@msu.edu
Samantha Wolfe	Agriculture & Occupational Health	231-882-0025	wolfesa4@msu.edu
Casey Zangaro	Swine	989-875-5292	zangaroc@msu.edu