

Montmorency County Annual Report

2025-2026

Staff: Patricia Makins

Karen Fifield

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Hillman Soybean Field Day 2025

Message from the District Director

I'm pleased to share highlights from another successful year of partnership between Montmorency County and Michigan State University Extension. Through your continued support, we have helped residents improve their health and well-being, strengthened local businesses and agricultural operations, and provided valuable opportunities for youth to learn, grow, and succeed.

MSU Extension continues to expand access to trusted, research-based programs through in-person, virtual, and hybrid learning opportunities. Because our staff live and work in the communities they serve, we can build strong local partnerships and respond to emerging needs with relevant programs and resources.

Thank you for your continued partnership and support. Together, we are creating positive impacts across Montmorency County and helping individuals, families, businesses, and communities thrive. We look forward to another successful year and hope to connect with you at an upcoming MSU Extension program or event.



— Adam Koivisto, District 14 Director

Impact



72 Programs Accessed by
Residents



129,800 Social Media Reach



691 Programming Reach

Developing Youth & Communities



99 youth enrolled in 4-H



222 youth reached through educational programs



20 total volunteers

4-H in Montmorency County

Michigan 4-H offers hands-on learning that helps youth build skills, explore interests and connect with their communities. Local programs in Montmorency County emphasize natural resources and life sciences.

4-H programs equip young people with practical knowledge and leadership skills, preparing them to contribute to Michigan's future workforce and civic life.

4-H enhances academic and workforce readiness, helping young people become informed, capable contributors to Michigan's economy and communities

Fifteen Montmorency County youth attended a three-day summer camp focused on Michigan's natural resources, survival and life skills. Montmorency youth are able to meet other 4-H youth from 3 other counties and build friendships that will last a life time.



Montmorency County 4-H



Beyond Ready

4-H builds STEM and career skills in Montmorency Schools

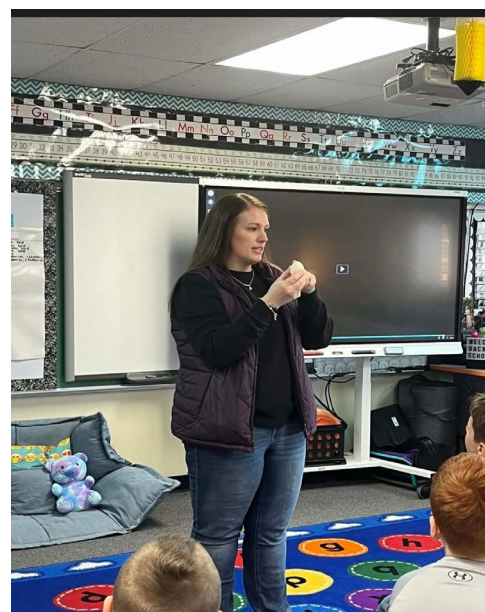
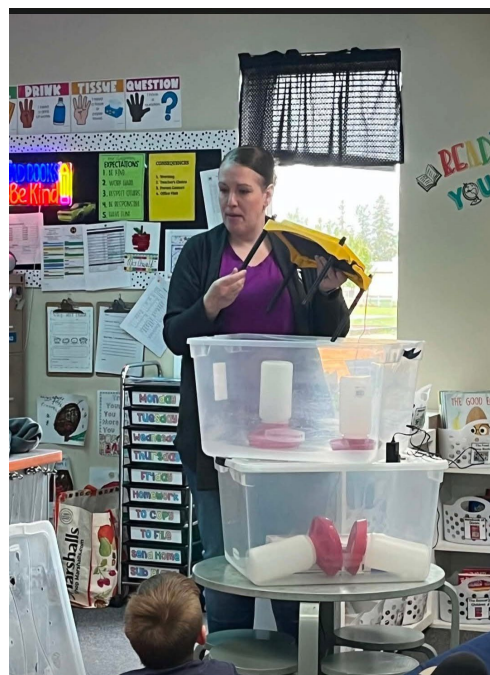
Montmorency County youth benefit from 4-H programs that support STEM learning, financial literacy, and career readiness across elementary and high school classrooms.

Kindergarten students at Hillman Elementary engage in monthly STEM activities through 4-H in the Classroom. High school juniors and seniors at Hillman and Atlanta schools participate in budgeting lessons and mock interviews led by community volunteers.

Students gain hands-on experience in science, money management, and job preparation. These programs build confidence and practical skills for life beyond school.

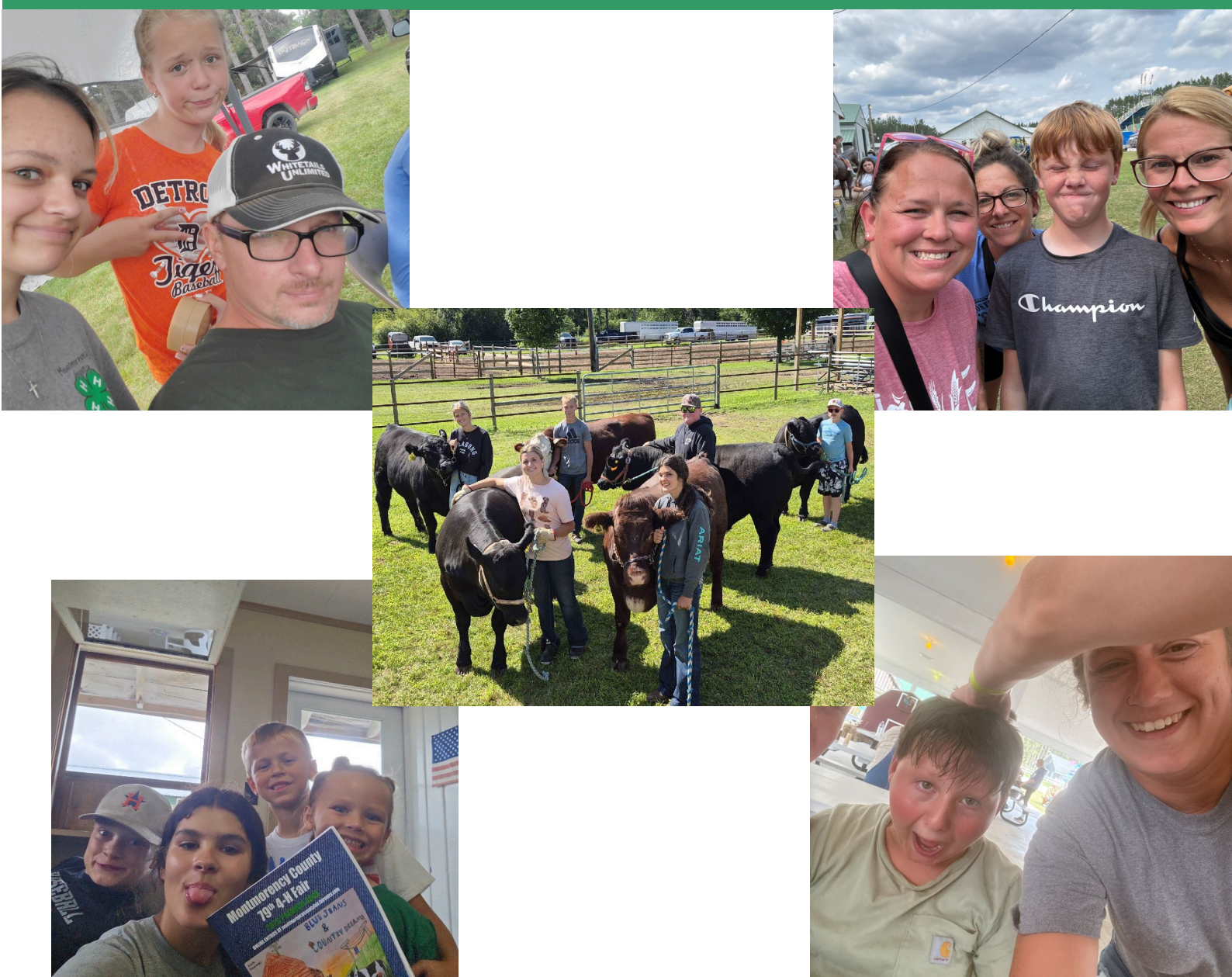
Key metrics

- 1 kindergarten classroom receives monthly STEM lessons
- 2 schools host budgeting and career prep programs



Montmorency County Fair

The Montmorency County Fair offers youth a platform to showcase their 4-H projects, build confidence, and engage with the broader community through hands-on learning and family-friendly activities. More than 90% of local 4-H youth participated in the fair, which featured record-breaking animal entries. Youth and parents joined in the popular fair goose chase, expanding community involvement. The fair highlighted strong youth engagement and growing family participation. Increased entries and interactive events reflect the vitality of 4-H programming in Montmorency County. County fairs foster leadership, agricultural literacy, and civic pride. High participation rates demonstrate strong return on investment in youth development and community enrichment. Some 4-H youth spends months getting their projects ready for fair, while other projects take a year to get ready. Montmorency County 4-H youth put their heart, sweat and tears into these projects and turn around and do it again year after year. I could not personally ask for a better group of kids, volunteers and parents to work with and spend the week with.





MSU Extension provides high-quality, research-based health and wellness education that helps Michigan residents build healthier lives at every age and stage. Through locally delivered programs, participants gain practical knowledge and skills related to safe food handling and preservation, food and water safety, chronic disease prevention and management, healthy aging, fall prevention, sleep health, and overall well-being. Whether learning safe techniques for canning, freezing, and dehydrating foods, managing conditions such as diabetes and heart disease, or finding ways to remain active, independent, and healthy as they age, community members benefit from trusted, university-based information that supports lifelong health and improved quality of life.

2025 full year statewide stats



Health & Nutrition

66,592

program participants

3,085

programs offered by health
and nutrition educators and
program instructors

1 MILLION+

content views across our MI Health
Matters and Think Food Safety
social media channels



Some of the classes attended by local Residents this year.

- Everything Apples Sauce and Cider Processing
- Serve Safe
- SLEEP Education for everyone
- Tai Chi for Better Sleep
- Michigan Cottage Food Law
- Food preservation
- Matter of Balance
- Diabetes
- Chronic Pain Toolkit

Improving Health, Nutrition & Food Safety

Michigan State University (MSU) Extension is here to support all the ways we can live healthier lives, be food safe and have successful communities by bringing the vast knowledge and resources of MSU directly to your community.



2026 Montmorency County Fair
Making Ice Cream in a bag



Did you know that making ice cream is a science? We learned about melting ice using salt, so the ice gets so cold that it freezes the cream to a solid. Then we get to eat yummy ice cream!



Our office participated in Project Connect. Providing Food Safety materials, veggie brushes and thermometers to residence of the county.

Face to face Food safety: Montmorency youth and community members gather and learn together. Cooking safely over an open fire. We learned to be food safe even when we are outdoors.



NUTRITION

MSU Extension supports the nutritional well-being of all Michiganders. Our staff delivers educational programming to communities and helps create lasting healthy changes in a variety of settings — from schools and childcare homes to food pantries and more.



Supporting Food Safety & Food Entrepreneurs



MSU Extension is proud to provide educational programs to all participants.

Food Preservation: There are many beliefs when it comes to food preservation. However, providing the most up to date research tested recipes and methods are important to keep your family safe from food borne pathogens. Here are some programs offered in your county that can not only provide education but also practice.

Face to face Food preservation: Montmorency youth and community members gather and learn together.

Preserving MI Harvest: This food preservation program online every Thursday at 1 and 6 p.m. Learn about tools of the trade when preserving foods for home use. Other topics include; Spring Produce and Herbs, Pickling, Preserving Venison, Preserving for Outdoor Adventures and many more topics.

Serving Up Food Safety: This program is a lunch and learn program every Monday, which helps answer, "What's new in

Safely
preserving foods
at home in
Montmorency
County



ServSafe: Montmorency restaurants receive their national certification from attending our ServSafe classes provided regularly from our office.



Supporting Food Safety & Food Entrepreneurs



Become and Entrepreneur: Many County residence are food buisness owners. Many have taken these classes from MSU Extension to learn how to be food safe and make a profit.

Moving Beyond Cottage Food: This program helps Cottage Food vendors to grow into a licensed business.

Preserving MI Harvest: This program is an online program, every Thursday at 1 and 6 p.m. Learn about tools of the trade when preserving foods for home use. Other topics include; Spring Produce and Herbs, Pickling, Preserving Venison, Preserving for Outdoor Adventures and many more topics.

Selling Honey and Maple Syrup Safely in Michigan: This is a new program that helps explain the exemptions, food safety and labeling of selling Honey or Maple Syrup in Michigan.

Michigan Cottage Food Law: Provides entrepreneurs a chance to sell their best product to the public without having to get a license. This is presented one or two times each month and we always have a Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Inspector on the program to answer any questions you may have. Please contact Karen Fidiel for Cottage Food current updates.

Scotty and I wanted you to know what a pleasure it has been to work with you in getting our Donut Shop under Cottage Law up and operating. The program that MSU has available was a plethora of great information!



Karen Fifiel – MSU
Advanced Extension
Educator, Food Safety



Local Events

AGRICULTURE

Farm Safety Day March 28th, 2026 CharlevoixField Days: Climate Resiliency project - June 18th, 2026 and Soybean August 4th, 2026 Hillman

Local Summer research: results shared at field days and published.

- Climate resiliency: 5 Farms. Greenhouse gas testing, soil samples. Research provides recommendations for sustainable farming methods.
- Rye Plots: Metz. Testing different nitrogen rates applied and effect on yield.
- Oat and Barley plots: Johannesburg. Effectiveness of 4 oat and 3 barley varieties.
- Soybean trials: 4 on-farm trials in Alpena and Montmorency County examining different results of micronutrient, fungicide, deer repellent techniques, and herbicides along with control plots.

Local research studies provide growers in our counties with data about what works best and leads to the healthiest crop yield in our Counties. This can be very different from what works further south in the state.

Agriculture and Agribusiness

66,154
participants in MSU Extension agriculture and agribusiness programs

748
agriculture and agribusiness news articles, as well as 126 bulletins and fact sheets, published on the MSU Extension website

1,587
programs provided by MSU Extension agriculture and agribusiness educators

179,785
subscribers to agriculture- and agribusiness-related MSU Extension News Digests

AG PROGRAMMING

Michigan is agriculturally diverse both in what we produce and who produces it. MSU Extension goes beyond traditional methods of working with farmers with a strategy to reach farms at every level and size of production. We understand that some farmers may not be able to meet in person due to distance or timing of an educational offering, so we incorporate a vast array of online learning and digital outreach. We meet people where they are at, so they have the tools at the appropriate time, which is integral to farming success. In the past year, we have reached audiences in a variety of ways. 70% were in-person events, 19% were webinars, 6% were hybrid, and the remaining 5% were online courses.

Master Gardener and Natural Resources Programming



Newly onboarded MSU Extension Master Gardeners from several counties in northern Michigan at an orientation in Gladwin, Michigan, June 2026.



Patricia Makins, Montmorency Office Manager, began working with the MSU Extension Master Gardener Team in 2025 to promote and grow the program in Northeast Lower Michigan counties, like Montmorency County.

Extension Master Gardeners work on projects that improve communities in four major areas



Environmentally responsible gardening practices



Improving community and quality of life



Improving food security



Developing youth through gardening

Natural Resources Programs taken by Montmorency County Residents

Michigan Master Naturalist Program
Michigan Inland Lakes Convention
Essential Lake Ecology
2025 Introduction to Lakes Course
Selling Michigan Honey & Maple Syrup
Harmful Algal Blooms 101

There was a \$246.5 billion impact on Michigan's economy from food and agriculture, last year.

Montmorency 2026

Montmorency County Fair "Blue Jeans and County Dreams"



Vet Fest Briley Township Park July 17th



Office Services

MSU Extension offers a broad range of research-based educational outreach to county residents

PLAT BOOKS

Plat books available for purchase in our office for \$30.00 with cash or check written to AMCD.

Home, Yard and Garden

Toll Free Lawn and Garden Hotline: 1-888-678-3464 (1-888-MSUE-4MI)

The hotline is staffed by MSU Extension Consumer Horticulture Educators and [Master Gardener](#) volunteers; the Hotline is available weekdays 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. When calling the 1-888-678-3464 number, please make sure to choose Option #1 for the Hotline.

Garden Resources

For more information, visit the [Gardening in Michigan](#) website.

Educational Bulletins & Publications

Extension Educational bulletins / publications are sold in the office; however, best to call ahead for availability. You can also search for and order bulletins at our <https://www.bkstr.com/spartanbookstore> from the convenience of your home!

Soil Testing (Don't guess...soil test!)

Home Soil Test Kit (Residential Lawns, Vegetable Gardens, Flower Gardens, Trees and Shrubs)

Available to purchase for \$26 (includes postage) in our office with cash, check or credit card. Note: You must provide an email address as results will be sent directly to you via email. If you would like help interpreting test results, call our statewide Lawn and Garden Helpline at 1-888-678-3464, option 1.

Commercial (Agricultural Crops, Commercial Growers, Pastures and Wildlife Forage)

Soil mailers for sample collection **CANNOT** be ordered on-line but can be purchased at the office at a cost of \$18 each. Does not include postage.



Patricia Makins
Office Manager

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Email: msue.montmorency@county.msu.edu
Website: <https://www.canr.msu.edu/>
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/montmorencym sue/>

This past year
Montmorency County MSU
Extension has helped
community members
through phone, email,
Facebook and office walk-
ins

As MSU Extension continues to bring research and education to citizens across the state, three wonderful resources help reach every community member in our county:

MSU Extension Lawn and Garden Hotline (888) 678-3464

Calls answered by Extension Master Gardeners with the knowledge and resources to help with gardening and lawn questions.

Ask Extension canr.msu.edu/outreach/ask-an-expert

One-to-one answers from MSU Extension experts on topics such as lawns, agriculture, food preservation, natural resources, and more!

Soil Testing homesoiltest.msu.edu

Don't guess - soil test! Learn what vital nutrient your soil is missing for healthy growth in gardens, lawns, and crops. Purchase soil tests in our office or online.

Stay Connected!

Scan the QR code to sign up for monthly emails highlighting local MSU Extension events and information you can use



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