

NEWAYGO COUNTY ANNUAL REPORT 2024

- 4747 W 48th St., Suite 107 Fremont, MI 49412
- msue.newaygo@county.msu.edu | 231-924-0500
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Message from the District Director



I'm pleased to share the results of another successful year of collaboration between Newaygo County and Michigan State University (MSU) Extension. Your ongoing support has enabled us to positively impact the lives of youth, families, businesses, and communities. MSU Extension offers a diverse array of research-based educational services to county residents. Over the past year, we've helped families and individuals adopt healthier lifestyles, supported new and local businesses, provided opportunities for youth leadership development and career exploration, assisted farmers with business management and mental health, and much more.

Our staff, who live and work alongside county residents, are deeply embedded in community relationships and are responsive to community needs. We've embraced Newaygo County residents in our online community: offering virtual educational courses, answering questions on topics from gardening to food safety, increasing program awareness through social media, and providing a wealth of research-based resources on our website. Our partnership with you makes all of this possible. On behalf of the MSU Extension team serving Newaygo County, thank you for another remarkable year. We look forward to your continued support and hope you'll join us for one of our upcoming programs.

James Kelly
District Director

Staff

- Jennifer Bruin – Community Nutrition Instructor
- Florencia Colella – Farm Business Management Educator
- Ryan Coffey Hoag – Land Use Educator
- Erick Elgin – Water-Resource Educator
- Marge Peck – Office Manager
- Laurie Platte-Breza – 4-H Program Coordinator

Overall Impact



6,212 Total reach of activity in Newaygo County
(Programming, consultations, office visits, soil tests, tip-line calls)



1,744 participants from the county attending programs.



2,946 client consultations



281 programs (across the state) attended by participants from this county.



45 programs hosted in Newaygo County



24 answered Ask Extension questions



123 volunteers



20 community coalitions and partnerships within the county that MSU Extension employees are members of

Communications Outreach



31,306 contacts through social media, web activity, e-newsletters, and handouts.



140 Plat books, soil tests, and other resources sold in Newaygo County.



656 4-H youth enrollments



44 4-H Clubs



864 total youth participants



103 total volunteers



127,720 in dollar value
4-H volunteer time



452 # of county residents who
participated in health and nutrition
programs.



358 nutrition and physical activity
participants hosted in-county.



4-H Days at Legends Ranch

"Each summer, Newaygo County 4-H youth visit Legends Ranch in Bitely to enjoy activities like archery, fishing, nature trails, arts and crafts, and the Wildlife Center. During one visit, two men from another organization praised the youth for their good behavior and emphasized that the future of Legends Ranch lies with them. Their kind words deeply touched me. 4-H Days at Legends Ranch is funded by a grant from the Gerber Foundation." – 4-H Program Coordinator

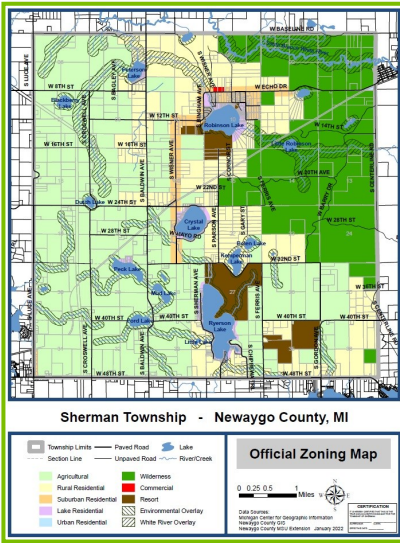


4-H Horse SPIN Club

"I attended the last two riding lessons and really enjoyed learning about the horses at Camp Henry. I miss Roman a lot. I was wondering if I could get a job or volunteer to work with the horses?" – Alivia Ekkel

The Newaygo County Horse 4-H SPIN club, a collaboration between 4-H and Camp Henry funded by the Fremont Area Community Foundation, is becoming increasingly popular, often filling up in less than a week. Alivia's enthusiasm for the club and her willingness to volunteer at Camp Henry to spend more time with the horses is a true success story. It speaks volumes about the impact of the program!

Land Use Education Programming



Newaygo County Land Use Educator Ryan Coffey Hoag provides our local communities with comprehensive land use education to build an informed body of land use decision makers, promote intergovernmental cooperation and resource sharing, and encourage community and economic development.

In 2024, Ryan provided service to 22 of the 24 townships in Newaygo County, Village of Hesperia, cities of Fremont, Grant, Newaygo and White Cloud, and County of Newaygo. He assisted 19 municipalities with zoning ordinance amendments and adoption of new ordinances that promote new business and housing development. Additionally, he assisted 16 communities navigate the difficult complexities of addressing solar energy systems in a changing regulatory landscape. Services provided by the Newaygo County Land Use Educator save our local units of government many tens of thousands of dollars per year in professional fees, limit liability risk and promote revenue growth.

Conservation Education Programming



Educator Erick Elgin led a team of local conservation organizations (listed below) to bring MSU Extension’s Conservation Stewards Program (CSP) to Newaygo County. CSP is a unique 8-week class where participants learn about the conservation and restoration of Newaygo County’s natural communities. The program included field trips and in-person classes from conservation experts in locations all around Newaygo County. The class was full, with 30 participants from various West Michigan Counties.



The program was so successful that it will be offered again in the fall of 2025. CSP could not have been delivered in Newaygo County without the following amazing local conservation partners:

Newaygo County Environmental Coalition, Fremont Area Community Foundation, Michigan Nature Association, Newaygo Invasive Plants Project, Newaygo Conservation District, and the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians.

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