

OGEMAW COUNTY ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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Message from the District Director

At MSU Extension, we believe that learning and working together make our communities stronger. In 2024, we helped farmers grow food more efficiently and overcome emerging challenges, supported individuals and families in making healthy choices, and gave young people opportunities to develop leadership skills and explore interests and careers. Our programs bring people together to solve problems and create new opportunities across District 4.

This year, we focused on supporting local communities, improving stewardship of our natural resources, and helping people prepare for the future. Whether through 4-H youth programs, farming workshops, community development support or health and wellness education, MSU Extension continues to provide valuable resources that make a difference in everyday life.

We are proud of the work we've done and excited for what's ahead. Thank you for being part of this journey with us. Together, we can build a brighter future for Ogemaw County.

Impact



21 commercial, farm, and homeowner soil samples processed



207 participants in community, food, and environment programs from Ogemaw County



1,748 participants from the county attending programs



50 volunteers



245 youth enrolled in 4-H



238 programs (across the state) attended by participants from Ogemaw county



29,264,562 contacts through social media, web activity, e-newsletters, and handouts



223 participants in county agriculture programs

Ogemaw Educators and Students Supported in Lake Huron Research Exploration with Partners

Two educators from Ogemaw Heights High School, Dominic Goulette and Chris Powley, have taken Great Lakes education to new depths through an innovative collaboration. Partnering with Great Lakes Observing System (GLOS) experts Shelby Brunner and Katie Rousseau, they participated in the year-long Teaching Great Lakes Literacy program, managed by Michigan State University Extension and Michigan Sea Grant educators Angela Scapini, Brandon Schroeder and Meaghan Gass.

Engaging 45 students, the team explored GLOS observational data, developing a hands-on lesson that connects human activities to their impact on Lake Huron. Their outstanding work earned their classroom a \$2,000 stipend for enhanced learning experiences, while each teacher received \$1,000 in recognition of their curriculum development efforts, funded by the Great Lakes Fishery Trust.

This innovative lesson won't stay local—it will debut on the Center for Great Lakes Literacy website in 2025, inspiring educators and students across the region. Teaching Great Lakes Literacy selects educators annually to collaborate with scientists, co-designing data-driven lessons on key Great Lakes topics. Thanks to this program, Ogemaw County students are gaining invaluable environmental insights while their teachers lead the way in Great Lakes education.

"It was an amazing experience with wonderful facilitators. The professionals that were [part] of our group were outstanding and clearly showed a passion for what they do. All around, it was an amazing project!" - a teacher participant in the program

Monthly Mile Walkers

Alexandra Clemens, a community nutrition instructor, conducted a Physical Activity OTP (optimal practice) with the Rose City All Ages Summer Recreation program and began a physical activity environmental change effort with them called "Monthly Mile Walkers." This effort was aimed towards the youth at the summer recreation program, ages 4-17, to encourage easy, enjoyable and measurable physical activity goals. The program consisted of walking around the gym and keeping track of how many miles you walked over the full summer recreation program.

After finishing a Physical Activity, one-time presentation with Rose City All Ages Summer Recreation, Alexandra initiated the "Monthly Mile Walkers" that would last the full six weeks of the summer recreation program throughout June and July. She walked the length of the gym to place "mile markers" and a handful of youth helped with that process! Together the students and MSU Extension staff member walked a lap around the gym and converted their steps into how much of one mile one lap would be, then did the math to figure out how many laps would equal one mile. After the youth saw how easy it was to walk a mile, they started taking laps around the gym. Some walked, some ran, but all were excited to start on their Monthly Mile Walker journey. One youth said she planned to tell her friends about, so they could still 'hang out' while getting some physical activity in! Both Alexandra and members of the Summer Recreation program are excited to see the progress of the youth at the end of the program and are already thinking about how to expand these policy, systems and environmental site changes for next year!

Beef Herd Management Meeting

MSU Professor Dr. Dan Buskirk and Senior Extension Educator Phil Durst collaborated on a program called, "Selling more pounds of beef in the fall". Phil introduced the topic with a beef market outlook that emphasized the importance of larger calves at sale time. Buskirk presented 12 ways to improve beef pounds sold. Phil then followed with updates on emerging issues that can impact animal health. Ed Lynch from Merck Animal Health sponsored a meal for the event. The farmers were pleased by the program offering and talked about it after the meeting.

HPAI Biosecurity Meeting

The emergence of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in 2024 required response quickly to safeguard human health as well as maintain the health and productivity of dairy herds. Quick response was required, and Senior Extension Educator Phil Durst activated his network to respond to the issue.

On May 1, 2024, the Michigan Director of Agriculture and Rural Development issued an order mandating biosecurity practices at all Michigan dairy farms. On Monday, May 8, after numerous calls by farmers, Phil had a meeting to talk about the new order and how they could comply and the level of biosecurity each producer and farm may need.

Tai Chi for Arthritis and Falls Prevention

After participating in an online Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention class, participant J said, "I'm really enjoying this class, you've helped me to recognize so many details I hadn't quite gotten right." She shared that she had taken the class in both online and in-person formats, getting different benefits from each format. She appreciated being able to stand next to the instructor when in-person. She also appreciated being able to focus on the instructor and see the steps close-up when virtual, plus practicing from home. She shared that her balance and coordination have been greatly improved by participating in tai chi classes.

"I'm really enjoying this class, you've helped me to recognize so many details I hadn't quite gotten right." –Program participant

4-H International Exchange in both directions

Ogemaw County 4-H continues to foster life-changing cultural exchanges. This year, Marlee F. traveled to Japan through the 4-H Japan Outbound program, reuniting with Sora, a delegate her family had hosted in 2018. Staying with Sora's family, Marlee experienced Japanese culture firsthand, from exploring Tokyo DisneySea to learning traditional crafts. Their lasting friendship, sparked by 4-H, deepened through this unforgettable journey.

Meanwhile, Ogemaw County welcomed Sakura, a Japanese delegate, through the 4-H Inbound Program. Staying with a local family, she embraced rural Michigan life, attended the county fair and shared her culture by preparing a traditional Japanese meal.

Both exchanges showcased the power of 4-H in building lifelong friendships and cultural understanding. Marlee and Sakura's experiences highlight how 4-H connects youth across the world, creating bonds that transcend borders.



The value of partnerships:

Michigan State University Extension engages community partnerships to leverage resources, expand outreach, and address local needs effectively. By collaborating with organizations, businesses, and government agencies, MSU Extension strengthens programs in agriculture, health, youth development and community vitality, fostering sustainable solutions and improving the well-being of individuals and communities across Michigan.

Driving Success: Ogemaw County 4-H Takes Spotlight on Local Transit

Ogemaw County 4-H recently seized an extraordinary opportunity to showcase its vibrant community through a unique collaboration with Celebrate Ogemaw, Ogemaw County Public Transit and Dynamic Bus Ads. The result? A stunning bus wrap featuring local 4-H youth, proudly displayed as the bus travels around the county for several months.



The journey to create this eye-catching bus wrap began with an exciting photo contest. 4-H families across Ogemaw County were invited to submit photos capturing moments of their children participating in various 4-H activities. These images were shared online, and the community rallied together to vote for their favorites. The eight photos with the most votes received prime placement on the bus wrap, while every submitted photo found a place on the design, ensuring that no family was left out of this celebration of 4-H spirit.

Dynamic Bus Ads worked their magic, carefully designing and installing the bus wrap, which now showcases Ogemaw County 4-H youth in action—whether they’re participating in local clubs, learning new skills, or giving back to the community. It’s a colorful and dynamic representation of what 4-H stands for - growth, community and leadership.

The partnership behind this initiative is just as remarkable. Thanks to generous community sponsorships, Ogemaw County 4-H didn’t have to cover any costs for the bus wrap, making it a perfect example of how local organizations can work together for the greater good. Even better, this collaboration is set to continue annually for the next few years, providing Ogemaw County 4-H with an ongoing platform to raise awareness about its programs and inspire new families to get involved.

Ogemaw County Public Transit, which serves residents of all ages, now carries this message of youth empowerment and community pride throughout the region. As the bus travels the county, it will not only provide essential transportation but also serve as a moving testament to the power of partnership and the bright future of Ogemaw County’s 4-H youth.

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