

Michigan State University Extension in Saginaw County: Solving Problems & Increasing Opportunities for Today & Tomorrow

On August 2, 2022, Saginaw County residents will be asked to continue investment in MSU Extension programs that helps families, businesses and professionals gain the knowledge they need to be healthy and safe, do their jobs better, build strong communities, protect local environments and help young people gain the confidence and skills needed to be successful. MSU Extension programs in Saginaw County help reduce the cost of public investment in health care as well as governmental remediation services and increase the educational resources that helps families and local communities thrive.

Saginaw County residents receive \$5 in return value for every \$1 the county invests in MSU Extension programs.

Delivering Education Despite the Pandemic

While stay-at-home orders hindered access to many opportunities during the pandemic, Saginaw County residents logged 1,599 registrations for MSU Extension online educational programs during the 2020 and 2021 program years. County residents accessed 508 online programs designed to improve parenting and child well-being, promote healthy and safe eating, and improve adult and youth social and emotional well-being among the many online MSU Extension educational offerings.

- Saginaw County agriculture producers logged 61 registrations for the virtual MSU Extension Integrated Crop and Pest Management updates in 2020-2021. MSU Extension educators help farmers minimize risk and maximize profit by educating on strategies such as selecting planting sites, best production practices for specific crops, nutrient management and appropriate use of cover crops.
- In 2020 and 2021, Saginaw County residents registered attendance for 314 virtual educational sessions designed to help individuals manage stress and mental well-being. They participated in MSU Extension programs such as RELAX: Alternatives to Anger, Stress Less with Mindfulness, tai chi and a variety of other programs designed to help people incorporate mindful practices to best manage mental health.

Empowering and Equipping Youth Success

Sixty-eight percent of Saginaw County 4-H seniors graduating between 2012 and 2017, enrolled in college. This is a rate 14.8% higher than the overall Michigan high school graduate college enrollment rate of 53%. An investment in Saginaw County MSU Extension and 4-H is an investment in the positive development of Saginaw County young people.

- In 2020, Saginaw County MSU Extension 4-H programs engaged 966 Saginaw County youth aged 5 to 19 in special interest and short-term learning opportunities. There were also 260 Saginaw County youth engaged in 4-H clubs during the pandemic led by 67 community-based volunteers. 4-H club participation has proven to help prepare young people for work, especially for jobs in science, technology, engineering and math.

Educating for Greater Farm Profitability

Saginaw County is home to producers managing 8,000 heads of cattle including 3,000 dairy cows and farms planted with 232,000 acres of field crops that produced 22.8 million bushels of corn, oats, wheat and soybeans in 2021 (U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service, County Estimates, 2021).

- Access to evidence-based information is critical when business decisions depend on it. MSU Extension is a leader in discovering knowledge and helping farmers apply tested solutions that benefit their farms, their families and their communities. Saginaw County MSU Extension educators provided access to articles, webinars and timely social media posts designed to help producers manage the challenges of coronavirus disruptions to agriculture, prepare for tax season and manage the ongoing financial and business planning needed for farming.
- Michigan ranks fourth in the nation in sugarbeet production,* and MSU Extension provides evidence-based educational support for local sugarbeet farmers. The MSU Extension Sugarbeet Advancement program works to improve sugarbeet production through on-farm research trials and educational programs and demonstrations. In-person events attracted 980 attendees and virtual events attracted nearly 1,200 views.

*U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service. (2021). *Crop Production 2020 Summary*. p. 68.

Helping Families Make Healthy Decisions

MSU Extension delivers affordable, relevant, evidence-based education to help adults, young people and families eat well, consume food safely and stay healthy.

- By December 2020, Saginaw County had 34,643 residents receiving federal food and nutrition assistance. MSU Extension educators provided 139 sessions of nutrition and health education programming to individuals and families resulting in 50% of participants increasing muscle strengthening activities, 25% increasing overall physical activity, 36% engaging in advance meal planning and 31% comparing prices during grocery shopping. All of these practices are proven to improve family diet and physical well-being.
- More than 200 Saginaw County veterans receiving federal nutrition assistance received MSU Extension educational support to help them increase their physical activity, manage their food budgets, and prepare healthy and satisfying meals.

Supporting Early Childhood Development

Research shows that the possession of skills such as verbal and nonverbal communication, ability to work cooperatively, decision-making and problem-solving are all predictors of academic success. Since the development of these basic life skills begins in early childhood, it is vital that parents and caregivers are equipped with the tools to help children embrace these skills and learn to grow and thrive.

- In 2020, MSU Extension early childhood educators delivered 280 educational events that offered 438 sessions designed to help parents and caregivers understand the social, emotional and positive discipline needs of young children, and provide them with an early start to learning language skills, math, science, resiliency and technology. Of the 8,655 adults participating in these programs, 181 were Saginaw County residents.

MSU Extension is eager to continue serving Saginaw County residents in strong partnership with the County Board of Commissioners. By working together, MSU Extension can continue to help people improve their lives by bringing the vast knowledge resources of MSU directly to individuals, families, businesses and communities.