

COUNTY ANNUAL REPORT 2025

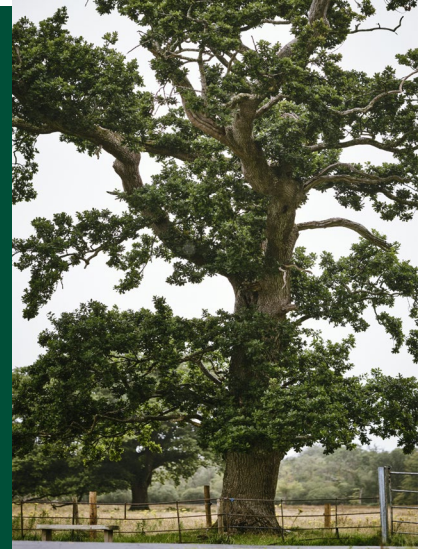
Washtenaw County

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Follow us on social media

<https://www.facebook.com/msuewashtenawcounty>



Message from the District Director

Photo Credit: Valeria on Unsplash

The long-lived steadfast oak trees found throughout Michigan can live between 100 to 600 years. To thrive, the oak does more than endure change; the oak embraces it by making the necessary adjustments to maintain the lives it supports as well as prepare for new growth. Change is inevitable. Embracing it can lead to growth, resilience & transformation. MSU Extension is no exception.

Throughout our 153-year history, we've seen lots of changes to our programs & because of your support, we continue to bring you quality information whether we must alter the format, content, or the method in which we bring it to you. In 2025, the National SNAP-Ed Program ended. That meant that we had to say goodbye to nearly 100 colleagues & friends here in Michigan. MSUE and families across Michigan felt the loss of the SNAP-Ed Program deeply. But like the mighty oak, MSUE is adapting to the change & continuing to share researched-based information through a variety of other programs.

Our resilient staff are working hard to identify emerging issues & ways that we can provide value in the communities we serve. We are seeing individuals and families being strengthened by our health programs for chronic diseases, fall prevention, parenting & food safety. Adults in various stages of their lives are participating in homeownership & financial webinars such as **"Thriving on a Fixed Income"** & **"Mortgage Foreclosure Basics."** Farmers & gardeners are benefitting from our programs on disease prevention, invasive species, nutrient & waste management. Youth are participating in programs such as 4-H, financial literacy & special interests that make them **"Beyond Ready"** for their future.

Groups such as non-profits, corporations, & governmental agencies also benefit from Extension's various educational opportunities. Entire departments in non-profits have taken mental health first aid training. Municipalities are leveraging science-based data on housing, tourism, & data centers from community & economic development tools to assist them make decisions about how to shape their communities.

Whatever training or information you need to thrive in a changing world, whether you want virtual or in-person programming; it's very likely that, **Extension Does That!**



6,400 participants from the county attended programs



454 Ask Extension questions answered



537 4-H youth enrollments



332 volunteers serving in county

Overall Impact



21 community coalitions within the county that MSU Extension employees are members of



10 Nutrition and Physical Activity Policy System and Environmental sites receiving PSE education within the county



56 Partnerships within this county



44 policy, systems, and environmental changes with those PSE sites



841 statewide programs attended by participants from this county



405,711 contacts through social media, web activity, articles, radio e-newsletters, and handouts in this county



788 client consultations



227 counseling hours for Washtenaw County MSU Product Center clients

Economic Development, Environmental Conservation, and Agricultural Productivity



72,517 participants in community, food, and environment programs from across Michigan



\$246.5 Billion annual impact of food and agriculture on Michigan's economy



380 soil test samples processed



436 participants in county agriculture programs



6,400 participants attending programs hosted in the county



66 clients serviced in this county from the MSU Product Center



476 virtual programs statewide related to Financial Education, Food Systems, Water and Environmental Quality, Government and Businesses



\$3,930,602.00 Annual Sales in this county from MSU Product Center clients



217 4-H Volunteers



3,042 youth participants in programs hosted in the county



\$ 71,328 4-H volunteer hour value



648 nutrition and physical activity participants hosted in-county



3,643 total Washtenaw County youth participating in statewide programs



1,080 county residents who participated in health and nutrition programs



13,661 total volunteers statewide



291 people participating in Food safety programs including ServSafe in Washtenaw County

More Than a Treat: How One Partnership Funded 12 Futures

As the cost of college and universities continue to rise, youth and families are looking more than ever for scholarship opportunities. Although Washtenaw County 4-H fundraises to provide scholarships for our 4-H graduate seniors, we are always looking for ways to increase the number of scholarships we can provide each year. The 2025 generous donation from the Saline Area Lions Club made it possible to provide 12 scholarships rather than our usual 6-8 scholarships to Washtenaw County 4-H seniors.

In 2024, Washtenaw County 4-H was without a 4-H Kitchen and the Saline Area Lions Club stepped in to bring their ice cream trailer to sell ice cream to visitors. We were overjoyed with this service but even more thankful when they gave \$1,000 of the funds raised back to Washtenaw County 4-H for scholarships. In 2025, they once again brought their ice cream truck and sold ice cream. But to our surprise, we were given not \$1,000 but \$3,500 of funds for 4-H scholarships. This huge donation came at a great time as we received 12 applications for senior scholarships from 4-H members. These funds allowed our 4-H Advisory Council to provide scholarships to each youth applicant. This partnership between Washtenaw County 4-H and the Saline Lions Club is a shining example of community collaboration.

Washtenaw County 4-H was also honored to be invited to the Saline Area Lions 50th anniversary celebration in October 2025. This celebration was a great opportunity to hear more about Saline Area Lions impact on their community and to meet many of the volunteers who make this organization possible. As many organizations are struggling to find volunteers, Saline Area Lions Club is also looking for more members to make their work possible. We hope that by highlighting their donation, we can bring other community members to see their work and possibly volunteer. If you are interested in volunteering with the Saline Area Lions Club, please send an email to salinelions@gmail.com



Photo Credit: Mandy Rogers



Beyond Ready

Photo Credit: [4-H](#)

Adapting for Tomorrow: Equipping Youth for Lifelong Success



Washtenaw County 4-H youth teen leader who took initiative to plan and lead a rabbit showmanship clinic

Photo Credit: Jenny Speyer

4-H Youth Program

Many people associate 4-H with farming or animal husbandry, but the organization offers so much more! As Michigan's largest youth development program, 4-H provides a wide variety of opportunities for young people to explore their passions. Each year, thousands of youth across Michigan engage in hands-on learning, from science and technology to clothing and textiles, and much more.

These fun, educational experiences help develop skills that empower youth to lead and succeed throughout their lives. After all, leadership isn't innate—it's cultivated through growth and experience! To learn more about participating in Washtenaw County 4-H please visit the link here:

[Washtenaw County 4-H - Washtenaw County.](#)

In 2025, participation grew significantly, with 362 exhibitors representing 22 clubs and entering 4,309 projects, compared to 320 exhibitors and 3,830 projects in 2024.

From Quiet to Confident: Empowering Youth to Speak, Lead & Succeed!

Over the past year, Washtenaw County 4-H has prioritized helping youth build confidence and strengthen public speaking skills—essential tools for success in school, careers, and everyday life. By intentionally embedding communication and leadership opportunities into programming, 4-H is ensuring youth are **“Beyond Ready”** for whatever comes next.

Through a range of hands-on experiences, youth stepped into leadership roles and practiced real-world communication. Programs such as the Showbook Committee reintroduced youth voice into decision-making, while workshops focused on interview and presentation skills helped participants prepare for formal settings. Additional opportunities—including Project RED, Still Projects presentations, and local radio appearances—allowed youth to engage diverse audiences and build confidence in public and on-air speaking.

These experiences led to meaningful growth. Youth who once hesitated to speak are now volunteering for leadership roles, confidently sharing their ideas, and representing 4-H in their communities. Participants report feeling more prepared for interviews, presentations, and future opportunities.

The impact extends far beyond these individual programs. By fostering confidence and communication skills, Washtenaw County 4-H is developing capable, articulate young leaders who are ready to contribute to their communities. These efforts create lasting public value by preparing the next generation to lead, advocate, and inspire with confidence.

Pathways to Stronger and Resilient Families



MSU Extension Parenting Education Website
[The importance of parent education - Child & Family Development](#)

Child & Family Development Program

Parents and caregivers play a critical role in shaping a child's development and academic success. To support families across Michigan and promote school readiness, MSU Extension offers research-based programs for parents, caregivers, and early childhood educators—those who are in the best position to nurture and advocate for children's growth.

These programs empower families by enhancing early childhood skills in science, math, preliteracy, and social-emotional wellness. By increasing caregivers' understanding of child development, MSU Extension helps foster a strong foundation for lifelong learning and success. To Learn more about how to attend a class or event please visit the link here: [Child & Family Development](#)

Six Years Later: The Lasting Impact of Parenting Education

A recent phone call highlighted the lasting impact of parenting classes offered in 2019. A former participant shared how what began as an effort to "fix" her child and attend a single class turned into a journey of personal growth—realizing that change starts from within.

By adjusting how she communicated and responded, she created a ripple effect that strengthened relationships with her daughter, spouse, and extended family. Though the transformation took time, the results were profound.

Her story reflects how small, intentional changes can lead to stronger families, improved well-being, and lasting impact beyond the classroom.

Quote from Participant

"You changed my whole family. You gave me my life, my family, my freedom, because I can sleep, I can breathe."



MSU Extension Parenting Education Website
[What are the best toys for children? - Child & Family Development](#)

Protecting Health Through Safe Food Practices



Photo Credit: [Facebook](#)

Food Safety

Ensuring food is safely prepared and handled can prevent foodborne illnesses, reducing healthcare costs and enhancing overall community health. MSU Extension offers a range of classes to support food entrepreneurs, community volunteers, childcare providers, and consumers interested in food preservation. Our high-quality, affordable programs teach the importance of safe food practices and helping individuals make informed choices to protect their health.

From food safety to proper preservation techniques, MSU Extension's research-based education empowers Michigan residents to enjoy healthier, safer food and water in their daily lives. To learn more about our program, please visit the link here: [Safe Food & Water](#)

Reducing Food Waste, Increasing Impact and Maximizing Safety

Food pantries often face uncertainty about whether donated food is still safe to distribute after the date on the label has passed. The *Safe Food Handling for Food Donations: BASIC training* addresses this challenge by clarifying that many dates reflect food quality, not safety helping pantry staff make informed decisions.

Through this training, volunteers & staff gain practical tools to confidently assess shelf-stable foods, reduce unnecessary waste, and safely extend the use of donated items. As a result, more food reaches individuals and families experiencing food insecurity.

Participant feedback highlights the value of the program, particularly the clear, easy-to-use handouts that support day-to-day pantry operations. By combining education with practical resources, this training strengthens food pantry efforts—ensuring safe food handling while maximizing distribution and minimizing waste.

Quote from Participant

“Thank you for the training and for all the handouts. In particular, the “quality vs. safety” and “shelf stable food storage” info sheets are great and will be very helpful for volunteers and staff in our food pantry.”



Photo Credit: Google Images



Photo Credit: Google Images

Healthier Communities, Stronger Futures



Photo Credit: MSU Extension
Community Nutrition

Community Nutrition

MSU Extension's team of experts is dedicated to promoting better nutrition and physical activity across Michigan. By offering evidence-based educational programs, we empower individuals and communities to make informed decisions that lead to healthier lifestyles.

Our staff works directly with schools, and community organizations, providing valuable resources that foster long-term, sustainable changes. Whether it's at the kitchen table or in school cafeterias, MSU Extension's programs are helping to create healthier environments and improve the well-being of Michiganders, one community at a time. To learn more about our program, please visit the link here: [Nutrition](#). Programming is supported through the [Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program](#).

Building Healthier Plates Through Nutrition Education

In July 2025, the EFNEP Nutrition Buddies program at Trinity Health supported adult participants in developing healthier eating habits and greater confidence in the kitchen. Through hands-on learning and practical discussions, participants explored balanced nutrition using the MyPlate model, gaining a clearer understanding of how to proportion carbohydrates, proteins, and fruits and vegetables in their daily meals.

One participant shared how impactful this visual guidance was, noting that the model revealed an imbalance in their diet—highlighting a reliance on carbohydrates with limited protein and few fruits. As a vegetarian, the participant was especially interested in identifying accessible, plant-based protein options. Through the program, they were introduced to nutrient-rich choices such as beans, peas, and lentils, many of which were incorporated into featured recipes.

Participants also built practical food preparation skills, including safe food thawing techniques, while trying new, budget-friendly recipes like Zubeanie Boats and Tuscan Bean Soup. These experiences not only increased knowledge but also encouraged lasting behavior changes at home.



Photo Credit: [Beyond meatless Mondays - Nutrition](#)

Seeds of Progress: Gardening for a Greener Future

From Overgrown to Outstanding: A Garden Reimagined

Since beginning training with the MSU Extension Master Gardener program in June 2025, a new volunteer has contributed 185 hours redesigning the children’s garden at Arbor Hospice. This project focused on transforming an overgrown “five senses” garden into an inviting, educational space for hospice staff, residents, and community visitors.

The garden, previously overtaken by aggressive plants and weeds, was replanted with non-toxic varieties featuring vibrant colors and textures, along with walking paths to encourage exploration. Fun facts about the plants were incorporated to engage visitors and stimulate interest in nature and gardening. During a garden tour hosted by a local garden club, the volunteer shared knowledge about the plants with approximately 50 attendees and introduced a scavenger hunt that engaged both children and adults.

This effort highlights the impact of Master Gardener volunteers in fostering community engagement, hands-on learning, and accessible outdoor spaces for all.

Washtenaw MSU Extension Master Gardener Program

The MSU Extension Master Gardener Program (EMG) offers comprehensive horticulture education & leadership training for volunteers passionate about making a difference in Michigan communities. Volunteers in this program are dedicated to enhancing the quality of life through horticulture and beautifying neighborhoods across the state.

The program serves two key purposes: 1) to provide adults (18 years or older) with research-based horticulture education, equipping them with the knowledge to become skilled gardeners, and 2) to cultivate a network of trained gardeners who, through volunteer activities, teach sustainable, environmentally-friendly gardening practices to others in their communities. To learn more about our program, please visit the link here: [MSU Extension Master Gardener Program®](#)



Overgrown trees and weeds in the garden at Arbor Hospice before the EMG project started

Photo Credit: Carol Lawton Washtenaw County MSU Extension Master Gardener



The revitalized garden after completion of the EMG project

Photo Credit: Carol Lawton Washtenaw County MSU Extension Master Gardener

From Planning to Ownership

Creating Financial Security for All



Photo Credit: [The financial behaviors that may support financial well-being - MI Money Health](#)

Finance and Homeownership

Money and housing can be stressful for everyone. MSU Extension delivers impactful, research-based financial education, strengthening community resilience in Washtenaw County. The [Homeownership Education course](#) guides aspiring homeowners, demystifying the complex homebuying process. This course provides a Certificate of Completion required for different down payment assistance and loan programs.

[Targeted workshops and webinars](#) are offered on a wide variety of money management topics, delivering crucial financial skills. "Train-the-Trainer" style courses, featuring *Your Money, Your Goals* and [Get Ready, Get Set, Get Going](#), provide frontline workers and individuals with actionable tools to effectively guide clients in financial conversations.

[HUD-certified housing counseling](#) offers personalized, one-on-one guidance for individual financial challenges. For more information, please visit the website at mimoneyhealth.org.

On the Path To Recovery: Making the Connection Between Finances and Healing

A recent Making Money Decisions class at Dawn Farm, (a residential treatment facility), highlighted the power of combining financial education with personal growth. Despite a hot room and a larger group than expected, the class became an engaging space where participants explored SMART goal setting, prioritized financial objectives, and practiced decision-making with tools like satellite mapping.

A spending plan game sparked deep insights, helping participants see how income previously spent on substances could now support meaningful goals. By fostering a safe, collaborative environment, the class encouraged vulnerability, reflection, and connection between recovery and financial health.

Participants left feeling empowered, with several calling it the "best class they'd had," demonstrating how financial education can inspire lasting change and support a stable, sober future.

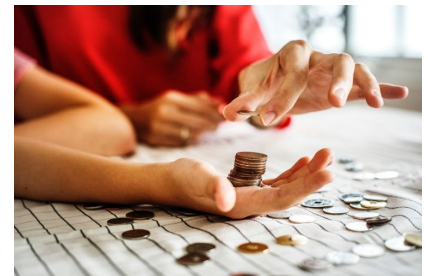


Photo Credit: [Where does money come from? - 4-H Youth Money Management](#)

Connecting Communities: Our Partners in Action

Bishop Elementary School	Neutral Zone 2025
Chelsea District Library	Peace Neighborhood Center
Chelsea School District Partnership	Saline Area Lions Club Partnership
Chelsea SRSLY Partnership	Saline Young Adult Program
Child Care Network Lending Library	Soil Beneath our Feet
Copy of Washtenaw Area Council for Children	Southeast Livingston County Recreation Authority
Cranbrook Tower	The Farm at Trinity Health
CSP Washtenaw Planning Partner- City of Ann Arbor Natural Areas Preservation (NAP)	The Farm at Trinity Health 4-H Junior Master Gardener Program 2025
CSP Washtenaw- Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner's Office	Trinity Health
Cuddle Creek Childcare	Trinity Health Lifestyle Medicine
Cumulus Media Ann Arbor	Washtenaw Co. Great Start Collaborative
Dawn Farm (Downtown & Stony Creek)	Washtenaw Community College Library
Disability Network Washtenaw Monroe Livingston	Washtenaw County Conservation District Partnership 2025
Eva Boyd - Reach One Teach One	Washtenaw County Farm Council
Flowers Early Learning	Washtenaw County Farm Park
Fortis Academy	Washtenaw County Foster Grandparents Washtenaw County Office of Community & Economic Development
Girls Group 4-H Explorations Days Collaboration	Washtenaw County Rural Education Days 2025
Invenergy/Washtenaw Solar Energy LLC Partnership	Washtenaw Success by 6 Great Start Collaborative
Ivybrook Academy	Westerman Preschool and Family Center
Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw (JFS)	Whitmore Lake Area Human Services
Life After Incarceration: Transition and Reentry (LAITR)	Whitmore Lake Early Learning Center
Lincoln Early Childhood at Model	WIC Washtenaw County
Livingston Conservation District	WISD
MHealthy	

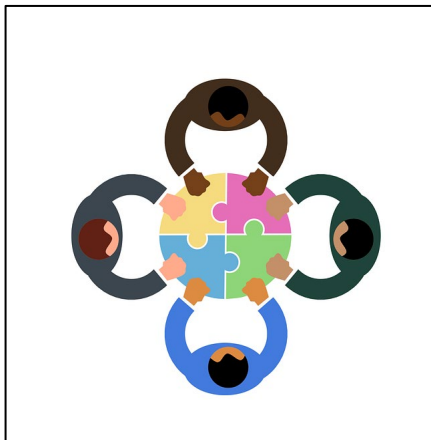


Photo Credit: Google Images



Photo Credit: Google Images



Photo Credit: Google Images

County Progress Starts with Collaboration

Barrier Busters
Budget Committee
Chelsea Youth Mental Health Community Collaborative 2025
Conference for Food Protection
Farm Council Fundraising Committee
Garden Advisory Council
Horse association
Livestock and Dairy
Livingston County Conservation District
Showbook Committee
Small Animal
Southeast Michigan Stewardship Coalition
Still Projects Committee
Washtenaw Advisory Council
Washtenaw Alliance for Children and Youth 2025
Washtenaw County Food Waste and Packaging Policy Action Team
Washtenaw County Project RED Committee
Washtenaw County Youth Commission 2024-2025
Washtenaw County Youth Commission 2025 – 26
Washtenaw Farm Council
Washtenaw Food Policy Council Food Access & Nutrition Policy Action Team



Photo Credit: Google Images

Statewide Network of Resources to Help You

Ask Extension offers one-to-one answers from MSU Extension experts and Extension Master Gardener volunteers on topics such as lawns, gardening, agriculture, nutrition and physical activity, food safety, food preservation, natural resources, community development, youth programming and more! Ask Extension: www.canr.msu.edu/outreach/ask-an-expert

Lawn and Garden Hotline: 888-678-3464 Hours: M,W,F 9:00 am–12:00 pm (Year-round)

Crabgrass, brown spots, or powdery mildew, the Lawn and Garden Hotline can give you information on all your home gardening questions.

Soil Mailers: MSU Extension home lawn and garden and commercial soil mailers provide access to personalized fertilizer recommendations for thousands of Michigan residents every year. The home lawn and garden mailer can be purchased in person at MSU Extension offices or online from the [MSU Extension bookstore](#). Commercial soil mailer are purchased in person at MSU Extension offices. Questions about soil results can be sent to MSUsoiltest@msu.edu

Have a home
gardening or
lawn question?



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Statewide Resources You Can Access from Anywhere

Food Safety Hotline: 877-643-9882 Hours M-F, 9:00 AM-5:00 PM

Do you have questions about food expiration dates, how long food will last or preserving foods at home? The Michigan State University Extension food safety hotline can help answer these types of questions and concerns.

MSU Extension Bookstore <https://shop.msu.edu/collections/msu-extension-bookstore> Look for bulletins, publications and MSU Extension products at theBookstore!



MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension

Did you know?
Dial gauge pressure canners need to be tested annually to ensure dial gauges are accurate.



MSU Extension can help!

The graphic contains three small images: a close-up of a dial gauge, a hand testing a dial gauge with a tool, and a pressure canner with a dial gauge on top.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension **Operating Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.**
Call 877-643-9882

FOOD SAFETY HOTLINE



Ask Extension <https://www.canr.msu.edu/outreach/ask-an-expert>

The collage includes images of jars, a digital thermometer showing 188.0, a refrigerator with produce, and jars of jam. A small image shows a receipt for a product with a date of 26/11/2016.

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Michigan 4-H License Plate: The Michigan 4-H license plate is a great way for members of the Michigan 4-H community to show their 4-H pride while supporting 4-H youth development programming. The plate prominently displays the signature 4-H clover and part of the proceeds from every sale and renewal will go to support Michigan 4-H youth. https://www.canr.msu.edu/4h/Support_Michigan_4_H/michigan-4-h-license-plate



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