



# KALAMAZOO COUNTY 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

## MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR



Despite the ongoing pandemic of 2021, Michigan State University Extension continued to work for Kalamazoo County youth, adults, businesses and communities providing outstanding research-based education and community development programs.

With the learning curve of online programming behind us, we continued to expand and perfect our digital educational offerings.

Considering the health and safety of participants, many of our face-to-face programs provided both an in-person and remote option to participate. Our educators found creative ways to offer outdoor programs and engage with schools and community groups while

maintaining social distancing.

The investments we have made in online program development and staff capacity over the last two years have augmented our face-to-face work and strengthened relationships. This report is a snapshot of some of those accomplishments.

Please reach out to us with ideas for programs, contacts for new partners or feedback on our work. It takes all of us to bring the best programming to the district.

Thank you for your continued partnership and support of MSU Extension in Kalamazoo county.

*Julie Pioch, District 13 Director*

## KALAMAZOO STAFF

**Veronica Bolhuis**

4-H Program Coordinator

**Mariel Borgman**

Community Food Systems Educator

**Beth Clawson**

Natural Resources Educator

**Julie Ford**

Administrative Assistant

**Wrifton Graham**

Extension Master Gardener  
Program Coordinator

**Nancy Hostetler**

Administrative Assistant

**Amanda Hulet**

Community Nutrition Instructor

**Christopher Imler**

Consumer Horticulture  
Educator/Veterans Liaison

**Jeremy Jubenville**

Floriculture Educator

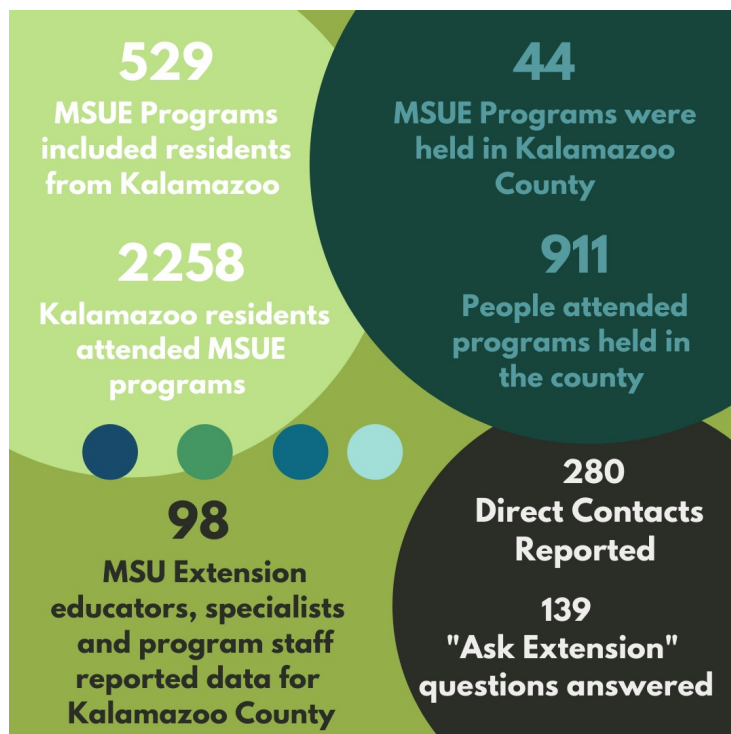
**Jane Toll**

Community Nutrition Instructor

**Amanda Williams**

4-H Program Coordinator

## BY THE NUMBERS



## CONTACT US

MSU Extension / Kalamazoo County  
201 W. Kalamazoo Ave. Room 306  
Kalamazoo, MI 49007  
269-383-8830

[msue.kalamazoo@county.msu.edu](mailto:msue.kalamazoo@county.msu.edu)  
[www.canr.msu.edu/kalamazoo/](http://www.canr.msu.edu/kalamazoo/)

<b>KALAMAZOO COUNTY GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATION</b>	<b>2019</b>	\$304,077
	<b>2020</b>	\$290,200
	<b>2021</b>	\$293,400



## 4-H AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

A total of 377 youth were enrolled in traditional Kalamazoo County 4-H Clubs in 2021. There were an additional 97 youth who participated in six weeks or longer special interest clubs. One hundred twenty-one volunteers dedicated their time to mentoring, teaching, and providing leadership to the program. In order to maintain a high-quality program that is safe and welcoming to all youth, much of our 4-H program coordinators' time was spent recruiting, training and coaching volunteers. To equip our volunteers with skills to manage conflict, each leader was required to participate in a short online training in order to stay in good standing in 2021.

### A FOCUS ON HEALTHY LIVING

MSU Extension provided face-to-face and online programs to engage youth in topics to help them develop and maintain healthy habits. In total, there were 12 programs that engaged 144 Kalamazoo youth in exercise, healthy eating, cooking lessons and developing healthy social emotional habits and self-awareness. Program highlights included:

*4-H Ninja Training*, a six-week series where youth learned spatial awareness, while improving agility and balance in addition to learning steps to overcome life's obstacles.

*Mindful Me*, a program where young people grades 1<sup>st</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> in the Kalamazoo County YMCA summer program were introduced to the practice of mindfulness through a variety of hands-on activities and storytelling. Youth learned and practiced mindful habits that led to developing a sense of self, time management, stress management, and emotional regulation. Activities emphasized mindful eating, being present, visiting feelings, belly breathing, being a bucket filler, going on listening walks and meditation. Teachers reported that through the summer youth were more mindful of their behavior and were becoming better at managing their own feelings.

### SCIENCE LITERACY

Yearlong work with youth in classroom settings and summer programs resulted in 136 youth participating in 25 science literacy programs in 2021. MSU Extension staff partnered with Corteva to use a variety of hands-on teaching tools to demonstrate to youth the importance of pollinators in the production of the food they eat and about the variety of types of pollinators. MSU Extension youth development staff also worked with 4-H youth and the City of Galesburg, to plant a pollinator garden behind the city hall. The garden includes a variety of native plants and educational signage to educate visitors about the importance of creating pollinator habits. Other well-attended youth programs included the scientific study of rabbits, poultry, goats, and horses where youth worked hands-on with the animals, learned about their care, nutrition, breed, and how to properly handle each animal.

### PREPARING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR SUCCESS

Michigan 4-H provides youth with hands-on opportunities to explore future careers and entrepreneurship while enhancing their financial literacy and important skills for success in the workforce. In 2021, Kalamazoo County youth participated in the 4-H Financial Fitness and Fun program to learn about setting financial goals, saving, budgeting, banking basics, and credit through fun, interactive learning activities. Kalamazoo students also participated in an online financial goal setting session as part of MSU Extension's Adulting 101 series. Workforce prep education occurred at Galesburg-Augusta High School where 39 students practiced their interviewing skills and learned about how to be successful once they received a job offer.



*4-H'ers work throughout the year to prepare their projects for competition at the fair.*



*Young people enjoyed hearing about the importance of pollinators to the food supply from MSU Extension 4-H program coordinator Veronica Bolhuis.*





## COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEMS

MSU Extension has been a core partner of the Zoo City Food and Farm Network development for the past four years providing resources and technical support to navigate urban agriculture policy and zoning and community food system development. In 2022, Zoo City Food and Farm Network will break ground on three urban agriculture sites in the Edison Neighborhood, located just east of downtown Kalamazoo.

Zoo City is a local food policy council, industry association, and network of cottage food businesses, folk artisans, urban farmers, and conscientious consumers with the goal of "disrupting food systems" by building in more urban food production, community-based food advocacy, and policy change to create more resilient local food systems.

Their three urban agriculture sites will be owned in a cooperative by network members and will begin food production in spring 2022. One site is outfitted with raised beds and a building to house educational programming. A second site is equipped with a hoop house.

*From Remi Harrington, Zoo City Food and Farm Network Founder:*

*"MSU Extension has personified equity-centered and restorative institutional support in our food sovereignty movement. MSU Extension has partnered with us in this work and has provided us with the backing we've needed to move our shared goals forward.*

*The wealth of resources are incomparable. Everything from the knowledgeable staff providing us with exhaustive and comprehensive information without being prescriptive, the industry specific convenings, the accessibility and relationship building are of the most superior quality.*

*Our community food systems educator Mariel Borgman stood boldly by my side during hard times of rejection and dismissal; when it was lonely and people couldn't see our end game. I know that it was scary for her, because it was scary for me, but we stood together with others that shared our values and we have two sites that we've developed and own and are stewarding even more property now.*

*This has been an amazing ride and I feel confident, equipped, and supported with MSU Extension as a partner in this reaching our food sovereignty goals that are necessary for achieving a vast and sustainable food system for all."*



*Zoo City Food and Farm Network urban agriculture sites located in the Edison Neighborhood.*



## NATURAL RESOURCES

### MICHIGAN MASTER NATURALIST

The Michigan Master Naturalist (MIMN) program is designed to create a cadre of individuals dedicated to instituting sound environmental practices on their properties. As a certified Michigan Master Naturalist, participants are encouraged to share their knowledge with neighbors and their communities. In 2021, a Southwest Michigan course had 30 trainees including seven from Kalamazoo County. The program is typically site-based but was successfully transitioned to a virtual platform due to COVID-19. Several weeks of training focus on core conservation topics such as stewardship of land and water, sustainability, native flora and fauna, invasive species, restoration of habitats, reduction of carbon footprint, Michigan's ecosystems, and adapting to climate change. Participants create a conservation plan for their land. One participant said: *"I enrolled in this class with my wife to further our knowledge of the natural world and to spend some quality time together roaming around some of Southwest Michigan's finer natural areas...our home is now in Texas Township which was historically oak savanna*

*habitat. I am a food scientist by profession and a naturalist by nature. I hope this class helps me improve my knowledge as a naturalist to support volunteer activities which include being a Michigan Nature Association steward, an SWMLC volunteer, a Two Rivers Coalition volunteer, and a citizen scientist helping out with studies of butterflies, stream quality, herpetology, bumblebees, and invasive species."*

### INTRODUCTION TO LAKES

Now in its fourth year, 13 participants from Kalamazoo County joined 286 attendees in the six-week Introduction to Lakes course. The series focuses on developing local leaders through education in lake ecology, shoreline management and other topics important to keeping our 11,000 Michigan lakes healthy. The series combines self directed educational sessions with online communication between participants and instructors through topical discussion forums. In addition to the online course content, participants attend three Ask-an-Expert webinar sessions with instructors and outside experts.



## AGRICULTURE

### 2021 GREAT LAKES EXPO FACE-TO-FACE

More than 2000 producers from around the country, including 60 from Kalamazoo County attended the Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable & Farm Market EXPO and Michigan Greenhouse Growers Expo in Grand Rapids in December 2021. For three days, producers attended sessions on fruit, vegetable, and specialty crops, greenhouse production, farming operations, farm labor and food safety. MSU Extension educators including Kalamazoo's Mariel Borgman and Jeremy Jubenville played instrumental roles in organizing the event and presenting the latest scientific research, critically important to Southwest Michigan's agriculture economy.

### MI AG IDEAS TO GROW WITH VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

MSU Extension agriculture educators rose to the challenge in 2021 by pivoting their traditional educational efforts to providing clientele with access to programs and information from their homes or offices. One significant effort developed to meet this need was the MI Ag Ideas to Grow With virtual conference.

This unique event combined the previous, in-person annual events of Ag Action Day (typically held at Kalamazoo Valley Community College), Branch County Farmers Day, and Southwest Michigan Horticulture Days into a month-long virtual program. It featured science-based tracks from livestock production, fruit and vegetable production, sustainability, soil health and irrigation to horticulture and home gardening. A track was also offered for youth participants. In all, 55 different education sessions were offered.

Each day focused on specific topics with sessions occurring at the top of every hour. The horticulture, home gardening and animal agriculture sessions were featured daily throughout the week. Educators worked with state officials to make it possible for attendees to receive RUP and CCA credits for eligible sessions.

While this program was developed to provide access to education typically delivered at MSU Extension's in-person programming, the success of the virtual platform exceeded the expectations of the planning team. During the month-long event participants from 47 counties in Michigan including 31 from Kalamazoo County attended sessions and over 980 sessions were accessed by clientele. Attendees included some who had not participated in the traditional in-person programs in the past. One participant said: *"Thank you so much for putting on this conference. I've attended the past few years and I always learn a lot. You guys do a really good job of providing various quality materials and knowledgeable speakers."*

## CONSUMER HORTICULTURE

### EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER

Since 1978, well over 40,000 residents from 80 Michigan counties have been involved in the MSU Extension Master Gardener (EMG) Program. Through their volunteer outreach, EMGs share science-based, environmentally-sound gardening knowledge and engage citizens and empowered communities in the following areas: environmentally responsible gardening practices; improving food security; improving community and quality of life; and developing youth through gardening.

In 2021, 14 new Extension Master Gardener trainees successfully completed their 13-week coursework and look forward to joining 102 Kalamazoo County EMGs in educating the public through interesting Kalamazoo County gardening projects in 2022.

Consumer Horticulture Educator Christopher Imler and Writton Graham, Extension Master Gardener Program Coordinator joined the district in 2020. Since then, Kalamazoo County has seen significant additional programming efforts related to gardening and Extension Master Gardener volunteer education. The local offices in the district have also received increased support in answering homeowner gardening questions and outreach.

### CONSUMER HORTICULTURE HIGHLIGHTS

- 52 Kalamazoo County EMGs attended Horticulture Café sessions designed specifically to maintain EMG educational momentum via Zoom. Topics included honeybees and pesticides, water quality, Hidden Lake Gardens, trees and their language, and the SW Michigan Land Conservancy.
- 26 Kalamazoo County participants attended Cabin Fever Sessions. In addition to exploring new technical topics this year, such as indoor seed starting, beneficial insect relationships, and season extension practices for the home gardener, 2021 featured conversations with local community partners who are using gardens as tools for community empowerment, inclusion, and food sovereignty.
- 139 Kalamazoo County residents used MSU Extension's ["Ask Extension"](#) online tool to get answers from MSU Extension experts for questions ranging from food safety, agriculture and gardening, to natural resources questions relating to frogs and snakes to land use and home ownership questions.



## GOVERNMENT & COMMUNITY VITALITY

### CITIZEN PLANNER

The MSU Extension Citizen Planner (CP) program provides lay planners a unique program to learn the fundamentals of planning and zoning. Thousands of Michigan residents have graduated from the program since 1999. In 2021, 91 people participated in the CP program via Zoom and 206 completed the self-paced CP Online program. Six graduates were from Kalamazoo County.

### RESILIENCY PLANNING SERIES

In 2021, MSU Extension hosted an engaging series of live webinars about resiliency planning for communities. In partnership with the Comprehensive Economic Recovery Initiative (CERI) at MSU's Center for Community and Economic Development, 220 Michigan community leaders (five from Kalamazoo County) tuned in to learn what it means to achieve socio-environmental and economic resiliency; how to utilize innovative approaches to planning and public engagement while also hearing about key state and federal programs. The series was met with positive feedback from everyone involved, and requests for the recordings continue one-year since the series was introduced.

### KEEPING ELECTED OFFICIALS IN THE KNOW

The Current Issues Affecting Michigan Local Governments Webinar Series is for officials and staff at all levels of government, as well as any Michigan resident interested in learning about public policy issues. MSU Extension partners with the Michigan Association of Counties and Michigan Townships Association and the MSU Extension Center for Local Government Finance and Policy to present community-engaging topics. Eight Kalamazoo County leaders participated in 2021.

### FINANCIAL HOMEOWNERSHIP EDUCATION

MSU Extension's goal is for Michigan residents to have an opportunity to participate in personal finance and home ownership education regardless of their financial status. MSU Extension certified housing and money management counselors deliver trusted, unbiased education that is easy to understand and can demystify common money and home ownership best practices. In 2021, 29 Kalamazoo County residents participated in programs to help them financially prepare and understand the process of home buying, be an informed renter, navigate the family dynamics and explore the practical considerations and conflicts surrounding the passing on of personal possessions through a popular program called "Who Gets Grandma's Yellow Pie Plate."

### ARPA FUNDS TRAINING

MSU Extension partnered with the Michigan Association of Regions to host 14 workshops around the state for local and tribal government officials to discuss American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund spending opportunities. Participants attend the sessions both in person and remotely. Sessions covered ARPA fund rules, best practices and early examples of ARPA spending; practical considerations for contracts, accounting, and project management. Group discussion centered on regional collaboration, leveraging funding sources and setting priorities. Over 750 government representatives participated (19 from Kalamazoo County).

One participant said: *"Great job! I am thinking more broadly about ways to use our ARPA funds. I was very pleased with the attendance, the facilitation, and the information shared as well as the flow of the workshop. Thank you! I can think of many ways to use this extra revenue."*

### FISCALLY READY COMMUNITIES SERIES

Kalamazoo County community leaders attended the four-part Fiscally Ready Communities series, created to assist communities that want to establish, measure, and maintain policies to increase operational and financial effectiveness and safeguards. MSU Extension and the Michigan Department of Treasury partnered to help local governments work toward fiscal health by sharing best practices in fiscal sustainability. The series topics included: Financial Best Practices Overview, Budgeting for Fiscal Sustainability, Capital Asset Management and Planning, and Managing Internal Controls.

### KALAMAZOO COUNTY CLIMATE COALITION

Building off a 2020 series of educational and networking meetings of Kalamazoo County leaders around climate change, Government and Community Vitality Educator Tyler Augst led a community visioning process to identify climate health issues in Kalamazoo County. Issues were identified through a four-part input process that included conversations over Zoom with key stakeholder groups and an online survey with 119 respondents from Kalamazoo County. This work was done in partnership with MSU's School of Planning Design and Construction and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and culminated in a report summarizing the issues identified, survey results, and outlining example recommended action steps for continued climate and health adaptation work in Kalamazoo County.





## HEALTH AND NUTRITION

### FOOD SAFETY

In 2020, as the coronavirus pandemic progressed forcing people to stay home, interest in gardening and preserving food at home skyrocketed. This was seen by the enormous interest in our online food preservation classes as well as in retail settings where garden seeds, canning jars, lids, and canners became precious commodities and very hard to access. After moving quickly to pivot MSU Extension food safety classes to an online format there was an explosion of interest as evidenced by more than 10,000 people registering for online classes from June-December 2020.

Continuing into 2021, we recognize that online learning offers opportunities to reach more people with education on safe home food preservation practices. Distance learning can address the discrepancies caused by socioeconomic and geographic differences, schedules, and ease of accessibility. The team reached 7,189 people in nearly 400 programs including 97 participants from Kalamazoo County. Classes such as Preserving MI Harvest Food Preservation were offered from mid-January through early December 2021. Each Preserving MI Harvest program included a lesson, and an expert panel to answer consumer questions. A variety of timely and seasonal preservation topics were covered in order to provide research-based education and resources to consumers on safely preserving food at home.

Long-awaited ServSafe classes were held face-to-face in November 2021 after a halt to in-person trainings due to COVID-19. Eleven Kalamazoo County food professionals enrolled in this industry-required training for food handlers.

### SOCIAL EMOTIONAL HEALTH

The MSU Extension health team offers a variety of programs to help people learn to improve their lives through educational programs in social emotional issues, chronic disease, addiction and pain management. Health team highlights for 2021 include:

- Mindful Mondays Lunch & Learn teaches and encourages the use of mindfulness self-care skills to help participants feel better and enjoy life more. Research has shown that practicing mindfulness is effective in reducing stress-related symptoms such as worry, depression and physical tension, and may be helpful in managing chronic conditions such as cardiac disease and diabetes. Topics covered in these Monday sessions included breathing techniques, mindful eating, changing negative self-talk, and mindfulness for parents and caregivers. This series reached more than 2000 participants including 57 from Kalamazoo County.
- RELAX: Alternatives to Anger is a four-part educational series designed to help adults, parents and caregivers increase their knowledge about anger issues and put anger management and healthy relationship skills into practice. Through presentations, group discussion and skill-building activities, participants learn what anger is, what triggers anger, calming down and de-stressing methods, the principles of problem solving, effective communication skills and forgiving and letting go of the past. The health team reached nearly 600 participants with 14 from Kalamazoo County.

### NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

With a focus on reaching those in the community who are eligible to receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Benefits (SNAP), MSU Extension works with community partners to present one-time lessons and 6 to 8 session series on nutrition and physical activity education with students, adults and seniors. The SNAP education curriculum is an evidence-based program that helps people lead healthier lives, teaches people about good nutrition and how to make their food dollars stretch further.

In 2021, the Kalamazoo team and community nutrition instructor colleagues from neighboring counties reached more than 654 youth and 506 adults in Kalamazoo County. Sessions were taught both in person and online.

