

OAKLAND COUNTY ANNUAL REPORT 2025

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Message from the District Director



Kristi Evans
District 11 North Director
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At Michigan State University Extension, we transform lives through education—supporting individuals, families, and communities across Michigan. From agriculture and environmental education to youth development and community engagement, our 600+ staff deliver trusted, research-based knowledge where it’s needed most.

In 2025, we empowered families, strengthened youth and continued to deepen our community impact. This year also marked an important transition, as MSU Extension moved out of the county health department and the county's general fund and is now proudly aligned within the Oakland County Parks Department, strengthening our connection to place-based learning, conservation, and public spaces. With strong partnerships and deep community roots, we are building a stronger Michigan and a better Oakland County. Thank you for being part of our journey.

Impact



16,768 reached through community events and fairs



873 answered Ask Extension questions



\$3,498,482 worth of time has been contributed by volunteers



838 volunteers



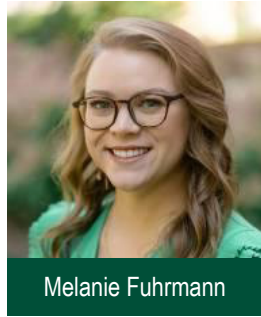
3,842 participants in health and nutrition classes



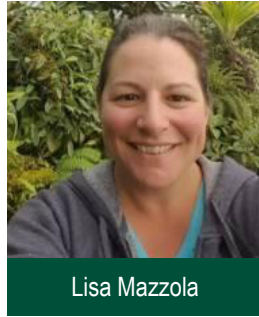
1,616 consultations



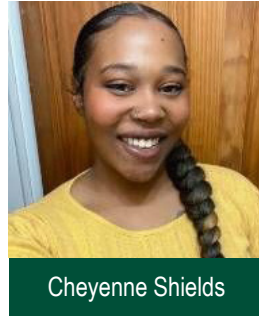
Bindu Bhakta



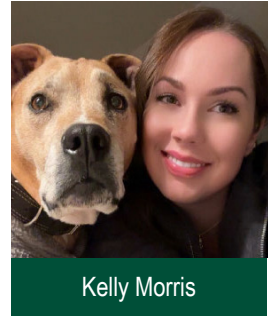
Melanie Fuhrmann



Lisa Mazzola



Cheyenne Shields



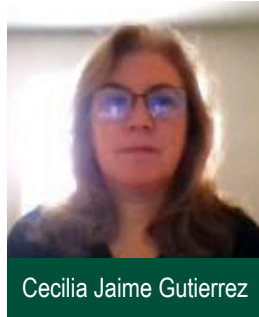
Kelly Morris



Caitlin Splawski



Jordan Hewitt



Cecilia Jaime Gutierrez



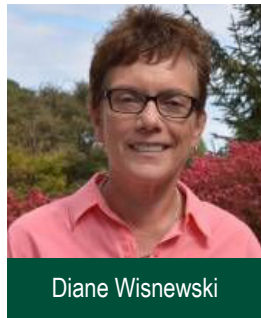
Amy Safaoui



Catherine Morris



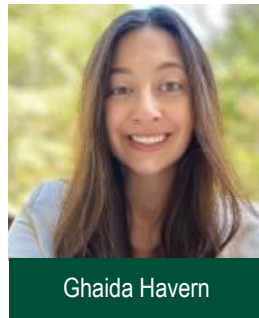
Waverly Eubank



Diane Wisnewski



Lisa Tams



Ghaida Havern



Janice Recinos



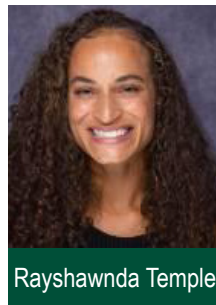
Katie Peet



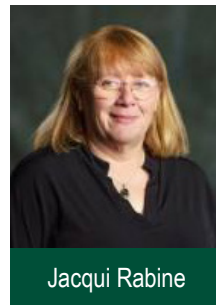
Derek Plotkowski



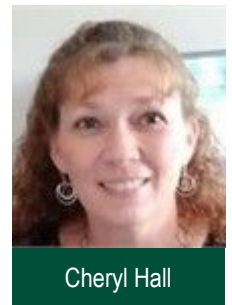
Sophia Zollner



Rayshawnda Temple



Jacqui Rabine



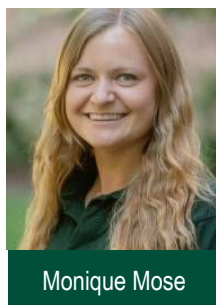
Cheryl Hall



Leanne Frost



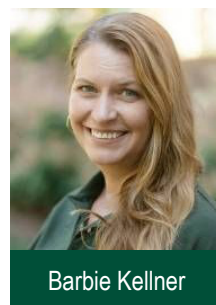
Hannah Sentgerath



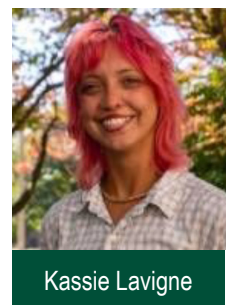
Monique Mose



Destiny Pearson



Barbie Kellner



Kassie Lavigne



4-H Youth Programming



1,248 of 4-H youth enrollments



8,040 of total youth participants



265 of total volunteers



Chicken Embryology SPIN Club at Notre Dame Academy

Third grade students hatch eggs in an incubator in their classroom while learning about embryo development, scientific record keeping, and fun chicken facts.

I scream, you scream, we all scream for ice cream!

Einstein’s little geniuses celebrated the new year with an ice-cold treat. Using hands-on STEM activities to re-engage and re-focus our youth for this year’s success. Elementary students learned how to make ice cream in under 5 minutes with just 5 ingredients. A self-made treat we couldn’t beat!



4-H Discovery Day

Discovery Day is one of Oakland County's largest 4-H events. It is an all-day event open to the public and provides an opportunity for Oakland County 4-H clubs to showcase their 4-H projects and recruit new youth and volunteers.

Oakland County Extension Master Gardeners

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION



3,609 Monthly Oakland Gardener readers



3,783 People reached through Smart Gardening outreach efforts in 2025

"Amazing newsletter every month. You and your team do a great job."

Reader comment



52 NEW Oakland County Extension Master Gardeners welcomed in 2025



Novi Home Show 2025

MSU Extension Educators and Smart Gardening trained Extension Master Gardener (EMG) volunteers engaged with attendees at the Novi Home Show through presentations, and youth activities to reach a **total of 742 people**.

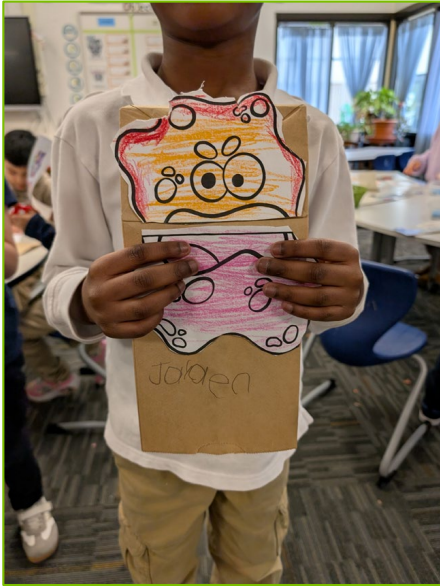
"I always turn to MSU Extension when I have gardening questions! I know you will always have an answer that I can trust. "

Home show participant



Extension Master Gardener Onboarding 2025

Trainees participated in guided tours of active project sites. The goal of these sessions was to ensure volunteers feel prepared, supported, and connected as they begin their service in the community.



Creative Germ Puppets: A Fun Hands-On Hygiene Lesson

Kindergarten students at International Languages Academy (WHRC) participated in MSU Extension’s Show Me Nutrition program and enthusiastically created colorful germ puppets using paper and paper bags, turning a simple craft into a fun, hands-on learning experience. As they colored and assembled their unique designs, the activity helped introduce important concepts about germs and hygiene in an engaging and memorable way. The students enjoyed bringing their puppets to life, making the lesson both creative and educational.

"We always prioritize attending the MSU Extension programs when we see them on the calendar."

Participant in Strengthening Family Connections Through Mindfulness and RELAX



Cooking Matters: Building Confidence in the Family Kitchen

Strong participant commitment, with consistent attendance and engagement, was the key to this program. Over time, participants experienced a meaningful shift in mindset, moving from seeing cooking as difficult and time-consuming to viewing it as enjoyable and manageable. They gained confidence in preparing healthy meals at home, which positively impacted their family life by creating more opportunities to cook and spend time together.

Health and Nutrition Programming

Supporting Families, One Space at a Time

Key Grace Academy, a small K–8 school in Madison Heights, is transforming part of its daycare into a cozy, private lactation space for breastfeeding families. With strong parent input, staff support, and grant funding, the initiative aims to create a safe, comfortable environment for infants and ensure long-term care through ongoing maintenance and community support.



Before funding came to an end MSU Extension implemented 35 policy, systems or environmental changes to sites, which impacted over 2,500 individuals and reached over 1,000 individuals through the classroom.

Strawberry Preservation Workshop



Youth have a stronger connection to where their food comes from and interest in cooking and food preservation when they are involved in these experiences firsthand. This is exactly what 4-H youth were able to experience at the 4-H Strawberry Preservation Workshop at Tollgate Farm. Youth, ranging from kindergarten to 6th grade, came to Tollgate Farm for this two-hour program. The children visited the farm's strawberry patch where they learned about production, harvesting, and local agriculture. Then, they learned how to safely preserve strawberries by making their own freezer jam with a research-based recipe and food safety practices.

Cultivating Success



Empowering Michigan's specialty cut flower growers through farm tours

The specialty cut flower industry in Michigan has seen a surge in interest over the past decade, attracting many new growers with limited agricultural experience. These aspiring farmers often lack formal training in both horticulture and business planning. Recognizing this gap, MSU Extension launched the Specialty Cut Flower Farm Tour Series to provide hands-on learning and peer-to-peer engagement.

"The wealth of information was invaluable. Thank you so very much - much appreciated."



From Education to Action: Seed Sowing

The Seed Sowing workshop at Henry Ford Hospital's West Bloomfield campus combined hands-on learning with community impact. MSU Extension Master Gardeners strengthened their seed-starting skills while directly supporting the Henry Ford Greenhouse in launching this year's herbs, vegetables, and flowers, reinforcing sustainable gardening practices and community partnerships.

Driving Business Growth and Job Creation in Oakland County

Through the Product Center, we supported Oakland County entrepreneurs and small businesses, generating measurable economic impact through targeted, one-on-one assistance.

Impact Highlights:

- **\$1.25 million** in increased sales
- **\$5.4 million** in annual sales supported
- **35 jobs** created
- **9 jobs** retained
- **60 businesses** served





Conservation Stewards help combat Oak Wilt Disease in northern Oakland County

The Michigan Conservation Stewards Program (CSP), first offered in Oakland County in 2006, equips adults with the skills to support land and water stewardship in their communities. In Fall 2025, **30** new stewards joined more than 266 alumni.



As part of the program, participants complete capstone projects addressing real-world conservation needs. Graduates, along with their families and classmates of Blue Heron Headwaters Conservancy, collected and planted over 1,000 white oak acorns across Oakland County.

Their project helps combat oak wilt, a disease that has been devastating red oak trees in Michigan. Because white oaks are more resistant, planting them ensures forests can continue to thrive even as red oaks decline.

Oak trees are a vital keystone species, supporting insects, birds, and entire ecosystems. Efforts like this help protect biodiversity and the future of Michigan's natural landscapes.



“One of my favorite aspects of this capstone project was collaborating with Kari, a fellow Conservation Steward from the Fall 2025 cohort. The project was successful because of how much help from community we received along the way. Kari crowdsourced the acorns, and we brought in our kids and family to help us plant them! Kudos to Blue Heron Headwaters Conservancy for designing a project that was clearly delineated and actionable.”

Elena Mityaeva- 2025 CSP Oakland graduate

Tollgate Farm and Education Center



The 160-acre farmstead provides non-formal learning for children, families, and adults, offering the unique opportunity to experience hands-on agriculture in an urban environment.



Sweet Success: Maplefest 2025 Draws Large Crowds

Tollgate Farm and Education Center once again tapped into the sweet traditions of spring with its beloved annual Maplefest, welcoming families from across Southeast Michigan to explore the wonder of maple syrup production.

PumpkinFest A Celebration at Tollgate Farm

Tollgate Farm hosted their annual PumpkinFest in October. Families rode wagons out to the Scarecrow Trail and pumpkin patch, enjoyed live music, and met friendly farm animals. Hands-on activities, such as decorating mini pumpkins and playing themed games, concessions and educational displays added to the experience. PumpkinFest offered something for everyone.



An “all-you-can-eat” pancake celebration, complete with locally made maple syrup. “It’s not just about the pancakes,” one attendee shared. “It’s about learning where our food comes from—and having fun doing it.”

Tollgate Farm and Education Center



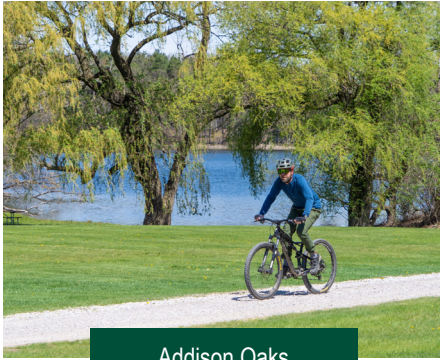
Planting Seeds of Purpose

MSU Extension Tollgate Farm and Education Center launched an inspiring new partnership with the Living and Learning Enrichment Center in Northville, a nonprofit dedicated to enhancing the lives of individuals with disabilities. This collaboration created meaningful work-based learning opportunities for Living and Learning participants, transforming Tollgate Farm into a space for skill-building, confidence, and community connection. Twice a week throughout the summer, participants worked alongside a Living and Learning staff coach with the aid of Tollgate team members.



Farm Sprouts Early Learner Program Launches

MSU Tollgate Farm & Education Center is celebrating the wildly successful launch of its newest early childhood initiative, Farm Sprouts, a hands-on farm adventure designed for children ages 2–4. Since its debut, the program has quickly become a community favorite, with all initial sessions selling out and demand continuing to grow.



Addison Oaks



Oakland County Farmers Market



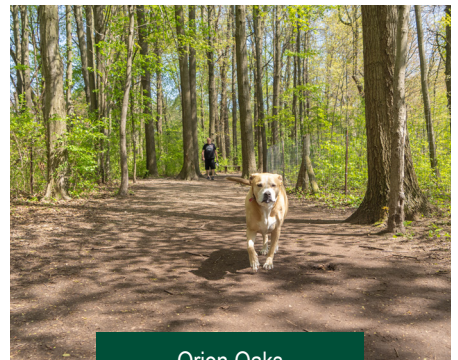
Holly Oaks ORV Park



Independence Oaks



Lyon Oaks



Orion Oaks



Red Oaks Nature Center



Red Oaks Waterpark



Rose Oaks



Springfield Oaks



Waterford Oaks

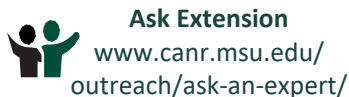


White Lake Oaks Golf Course

Thank you to all our partners who share our mission of helping people improve lives through education.

A Mothers Touch Daycare - Novi	Great Lakes Ace Hardware	Oakland Schools Technical Center
Alex and Marie Manoogian Charter School	Growing Pontiac	Orion Township Public Library
Alzheimer's Association of Michigan	Hess-Hathaway Park – Waterford Twp	Pontiac Academy for Excellence
Anderson Middle School - Berkley	Highland Township Public Library	Pontiac Public Schools
Ann Arbor Bonsai Society	Hinoki Foundation	Pontiac Public Library
Avondale GATE School	Holly Township Library	Royal Oak Manor
Baldwin Center of Pontiac	Honor Community Health	SEMBA (Southeastern Michigan Beekeepers Association)
Beverly Hills United Methodist Church	International Technology Academy - Pontiac	Senthamil International Learning
Birney Middle School - Southfield	Key Grace Academy - Madison Hts	SILAMBU Tamil School – Farmington Hills
Bound Together - Pontiac	Kiwanis Club of Pontiac	Solberg Tower Senior Housing Center
Bowers School Farm – Bloomfield Hills	KMG Prestige Residences at Sakura	Sorenson Nature Center - Holly
Camp Dearborn – Dearborn Parks and Recreation	La Casa Amiga - Pontiac	South Oakland YMCA
Center for Success - Pontiac	Lake Orion Methodist Church	Southern Michigan Orienteering Club (SMOC)
Centro Multicultural La Familia	Little Shepherds Homeschool	Southfield Parks & Recreation
Clarkston Family Farm	Madison Elementary School	Southfield Public Library
Clinton River Festival	Madison Heights High School	Springfield Township Parks and Rec Dept.
CNS Healthcare	Master Gardener Society of Oakland County	St. Fabian Catholic School
Lyon Township Public Library	Michigan State Fair Board	Susick Elementary - Troy
Corewell Health	Michigan State University Credit Union	The Farm at Trinity Health - Pontiac
Costick Activities Center – Farmington Hills	New Beginnings Ranch - Holly	VIBE Credit Union
Cranbrook Institute of Science	Notre Dame Academy - Pontiac	Walled Lake Consolidated Schools
DaVita, Inc.	Novi Chamber of Commerce	Walled Lake Farmers Market
Detroit Zoological Institute	Novi Christian Academy	Walled Lake Head Start
Einstein Elementary – Oak Park	Novi Community School District	Walled Lake Villa - KMG Prestige
English Gardens	Novi Parks and Recreation	Waterford School District
Farmington Hills Nature Center	Novi Public Library	Weingartz
Farmington Public Libraries	Oak Park Parks and Recreation	Henry Ford Hospital Greenhouse – West Bloomfield
Farmington Public Schools	Oak Park Preparatory Academy	West Bloomfield Parks and Recreation
Ferndale Area District Library	Oakland County 4-H Horse Council	West Bloomfield Township Public Library
Ferndale Public Schools	Oakland County Environmental Health	
Friends of Royal Oak Township	Oakland County Fair Board	
Friends of the Animal Barn - Tollgate	Oak Park Farmers Market	
Friends of the Novi Public Library	Oakland County Government	
Friends of the Rouge	Oakland County Parks and Recreation	
	Oakland Family Services - Pontiac	

A special thank you to Oakland County Parks Commission and their continued support!



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