

# Alcona County 2023 Annual Report

## IMPACT AT A GLANCE

<b>151</b>	PROGRAMS ATTENDED BY ALCONA COUNTY RESIDENTS
<b>14</b>	SOIL SAMPLES FROM ALCONA COUNTY PROCESSED
<b>75</b>	HEALTH & WELLNESS PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS
<b>26</b>	RESIDENTS ATTENDED FOOD SAFETY PROGRAMS
<b>431</b>	RESIDENTS SERVED BY SNAP-ED
<b>66</b>	ANSWERS FROM ASK EXTENSION FOR ALCONA RESIDENTS
<b>132</b>	AGRICULTURE PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS
<b>202</b>	YOUTHS ENROLLED IN 4-H
<b>2,441</b>	TOTAL ALCONA COUNTY RESIDENTS PARTICIPATED IN MSU EXTENSION PROGRAMMING IN 2023

## MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR

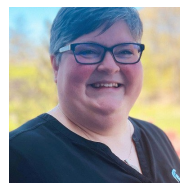
This annual report is a summary of the work that MSU Extension has done in Alcona County to help people improve their lives through an educational process that brings the vast knowledge and resources of Michigan State University to local communities in northeast Michigan.

In the following pages, you will discover the stories of progress, resilience, and empowerment that have defined our engagement with individuals, families, and organizations across District 4. From cultivating sustainable agriculture practices to nurturing the potential of our youth through 4-H programs, each achievement is a testament to the dedication of our team and the unwavering support of our communities.

We could not do this work without local partners in community government, local volunteers and supporters, or people who turn to us for the information and education that we provide. Please continue to use us as a resource for information and ask us questions.

Thank you for your support in 2023 and beyond.

Sincerely,



**Julie Darnton**  
District 4 Director



More than 322,000 people in Michigan visited our website last year. You may want to look here too!

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

## CHILDREN & YOUTH YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Michigan 4-H is growing current and future leaders. The largest youth development organization in Michigan, 4-H provides thousands of young people with experiential learning opportunities to explore new interests and discover their

passion. While learning about the world around them, youth gain valuable life skills such as responsibility, citizenship, teamwork, and problem solving. In 2023, **1,723** Alcona County youth participated in **51** programs.

## FINANCIAL LITERACY

**313** students from Alcona Elementary participated in financial literacy activities in partnership with the Alpena Alcona Area Credit Union.

**1st graders:** practiced identifying and sorting coins after brainstorming why we need money and how we get money

**2nd graders:** practiced identifying and sorting coins and using their coins to “buy” items after brainstorming why we need money and how we get money

**3rd graders:** used common coins to make combinations equaling 25 cents.

**4th graders:** learned about wants and needs and debated if or how items could be wants or needs

**5th graders:** calculated a budget based on the M&M candies in their fun-size package, then used that budget to “buy” items



The 2023 4-H Fall Soccer season had a total of **95** players on **11** teams.



The 2023 4-H Baseball/Softball season had a total of **177** participants.



# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

## HEALTH & NUTRITION

Through MSU Extension's nutrition and physical activity programming, Michigan adults, families, and children gain crucial knowledge about nutrition and healthy foods, increase their daily activity, and improve their food security. In 2023, **99** Alcona County residents participated in **18** health and nutrition programs.

## SUPPORTING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

MSU Extension partners with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services to provide SNAP-Ed, a nutrition education program designed to reduce hunger and food insecurity and promote healthy eating habits for people who are eligible for food assistance programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The goal of SNAP-Ed is to improve the likelihood that SNAP-eligible persons will make healthy food choices within a limited budget and choose physically active lifestyles consistent with the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the USDA food guidance.

In 2023, **431** Alcona County residents participated in **25** SNAP-Ed programs, such as Eat Healthy Be Active, Teen Cuisine, Cooking Matters and Cooking for One.

## SUPPORTING STRONG COMMUNITIES

As a result of MSU Extension's social-emotional programming, **75** Alcona residents learned how to manage their anger, reduce stress, thrive as caregivers, practice mindfulness and strengthen their families and communities' understanding of and response to mental health crises.

Residents participated in **ten** programs including Matter of Balance, Begin with a Breath, Powerful Tools for Caregivers, and Tai Chi for Arthritis and Falls Prevention.



After some discussion and brainstorming on how to begin incorporating more from scratch home-cooked meals for lunch at Alcona Elementary, through coaching with MSU Extension Community Nutrition Instructor, Michelle Luttrell, Lead Cook Bobbie decided to implement Try-Day Fridays.



Students who chose to try new foods received tickets that they could cash in at a prize box. During the lunch period, they were able

to vote, using colored chips to indicate whether or not they liked the recipe. Recipes with a majority vote of YES were added to the Lunch Menu.

Through SNAP-Ed, Bobbie was awarded a **\$1,000 grant** to receive new kitchen equipment to help in the preparation of from-scratch meals and produce from the school's hoop house.

Bobbie observed that students were excited to try new foods and requested more fresh fruits and vegetables. As a result of this success, the hot breakfast line has been added to Try-Day Fridays.

*"Students who normally choose peanut butter and jelly for lunch are giving the new recipes a try, and trying more foods than they normally do."*

*-Bobbie, Alcona Elementary Lead Cook*



# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

## STEWARDSHIP OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Our natural resources programs improve public understanding, help landowners and communities use those assets for sustainable long-term social and economic development and conserve natural resources for future generations. In 2023, **870** Alcona County residents participated in local and regional natural resources programs including the Wild About Conservation Webinar and Michigan Birding 101.



## SUPPORTING CLEAN WATERS

As leadership partners of the Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative, MSU Extension and Michigan Sea Grant supported local schools in fielding place-based stewardship education projects.

In the 2022-2023 school year, **372 students and 13 educators** from Alcona Community Schools were engaged in Great Lakes and natural resources stewardship programs.

In the 2023-2024 school year, **386 students and 15 educators** from Alcona Community Schools were engaged in Great Lakes and natural resources stewardship programs.

## AGRICULTURE & AGRIBUSINESS

The agriculture industry is developing and growing, contributing more than \$104.7 billion annually to Michigan's economy. MSU Extension works to increase farm success through workforce development opportunities, protecting the environment, ensuring food safety, reaching new markets, and advancing agriculture through applied research. In 2023, **132** residents from Alcona County participated in agriculture and agribusiness programs.

Project Restoring Alcona's Watersheds (RAW) is a student-led initiative that aids in the restoration of riparian areas close to home.



The Alcona High School environmental science classes successfully wrote a grant through the Lake Huron Forever Partnership Program to implement a rain garden as part of their Project RAW proposal for the Harrisville Harbor.

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