



Isabella County

2015 ANNUAL REPORT



MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT COORDINATOR



It is with pleasure that I bring another annual report of the good work MSU Extension is providing in Isabella County. Through our partnership with the local county, we are able to bring state and federal funding into the local Extension office to bring resources of the land grant university to this community. Our mission is to help "... people improve their lives through an educational process..." We do this by bringing resources from our four Institutes, or areas, of programming:

- Agriculture and Agribusiness
- Children and Youth (includes 4-H)
- Health and Nutrition
- Greening Michigan (Natural Resources, Leadership Development, and Economic and Community Development)

In 2015 MSU Extension continued to strive to meet the needs of the local communities and embarked on a large Needs Assessment process. In addition to conducting an online survey that netted over 5,000 responses statewide, we conducted "Issues Identification" sessions in each District. In our area - District 6 - we held three sessions in the last quarter of 2015. Almost 100 community members attended the facilitated discussions and answered questions like:

- *What do you think are the most important areas for Extension to focus their efforts over the next 3-5 years?*
- *What are the needs and opportunities in our communities that research and education can make a difference by addressing?*

Over the next several months, we will be processing the statewide and local data. We expect it will be very helpful in our program planning and resource allocation decisions. I would be happy to share the results of both the online Focus survey and the Issues ID sessions with anyone who is interested.

As always, I thank you for your commitment to MSU Extension and the people we serve in this great state and this county.

Shari Spoelman

District Coordinator

2015 Participation Numbers

Does not include phone and counter assistance

Soil Tests	88
Youth Served	2,538
Health & Nutrition Program Recipients	1,385
Food Safety Program Recipients.....	153
Agriculture Program Recipients.....	315
Gov, Nat'l Resources, and Comm Food Systems.....	62
Gardening / Consumer Horticulture.....	56

OUR MISSION...

Michigan State University Extension helps people improve their lives through an educational process that applies knowledge to critical issues, needs and opportunities.

CONTACT US

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DEVELOPING YOUTH AND COMMUNITIES

Isabella County 4-H By the Numbers – 2015	
Members enrolled in 4-H clubs	708
Registered adult leaders	335
Youth participated in camping programs	76
4-H Clubs	31
4-H Exploration Days	25

Horse Clubs - 4-H horse leaders and teen horse leaders plan and execute horse clinics, horse camp and horse shows. Isabella County has 26 horse leaders and 87 4-H members enrolled in horse projects. Some of their events include:

- Horse Shows - 10 shows at fairgrounds during spring and summer
- Isabella County Youth & Farm Fair
- State 4-H Horse Show - August, 10 members qualified to participate and represent Isabella County in 2015



Shooting Sports - 4-H shooting sports certified instructors and 4-H leaders plan and execute shooting sports clinics (qualifying shoots), practices, and the county shoot. Isabella County has 24 certified instructors and 87 4-H members enrolled in the shooting sports project. Youth must participate in at least one qualifying shoot in order to participate in the county shoot. The county shoot determines who is eligible for the 4-H State Shoot. In 2015, 17 youth from Isabella County participated in the State Shoot.



4-H Camps are coordinated between Isabella, Gratiot, Clare, and Gladwin counties. The summer camp experience is for 9-12 year olds; there is a Cloverbud Camp for youth ages 5-8 years. Summer camp features team building activities, craft making, and assembling projects like race cars or bird houses. At Cloverbud camp, innovative learning takes place and creativity is explored. Youth have an opportunity to enjoy old fashioned games. The camp counselors (youth ages 15-19) are given a chance to develop their leadership skills and help the younger kids enjoy their camp experience.



Developing Youth and Communities, continued

Livestock Producers - 4-H leaders and teen leaders plan and execute large animal clinics and events. Isabella County 4-H has 72 large animal leaders and 406 members enrolled in large animal projects (beef, dairy feeders, dairy, swine, and sheep).

- Moo Madness Clinic - Covered showing, fitting, caring and judging of dairy cattle; focused on nutrition and how a cow's digestive system works
- Sheep Weigh-In, Swine Tagging - May
- Dairy Feeder Weigh-In - March
- Steer Fitting Clinic—June
- Isabella County Youth & Farm Fair—July



Isabella County Youth & Farm Fair - July 18 - 25, 2015. This large central Michigan fair had 679 youth participants and hundreds of adult volunteers that include 4-H leaders, 4-H parents, fair board members, fair superintendents and fair volunteers.

Small Animal Association - 4-H leaders and teen leaders plan and execute small animal clinics and events. Isabella County has 25 small animal leaders and 298 4-H members enrolled in small animal projects (rabbits, poultry, goats, cats, dogs and pocket pets).

- Small Animal Showmanship Clinics - 5 clinics were held at the fairgrounds
- Dog Training/Obedience Classes - weekly classes in spring and summer
- Isabella County 4-H Rabbit & Cavy Show - May 2015

4-H Exploration Days - is an annual youth conference held in June on the campus of MSU that is open to all youth ages 11-19. This event is a learning experience that helps instill self-esteem, decision-making skills, independent thinking and leadership skills while giving youth a college campus experience. 25 youth and 3 adult chaperones from Isabella County participated in 2015.

Migratory Bird Day - In May, Isabella County 4-H partnered with the Soil Conservation District and the Ziibiwing Center for an International Migratory Bird Day Celebration at the Ziibiwing Center. The 4-H booth on environmental science opportunities had a hands-on activity of creating bagel bird feeders. There were 100 participants.

Environmental Education Day - This day of education and fun in May for Isabella County 3rd graders (619 students attended) included a 4-H booth on environmental science opportunities including a seed germination activity.

Connecting With Wildlife - This family fun day sponsored by Isabella County Parks & Recreation included an educational 4-H booth and hands-on activities for families. 23 community members attended.



On June 1, 2015, the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) issued a statement canceling all live poultry shows and exhibitions held in Michigan as a precaution against the spread of avian influenza. This decision affected all 4-H poultry shows at county and regional fairs. The ban also presented an opportunity for creative solutions and increased education. Pictured here is a youth explaining her poultry project to a fair judge using a model bird.

Developing Youth and Communities, continued

Photo Voice Project

The Voices for Food project is a grass roots effort to help address the issues facing the food system through the development of food councils. Community leaders in Isabella County are coming together to look at food systems issues, including food insecurities, hoping to make changes that will impact the people in their communities. This grant specifically included a tool called [Photo Voice](#) to help youth become involved, giving them the opportunity to have their voices heard and make a difference in the decisions the food council makes.

The youth met 5 times and each meeting had a different purpose. 1. Understand the project and food systems. 2. Photography skills. 3. Pick pictures for showcase. 4. Practice Public Speaking. 5. Showcase presentation to community.

The end result of this project included the youth sharing pictures that they took from their community with the newly formed Food Council. This happened at a showcase at the end of May. A PowerPoint presentation was created with all the pictures and the youth presented their own picture and story. Together, with the food council and youth, many great ideas were shared. This project gave adults in Isabella County the opportunity to see how youth can have their voices heard. It also gave youth the confidence to stand up and share their perspective in hopes to make changes in their community.



Dexter Lynch presents at the Voices for Food Showcase for the community.



Many people don't know what this is or how to use it in the kitchen.

- Turner Felton

What the youth that participated in the Photo Voice Project had to say about their experience:

"I learned about the different levels of access and who knows what in our area."

"I realized how lucky we are to have good resources."

"People don't realize they have a say. I didn't know I could change anything."

"This helped me to realize that there are programs that help youth share their perspectives."



Eating a variety of different colors of food is good.

- Turner Felton



Eggs stay fresh and are collected a few times every day. Eggs are laid in a clean nest.

- Hillary Pratt and Hannah McIntosh

HEALTH & NUTRITION

MSU Extension provides nutrition education to persons receiving (or eligible to receive) food assistance. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Education is funded through a statewide grant from the Federal Government (Farm Bill). SNAP-Ed plays a vital role in helping to improve nutrition among low-income individuals.

Youth Nutrition

- » **Show Me Nutrition** - This curriculum was taught in Mt Pleasant at:
 - four kindergarten classrooms
 - four first grade classrooms
 - four second grade classrooms and
 - four third grade classrooms
- » **Cooking Matters For Teens** - was taught at the Isabella County Day Treatment Center with Chef Emma Currie.
- » **Nutrition Presentations** - MSU Extension provided nutrition education at:
 - Summer PEAK day camp
 - 4-H Cloverbud Camp
 - 4-H Overnight Camp
 - National Nutrition Month and
 - Project RED



Adult Nutrition

- » **Presentations & Health Fairs** - Nutrition education presentations were provided at Commission On Aging Health Fair, Day of Play, Community days, Great Start Parents Conference and Special Olympics Summer Games.
- » **Eat Smart Live Strong** - This series, which was held at the Commission on Aging, taught older adults to eat more fruits and vegetables and to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity most days. The class also addressed goal setting and tips on saving money while eating fruits and vegetables.
- » **Eat Healthy, Be Active** - This program consists of six lessons, where participants taste test foods and share strategies for purchasing and preparing healthy foods on a budget. Eat Healthy, Be Active promotes healthy lifestyles and can help reduce the risk of obesity and chronic disease. Eat Healthy, Be Active was taught at Community Mental Health of Central Michigan.

Isabella County Nutrition Education Numbers—2015

Adults in Series	Adults in Presentations	Youth in Series	Youth in Presentations	Contacts	Presentations
40	364	386	577	4,287	42

KEEPING PEOPLE HEALTHY

» **Project FRESH and Market FRESH for Seniors** - MSU Extension provides the nutrition education portion for Market FRESH for Seniors and WIC Project FRESH. There were 120 coupon books distributed to the seniors of Isabella County and 105 coupon books were redeemed. 4,350 Project FRESH coupons were distributed to participants of WIC and 2,902 of the coupons were redeemed for fresh local produce.

Participants who took part in Project FRESH became more aware of the importance of eating fruit and vegetables. After attending the SNAP-Ed food presentation workshop:

- 94% of the participants intended to eat more fresh vegetables daily.
- 95% of the participants intended to eat more fresh fruit daily.
- 15% of participants reported that they hadn't been to a farmers' market before. But as result of attending the MSU Extension SNAP-Ed presentation, ⇒ 98% intended to buy fruit and vegetables at the local farmers' market.
- 88% of the participants reported that they learned new ways to incorporate more fruit into their meals and snacks.
- 98% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "Eating fruit and vegetables every day as part of a healthy diet may reduce your risk of certain types of cancer and various diseases."

» **Cooking Matters for Adults** - This program consists of six lessons that teach participants how to prepare and shop sensibly for healthy meals on a limited budget. Participants practice fundamental kitchen skills including knife skills, cutting up a whole chicken, and making a healthy meal for a family of four on a \$10 budget. Adults take home a bag of groceries after each class so they can practice the recipes taught that day. This series was taught at Nimkee Wellness Center and also with Community Mental Health of Central Michigan.

» **Small Steps to Health** - This program consists of four lessons and is part of the Voices for Food research project. The participants of this series learn how to improve their diet quality, food security, and family food safety. Topics include understanding MyPlate and food labels, and family meal planning and preparation.

Encouraging healthy behaviors helps reduce food and health care costs by helping prevent chronic health conditions and providing safe environments throughout a person's life span.



"I love this class. I learned new ways to save and get more healthy meals on my dinner table." - Cooking Matters for Adults

ENSURING SAFE AND SECURE FOOD—FOOD SAFETY

MSU Extension efforts in ensuring safe and secure food lead to a healthy population, which in turn helps keep health care costs in check and our communities viable.

Cooking for Crowds is an educational program for nonprofit groups that prepare food for their members or for the public as fundraisers. The curriculum shows the food safety risks that can develop when preparing and cooking large volumes of food, and teaches participants how to reduce those risks. Participants learn how to prevent unsafe conditions that may cause food-borne illness when planning, purchasing, storing, preparing and serving food. Cooking for Crowds was taught at the Isabella County Building to help 12 residents ensure safe food preparation procedures.

Food Preservation—Michigan State University Extension food preservation workshops cover a variety of topics that teach skills and techniques that provide participants with safe, high-quality preserved products. Using up-to-date research methods, participants learn how to successfully and safely preserve food.

As a result of attending the food preservation workshops:

- 95% know where to locate tested research based recipes for home food preservation.
- 96% will follow research based/tested recipes when canning food at home.
- 97% will properly use processing techniques to safely can low and high acid foods.
- 87% will use correct processing times to safely can low and high acid foods.

ServSafe:

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has called for increased efforts to improve food safety practices in retail food establishments, specifically a needed presence of certified food safety managers to oversee safety practices. Michigan state law mandates that every food service establishment employ a minimum of one certified manager. MSU Extension offers ServSafe, a national certification program for food service leaders. Restaurant customers can have increased confidence when they see a ServSafe-certified manager on duty. Three Classes were held in Isabella County in 2015, reaching 14 participants.

Cottage Food Law:

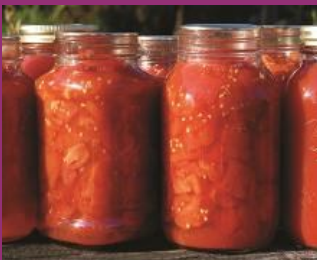
The Michigan Cottage Food Law allows aspiring food entrepreneurs to sell home-processed foods to the public. In 2012, updates to the Michigan Food Code and Cottage Food Law created the need for food safety education among this group of small business owners. Michigan Cottage Food Law workshops through MSU Extension enable residents to become certified to prepare and store particular foods in a home kitchen to establish their home businesses. MSU Extension participants rated a two-hour Cottage Food Law program with an overall satisfaction rate of 92 percent. Additional Cottage Food Law program surveys reflected:

- 99% of participants have a better understanding of what is necessary to run a successful Cottage Food Law business.
- More than 50% of participants indicated they gained new knowledge about proper cleaning and sanitizing.
- A six-month follow-up showed that 25% of participants planned to start cottage food businesses in 2015.

One Cottage Food Law class was held in 2015 in Isabella County, with 27 participants.

In Isabella County in 2015, we provided the following Food Preservation classes:

- 1 Blanching and Freezing classes: 4 participants
- 4 Canning classes: 24 participants
- 1 Jam and Jelly class: 5 participants
- 1 Youth Food Preservation class: 6 participants
- 1 Cooking for Crowds class: 9 participants
- 3 Food Safety one time presentations: 105 participants



ENSURING STRONG COMMUNITIES

PlaceMaking—Placemaking Strategy Development workshops were conducted throughout the state in spring 2015, including Mt Pleasant. The workshops consisted of classroom and hands-on exercises in which participants had the opportunity to apply the information learned in their own communities. This was a collaboration between MSU Extension, the Michigan Municipal League, Michigan State University Land Policy Institute and MSHDA.

Finance and Homeownership—In April 2015, Teagen Lefere was selected to assume the leadership role with MSU Extension. Her office is in Clare County and she provides resources and education to Isabella County residents as well. As the Finance & Homeownership Education Program Instructor, Lefere provides financial and home ownership education expertise, foreclosure prevention counseling and assistance, and serves as a resource for industry specialists and other financial and homeownership partners.



Lender referral education	13
(Homebuyer education for those ready to buy a home)	
Foreclosure intervention and prevention	10
Foreclosure assistance and triage	14
Money Management	5

Mock Interview Day

High school students benefit from practicing interview skills to be ready for the workforce. Employers appreciate and are more likely to hire candidates who know how to present themselves well. To address this need, a **Mock Interview Day** event for Isabella, Clare, and Gladwin counties is planned and held in mid-March every year. On the day of the event, about 70 adults from local businesses volunteer their time to interview students, review résumés, and provide short educational workshops. In 2015, almost 250 high school students from 6 area schools took part in the event.

98% of the students who filled out an evaluation felt they would do a better job interviewing in the future. 96% indicated they had more confidence in their ability to do well in a job interview. 95% felt more prepared to join the workforce.

Highlights from the written evaluations include:

- After today, I feel like I could go into an interview with confidence.
- I feel extremely prepared for a real interview.
- Very cool and a great way to practice interview skills.



Financial Capabilities

“I learned effective ways to save more, spend less and pay off my house.”

“Good information on paying my bills and can still start a savings.”



AGRICULTURE

The value of agriculture in Isabella County continues to increase, according to the USDA farm census. The economic impact varies from year to year based on commodity prices and input cost fluctuations. Latest figures estimated that the market value of agriculture production is over \$115 million annually. Farm production expenses are estimated at \$90 million annually, much of which is spent in the county. The primary crops are corn, soybeans, wheat, alfalfa, sugar beets, and edible beans. According to Michigan Agriculture Statistics, Isabella County has 28,000 head of cattle, of which 8000 are dairy cattle. The numbers of livestock continue a gradual increase.

Water quality, cover crops, and soil health programming

Extension Educator Paul Gross is part of the team that is providing leadership in cover crops and soil health programming. Programs provided to Isabella County farmers all include a component of the benefits of cover crops in their cropping systems. Adding cover crops can improve their bottom line over time by the soil improving effects of cover crops. Cover crops prevent soil erosion and conserve soil moisture. The impact of soil erosion control and enhanced water infiltration is not only beneficial for agriculture but also for the Chippewa River Watershed as well as the Great Lakes Basin.

Isabella County MSU Extension programming is focusing on farm management practices that build soil health and also reduce the environmental impacts of agriculture. The practices include, reducing tillage, no-till, cover crops, crop rotation diversity. These practices reduce the risk of crop loss during unfavorable weather conditions by building resilient soil systems.

2015 Field Crops Events

- Gratiot/Isabella IPM Meeting was held in Alma for Mid-Michigan farmers.
- Gratiot/Isabella Dry Bean Day held in Shepherd.
- Wheat Field Day - This annual event was held at Hauck's Seed Farm.
- 2015 Farm Bill Workshops and individual consultations.
- Soil Conservation District Tour presenter.
- Armyworm and Western Bean Cutworm Trapping program.
- Isabella County Cover Crop Field Day
- Isabella County Organic Soybean Field Day
- Quebec Farmer Study Tour of two Isabella County Farms

When you support MSU Extension, you help participants learn profitable and efficient business and production practices.




Supporting Food and Agriculture, continued

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- » **Pesticides Training** - Pesticide applicator training provides farmers and commercial applicators training on how to safely apply pesticides. The training topics include rules and regulations, integrated pest management, personal protection equipment, calibration, pest identification, pesticides and the environment, labels, and safe pesticide storage and handling. The trainings prepare attendees for the Michigan Department of Agriculture pesticide licensing exam, provide credits toward recertification, or the latest information on pesticide application and pest management for interested farmers. Paul Gross provided this training for over 30 Isabella County farmers.
 - » **Milk and Grain Marketing Meetings** - are held quarterly in Isabella County to provide education and support for area producers. Successful marketing strategies have been one of the most important indicators of farm profitability over the past decade. The impact of global economies and markets has created market volatility never before seen. This volatility impacts Isabella County farms. The Milk and Grain Marketing meetings provide technical and fundamental market information and provide strategies that farmers can implement to manage market risk. It has been said that “everyone can grow the crop. The successful farmers in the future are the ones that can sell it for a profit”. The workshops are taught by MSU Extension Marketing Specialists, and local Extension Educators. There are six farms that participate.
 - » **Farm Bill Education**—The 2014 Farm Bill introduced major changes in risk management programs for corn, wheat, soybean, fruit, vegetable and dairy producers in Michigan. These new programs, combined with an anticipated decrease in commodity prices, created major risk management decisions that will affect the financial success of Michigan producers until 2018 (the life of the Farm Bill). Because the bill required a one-time irrevocable decision by producers, programming in this area required the combined farm management, financial analysis, and marketing subject matters of MSU Ag Educators. This irrevocable decision, combined with the complexity of these new programs and the uncertainty of the long-term commodity price outlook, created an urgency for programming on this topic.

Isabella County On-Farm Research - Each year MSU Extension conducts on farm research and demonstration plots with the purpose of evaluating products and practices that might benefit Isabella County farmers economically and environmentally. Research trials in 2015 included:

- Soil health study involving five farms
- Foliar applications of fungicides, herbicides, and insecticides on soybeans
- Cover crops
- Sulfur sufficiency tissue testing in alfalfa
- Growth regulators in wheat



MSU Extension Director Jeff Dwyer visits a trial plot in Isabella County.



MI SPARTAN IMPACT

ENROLLED MICHIGAN STUDENTS

 106

ALUMNI RESIDING IN COUNTY

 773

SPENDING WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES

 \$347,390

TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT*

 \$8,300,676

FINANCIAL AID DISBURSED

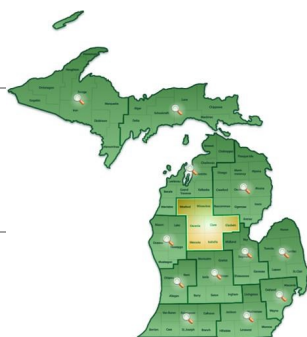
 \$815,597

PRODUCT CENTER COUNSELING SESSIONS

 22

MEDICAL STUDENTS

 10



DISTRICT 6: ISABELLA COUNTY

In addition to the Extension staff with an office in Isabella County (listed on page 2), the following MSU Extension staff and faculty provided programming and assistance to Isabella County residents in 2015:

Barb Duval	Financial Literacy
Ben Phillips	Vegetables
Beverly Przystas	Children & Youth
Brad Neuman	Citizen Planner & Placemaking
Bruce MacKellar	Field Crops
Caroline Shrier	Early Childhood
Dean Baas	Organic Soybeans
Emily Proctor	Tribes
Erin Lizotte	IPM
Gail Innis	Social Emotional Health
Gail Innis	Early Childhood
George Silva	Nutrient Management
Gerald May	Manure Nutrient Mgt
Janet Olson	Social Emotional Health
Janis Brinn	Youth Leadership
Jill O'Donnell	Christmas Trees
Jim Isleib	Beginner Farmers
Joanne Davidhizer	Product Center
John Amrhein	Gov & Public Policy
Kable Thurlow	Beef
Kathy Hintzen	Natural Resources
Kathy Lee	Dairy
Kylie Rymanowics	Early Childhood
Martin Nagelkirk	Wheat
Mary Dunkel	Product Center
Michelle Neff	Children & Youth
Michelle Walk	Tourism
Mike Staton	Soybeans
Phil Tocco	Farm to Table Food Safety
Phillip Kaatz	Forages
Sienna Szusek	Children and Youth
Sara Keinath	Workforce Prep
Shannon Lindquist	Social Emotional Health
Steve Poindexter	Sugar Beets
Teagen Lefere	Finance/Homeownership
Thomas Guthrie	Pork

Lawn & Garden Questions:

Online: <http://migarden.msu.edu/>

Toll-Free: 1-888-678-3464

Soil test kits (homeowners) http://shop.msu.edu/category_s/345.htm Product Code: E3154

Information Bulletins:

http://shop.msu.edu/category_s/345.htm

MSUE Events and Programs:

<http://msue.anr.msu.edu/events>



Online resources for MSU Extension Information

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A useful feature is the option to request an email notification of articles that recently appeared on the *MSU Extension News* website. The *MSU Extension Digests* will be emailed to you about every 2 weeks, listing new articles that have appeared. Digests are available by topic or category.