

Bringing Knowledge to Life in

St. Clair County

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New focus areas set for MSU Extension programming in St. Clair County

Michigan State University Extension and the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station began a process last winter to identify priority needs for research and education. Citizens from every county provided input via the internet, phone surveys, and local meetings.

In St. Clair County, participants outlined areas of concern and listed areas where MSUE could address their concerns through educational programming.

Citizens in St. Clair County are very concerned about the future of youth. There was much discussion about challenges for parents, schools and communities around childhood obesity, career preparation, and safe and appropriate activities for families and youth. Issues of Land use, agriculture, the environment, a safe food supply, the current status of the economy and its effect on employment in the county were all raised and discussed.

Currently the MSUE staff are developing a strategic plan to implement the 10 programmatic goals identified within these 5 major focus areas:

- Provide opportunities to prepare youth for the future
- Promote healthy lifestyles with schools and families
- Provide community support and resources to build strong families
- Strengthen communities with leadership development
- Promote responsible land use

Implementing change at Cleveland Elementary

A \$6,000 grant from Food Stamp Nutrition Education Funds through MSUE and MDCH helped provide these changes at Cleveland Elementary School, a diverse school where 97% of children receive free or reduced lunch, was chosen to become Port Huron's **model healthy school**

Goal: Schools provide only healthy menu choices resulting in better student diet and health. Students learn and practice appropriate, positive nutritional choices.

Focus: Increase fruit and vegetable consumption, get students more active, school environment changes:

- Recess before lunch implemented
- No food used as reward (stickers, pencils, activity books replaced candy as incentives)
- Walking club implemented
- Healthy snacks replace potato chips for morning snacks
- Nutrition curricula integrated into Cleveland's curriculum

Evaluation

1. End of Year Checklist

93% eating more fresh fruits and vegetables
86% eating healthier snacks
82% drinking more water
89% eating breakfast more often
82% increased physical activity
79% drinking more milk

2. Lunch Tally

- Kids ate more of their lunches and drank more milk when having recess before lunch was implemented
- Kids preferred recess before lunch due to: They could relax and eat lunch more slowly, they could be more active on the playground without full tummies, they could settle down for the classroom after a relaxing lunch.

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Michigan State University Extension helps people improve their lives through an educational process that applies knowledge to critical issues, needs and opportunities. Offices in counties across the state link the research of the land-grant university, MSU, to challenges facing communities. Citizens serving on county Extension councils regularly help select focus areas for programming. MSU Extension is funded jointly by county boards of commissioners, the state through Michigan State University and federally through the US Department of Agriculture.



End of season for 4-H Urban Gardens

Funded through monetary as well as in-kind donations from: Cargill of St. Clair (\$2,275.00) grant in partnership with the National 4-H Council as part of The Healthy Lifestyles Grants Program; local greenhouse, and Master Gardener volunteers as well as MSU Extension Family Consumer Science staff for nutrition and healthy lifestyles education.

“The support of the 4-H Urban Garden by the Cargill Grant and others was significant in providing monetary help or donations that offset the expenses so that we can offer this opportunity to youth free of charge,” states Gilda Schott, Extension Educator with 4-H. Regarding specifically the Cargill support, “National 4-H Council has two outstanding partners in Cargill and Kraft Foods, Inc., working together to help 4-H expand fun and innovative programming to encourage fitness, lower rates of obesity, and teach proper nutrition to youth age five to 12 and their families,” said Donald T. Floyd, Jr., president and CEO of National 4-H Council.

Fifty-eight youth participated in the program at gardens located at Algonac, Belle River, Woodrow Elementaries, and Woodland Developmental. The program ran from mid-May through mid-September for two hours each week. The first hour included the garden work: weeding, watering and harvesting. The second hour included special educational programming and fun activities.

Youth activities focused on healthy lifestyles, learning where food comes from, nutrition, gardening techniques, good bugs and bad bugs in the garden, germs and the importance of washing, and veggie taste testing to expand their food choices. Students also had the opportunity to make fresh salsa, as well as participate in other fun, hands-on learning.

Thirty-nine youth participated in our evaluation survey stating that:

- *Twenty three indicated they are getting two more servings of **fruits** a day, 10 more were getting one more serving of fruit, and six were getting three more servings of fruit a day.*
- *19 responded they are getting two more servings of **vegetables** a day; 10 said they were getting three more servings of vegetables*

- *Thirty indicated they are getting at least 30 minutes of **physical activity** a day; nine indicated they were not*
- *Thirty six of the 39 participants of the survey indicated that they have tried a new **fruit or vegetable***

This project incorporated the essential elements of 4-H:

- **Belonging** - all of the youth feel that they are a part of the garden. There is a “community plot” that all are responsible to help with. This also offers an extra gardening spot in case we have late registrations
- **Mastery** - participants learn that the weather can have more affect on one vegetable than another. In addition, there are other activities that they are exposed to so that we see success in a child in some venue.
- **Independence** - each child has a say in what they want to grow. They design their own garden plot – what it will contain and how it is laid out
- **Generosity** - they shared the “over production” of garden harvest with a local young entrepreneur who was raising funds through his vegetable stand for the local chapter of the Child Abuse and Neglect Council. This helps them play a part in serving the community. Some are read the story of “Stone Soup” and then make vegetable soup. The story is about everyone giving just a little for the good of the whole, learning to help others also.



Bethany prepares her vegetables for stone soup.