

## Allegan County MSU Extension

Applying knowledge to needs, issues, opportunities over the past two years, MSU Extension has transformed itself through a system-wide reorganization of administrative and programming structures. Some of the changes in this transformation included reduced administrative overhead through the elimination of county extension director, regional director and state leader positions; multi-county assignments for many educators, greater use of technology to reduce operating costs, and collaboration with other universities and industry to share specialized expertise and technology.

Our goal is that this transformation will result in:

- Focused and specialized programs, staff
- Connecting more effectively with broader range of MSU's expertise
- Increase responsiveness of staff—agile, current
- Enhanced accountability and evaluation of the outcomes of our work
- Program presence in communities across the state

The educational programs of MSU Extension are now organized under the structure of four institutes:

- Agriculture and Agribusiness
- Greening Michigan: Leveraging Natural and Human Assets for Prosperity
- Preparing Michigan's Children and Youth for the Future
- Improving Health and Nutrition

In this article, I would like to focus on the Agriculture and Agribusiness Institute. Led by Dr. Wendy Powers, this institute includes these educational focus areas:

- Bio-products and Bio-energy
- Agricultural Business Management
- Environmental Quality
- Food Production Systems
- Non-food Agricultural Production Systems
- Educational efforts done in partnership with MSU AgBio Research

The educators assigned to Allegan County as part of their coverage area include:

- Beef — Kevin Gould
- Bio Energy Crops — Charles Gould
- Blueberries & Small Fruit — Carlos Garcia; Mark Longstroth
- Celery, Muck Vegetables, Onions, Upland Vegetables — Ron Goldy
- Christmas Trees — Jill O'Donnell
- Dairy — Faith Cullens; Stan Moore
- Farm Business Management — Adam Kantrovich
- Field Crops — Bruce MacKellar
- Greenhouse & Nursery — Thomas Dudek
- Poultry — Darrin Karcher
- Soybeans — Mike Staton
- Swine — Beth Ferry
- Tree Fruit — Bill Shane

For contact information on any of these educators, please call the Allegan MSU Extension office at 673-0370. For information on any of the programs that MSU Extension offers, please contact Betty Blase, District 7 Coordinator, at 616-458-6805 or at 616-304-7191 (cell) or at [blase@anr.msu.edu](mailto:blase@anr.msu.edu)

## Membership Drive Planning Under Way

The Allegan County Farm Bureau Membership Committee will launch this year's campaign with a kickoff party at 6 p.m. Feb. 7 at the Trestle Stop in Hamilton. The kickoff is where membership workers set their goals, lay their plans, and get motivated before braving the cold with a stack of membership application forms. The drive will continue for a few weeks before wrapping up with a victory party to recognize membership writers.

Membership committee members are responsible for organizing the drive, recruiting local captains,

providing Farm Bureau information to membership volunteers, and following up with new members. Committee members this year include co-chairs Matt Mokma and Craig Poll.

To participate in the membership drive or to make reservations, please call Jeanne at Allegan County Farm Bureau, 269-399-1500.

Maintaining and increasing membership is vital to the survival of any grassroots organization, especially your county Farm Bureau. Be a part of our success—lend a hand and get involved!

## MSU Winter Dairy Meetings in February

Learn management techniques and tips from nationally renowned labor management consultant Robert Milligan, Ph.D., from Dairy Strategies.

Make labor the most productive enterprise on your farm. Managing employees can be one of the most challenging areas yet critical for the success of the operation. Learn how to manage people and build a dynamic team through this interactive training at three locations across the state.

Topics to be featured include:

- Farm business success in turbulent times
- Employee involvement in the business
- Quality control through employees
- Labor management on the expanding enterprise
- Supervisory skills for exceptional employee performance

Dates and locations:

- Feb. 20-21 — Amway Grand Plaza Hotel, Grand Rapids; 6:30-

8:30 p.m. Monday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday

- Feb. 22 — Great Wolf Lodge, Traverse City; 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., then 6:30-8:30 p.m.
- Feb. 23-24 — Bavarian Inn and Conference Center, Frankenmuth; 6:30-8:30 p.m. Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday

Registration fees are \$125 per person, or \$210 per management team (two people from same farm).

In addition to the daylong training, the program will feature an evening session to foster discussion about family teamwork in management.

To register, visit <http://bit.ly/dairylabormgt> or contact ANR Event Management at [honkemeg@msu.edu](mailto:honkemeg@msu.edu) or 517-353-3175, ext. 229.

For more information, contact Phil Durst at 989-387-5346 or [durstp@msu.edu](mailto:durstp@msu.edu); or Stan Moore at 231-533-8818 or [moorest@msu.edu](mailto:moorest@msu.edu).

## MSUE Websites

MSU Extension News for Agriculture: <http://news.msue.msu.edu/>

For information on beef—MSUE educator Kevin Gould notes that a lot of programs are being planned and will be added to the website calendar. Please visit <http://beefteam.msu.edu/> for updates on beef programming across the state.

## Board Update

While the Allegan County Farm Bureau Board remains the same for 2012, there has been some restructuring within the board.

Creela Hamlin has stepped down as vice president but remains on the board. Brian Geerlings has taken the roll of vice president, and Randy Yonker rounds out the officers as third member.

This will be a busy year for the board dealing with the membership drive, the annual meeting and working on political issues.

# Allegan county newsletter

County 3

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## Local delegates help plot MFB's 2012 policy

A 15-member delegate team traveled to Grand Rapids to represent Allegan County at Michigan Farm Bureau's 92nd Annual Meeting, Nov. 29 through Dec. 2.

The group consisted of Allan Overhiser, Chairman, Jim Garlock, Matt Mokma, Craig Poll, Brian Geerlings, Jerry Folkert, Earl Collier, Ross Brink, Lisa Brink, Harvey Jipping, Orma Jipping, Ron Veenstra, Denise Veenstra, Brian Westendorp and Laura Westendorp. Delegates reviewed and voted on policy recommendations submitted by county Farm Bureaus statewide.

"The new policy regarding labor guidelines is of particular importance here in Allegan County," said Allan Overhiser. Teaching our youth the importance of responsibility and work ethic is something that is vital to the agricultural industry and our nation as a whole. At each policy development session there seems to exist one hot topic item Farm Bureau members across Michigan embrace as a vital issue for the year.

At this year's annual meeting, the issue was proposed Department of Labor guidelines (RIN 1235-AA06) that would severely limit the ability of persons under the age of 16 to work in agricultural jobs across the country.

Farm Bureau members at the state annual meeting submitted more than 500 comments to the U.S. Department of Labor's website, reflecting the frustration many in agriculture feel regarding the regulatory agencies lack of common sense. They can't believe the agency would impose these guidelines with disregard to the impact these regulations would have on the family farm and youth agriculture based organization such as 4-H and FFA.



Representing Allegan County Farm Bureau at MFB's 2011 Annual Meeting were (front row, from left) Orma Jipping, Jeanne Folkert, Denise Veenstra; (middle) Harvey Jipping, Earl Collier, Craig Poll, Ross Brink, James Garlock, Allan Overhiser; (back) Matt Mokma, Brian Geerlings, Jerry Folkert and Ronald Veenstra.

Some highlights of the proposed guidelines would include:

- Preventing persons under the age of 16 from working on a farm that is not directly owned by his or her parents. They would not be able to work on a grandparent's farm or those farms involved in a partnership or LLC.
- Persons under the age of 16 would not be allowed to engage in the use of electronic devices in two way conversation which would include phones.
- Persons under 16 would not be allowed to herd animals on horseback or use battery-powered drills.

- Persons under the age of 16 would not be allowed to put hay bales on a bale elevator or use any equipment except if powered by hand or foot.

Michigan's legislature, and much of its congressional delegation, has submitted letters to the U.S. Department of Labor in opposition of these proposed guidelines. Farm Bureau members can be reassured that the Michigan Farm Bureau is doing all that it can to try to prevent these rules from being enacted.

In addition to policy-setting, delegates had the opportunity to attend several educational sessions and award presentations.

## County FB Recognized for Outstanding Programs

The Allegan County Farm Bureau and its members were honored for their outstanding efforts this year at the MFB Annual Meeting in Grand Rapids.

Thanks to the many hours of volunteer time and effort, Allegan County received Gold Star awards for its county issues, member involvement, membership, policy development and public policy programs. The Young Farmer program earned a Silver Star award.

Star Awards recognize county Farm Bureaus

for their hard work and creativity in promoting agriculture at the county level. Applications are submitted by each county committee and judged by Michigan Farm Bureau staff.

Farm Bureau staff and insurance agents writing five or more regular members are recognized with the Key Club Award. This year Tim Gleeson, Mark Hop, Tim Heffner, Arlo Clemens, Keith Swierengen and Jan Meeuwson all brought home Key Club honors.

