



DECEMBER 2025



4-H Family News

Mecosta County

Welcome to the 2025-26 Program Year!

I am just a little over 6 months into the position of Mecosta County 4-H program coordinator and I'm still working to understand all the "behind the scenes" duties. Although I have been involved a little with 4-H, the past few years as the Mecosta office manager, I know I still have a lot to learn.

I have lived in Mecosta County for many years and come from a health education and volunteer management background. I have a love and respect for animals of all kinds, but do not know much about livestock. Thank you to the superintendents, and families that answered all my questions at fair it was a great learning experience for me.

Thank You for the warm welcome. Mecosta County 4-H is a great group of volunteers, leaders, families and youth! I have enjoyed getting to know many of you and look forward to connecting with more of you.

Sincerely,

Karen Ripke, 4-H Program Coordinator

Mecosta 4-H Council is looking for new youth and adult members

Mecosta County 4-H Council is made up of adult and youth volunteers. We meet approximately 6 times a year. The Council is responsible for setting policies for the County 4-H Program, raising money for 4-H activities, helping out at events, participating in Mecosta County Fair activities, providing scholarships to 4-H members and reviews fundraising requests.

Some of our current activities include:

- Turkey Trot Fundraiser
- Old Timers/Adult Showmanship Sweepstakes
- Dairy Booth Ice Cream at the fair
- Senior and Event Scholarships
- Plat Book Sales
- Sponsors PEP (Proud Equestrian Program)
- Providing resources for members and leaders

CONTACT US

Karen Ripke

4-H Program Coordinator

Mecosta County Services Building
14485 Northland Dr.
Big Rapids, MI 49307

PHONE & EMAIL:

(231) 592-0792

ripkekar@msu.edu

WEBSITE:

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/mecosta/>

General email:

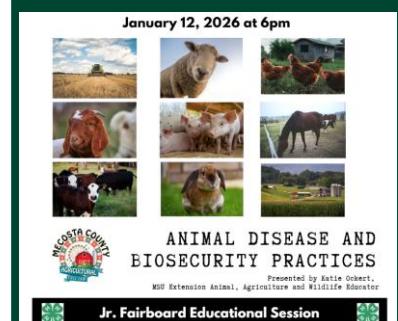
MSUE.Mecosta@msu.edu

Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status. Issued in furtherance of MSU Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Quentin Tyler, Director, MSU Extension, East Lansing, MI 48824. This information is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names does not imply endorsement by MSU Extension or bias against those not mentioned.



COUNTY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Festival of Lights Parade Float construction.....	11-16-25 1pm
Big Rapids Festival of Lights Parade.....	11-22-2025
Mecosta 4-H Turkey Trot	11-27-2025
4-H Online enrollment deadline for returning members	12-1-2025
Fair Entry Deadline for Beef & Dairy Steers.....	12-1-2025
Annual Volunteer meeting.....	12-3 or 12-9
Beef and steer weight in (Fairgrounds)	12-13-2025
Jr. Fairboard educational session (6pm MSU Extension office).....	1-12-2026
Jr. Fairboard Meeting 7pm MSU Extension office)	1-12-2026
Winterfest (Eagle Village)	2-6-2026
Jr. Fairboard educational session (6pm MSU Extension office).....	3-16-2026
Jr. Fairboard Meeting 7pm MSU Extension office)	3-16-2026
Fair Entry deadline: swine, feeders, sheep & goats.....	4-1-2026
Feeder, Sheep and Goat Weigh-in (Fairgrounds).....	4-11-2026
Swine registration deadline.....	4-13-2026
Horse Record books deadline.....	6-1-2026
Pre-Fair Meeting 7pm (Fairgrounds).....	6-29-2026
Record books, Community service/educational forms due	
Last day for Fair Entry registration for showing animals	
Jr. Fairboard educational session (6pm MSU Extension office).....	5-18-2026
Jr. Fairboard Meeting 7pm MSU Extension office)	5-18-2026
Mecosta County Fair.....	July 12-19, 2026





COUNTY 4-H NEWS

Paws and Pals Dog Club ready to kick off year 2! New Members welcome!



Paws and Pals had a small but mighty first year. Our members met monthly January to March without our canine friends to learn about grooming, health, the basic terms of showmanship and what it takes to be a good dog owner. A few furry professionals visited to show us how it's done.

Dogs joined the club in April to start training twice a month. Derby, Rebel and Scout learned new tricks and skills and made new friends. We wrapped up our year with a showmanship demonstration at the fair. All participants earned Novice Trick Dog and Canine Good Citizen titles. As we look to year 2, we plan to fully participate in the Mecosta County Fair showmanship events.

New members (8 years and older) are welcome!! We will start meeting in January. If you are already in a club, but want to participate with Paws and Pals, no worries you can still join us!

Talk to Karen Ripke for more information or to get added to the club.

Support 4-H with the TSC Paper Clover Campaign



From Nov. 28 – Dec. 14, Tractor Supply Company (TSC) customers across the nation will have the opportunity to support 4-H youth by purchasing a \$1 clover at checkouts when shopping both in stores or online at www.TractorSupply.com during the campaign dates.

Funds raised will support county, state and national 4-H programming. To learn more, visit www.tractorsupply.com/tsc/cms/4h.

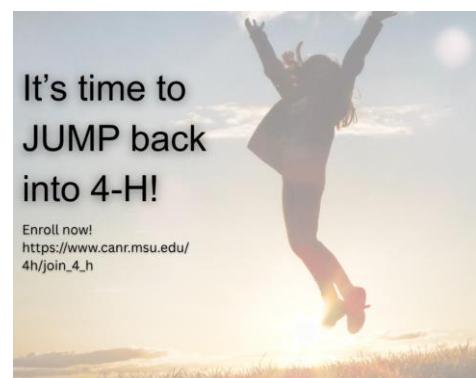
You can also support 4-H by purchasing three special commemorative 4-H holiday ornaments, now in TSC stores! Proceeds from the sale of ornaments support 4-H.

**Don't forget to get enrolled in
4-H Online before the deadline**

Returning members December 1st.

New members April 1st.

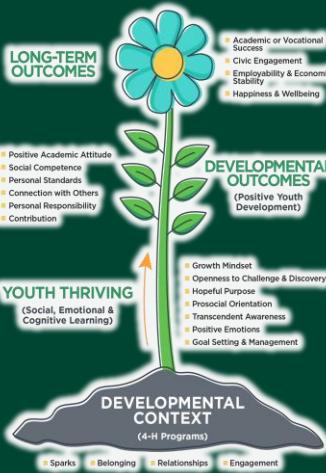
Contact Karen Ripke if you have questions or need help.





STATEWIDE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

4-H Thriving Model of Positive Youth Development



Have you ever been to a club meeting that starts with a roll call question? Building a sense of belonging in the 4-H community is one of four core concepts of the 4-H Thriving Model that any 4-H program can intentionally do.

We strive to build this welcoming feeling and offer kindness to help develop a sense of belonging throughout project meetings, club meetings, workshops and events offered. What better way to build a community than to find similarities among the membership?

Some of the questions are simple, some are silly, and some can get more involved depending on the purpose of the meeting. Regardless, it's a great way to get to know everyone. Contact your local 4-H staff for more information.

November 18: Mich. 4-H Volunteer Webinar Series: So You Want to Be a Club Leader? *Online*

Thinking about leading a club or want to refresh your leadership skills? Join to learn what it takes to be an effective and inspired club leader—from logistics and communication to culture and connection.

12-1 p.m. session: www.canr.msu.edu/events/michigan-4-h-volunteer-webinar-series-so-you-want-to-be-a-club-leader-lets-talk-noon

7-8 p.m. session: www.canr.msu.edu/events/michigan-4-h-volunteer-webinar-series-so-you-want-to-be-a-club-leader-lets-talk-7pm

November 28 – December 14: Fall TSC Paper Clover Campaign

Local Tractor Supply Co.

Support 4-H by purchasing a \$1 paper clover at your local Tractor Supply Co. (TSC) store! Seventy-percent of funds raised stay in the local community where the paper clover was purchased. www.canr.msu.edu/events/tractor-supply-co-paper-clover-campaign

December 2: Giving Tuesday *Online*

Join the #GivingTuesday movement — a global day of giving and a chance to celebrate the opportunities that makes 4-H so extraordinary. 4-H'ers are leading the way in a world full of change and together, we can build a generation ready for anything. We have set a goal to raise \$5,000 to grow 4-H county endowments in a 24-hour period. mi4hfdtn.org/giving-tuesday/

December 9: 4-H Wild Spartans: : Wild Spartans – Adventures in Wildlife Medicine: From the Field to the Clinic *Online*

Take a look at the wild side of veterinary science. Meet Avery Tilley, a veterinary student at the University of Georgia. You'll learn about his work, and the education and career path he followed to get there. Ask questions and learn more through a live Q&A. This free virtual series is open to 4-H and non-4-H youth ages 12-19 years. Monthly sessions will be held on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 6:30pm. Pre-registration is required

<https://events.anr.msu.edu/WildSpartansSeriesFall2025Spring2026/>





STATEWIDE 4-H NEWS

Mandatory reporting guidelines for Michigan 4-H volunteers

MSU Extension has updated its mandatory [reporting guidelines](http://www.canr.msu.edu/od/civil_rights_diversity_multiculturalism/civil_rights_compliance) (www.canr.msu.edu/od/civil_rights_diversity_multiculturalism/civil_rights_compliance) to align with MSU's policy (UW-02-01). All volunteers are required to report incidents of child abuse, neglect, or misconduct promptly. Reports should be made to MSU's Office for Civil Rights (MSU OCR) and, when applicable, to Children's Protective Services (CPS)/Department of Health and Human Services. In short, volunteers should:

1. In emergencies: Call 911 immediately.
2. Child abuse/neglect: Call CPS at 855-444-3911 and file DHS-3200 (available at www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/adult-child-serv/abuse-neglect/childrens/mandated-reporters) within 72 hours.
3. All other incidents: Report to MSU OCR via online form at <https://msu.guardianconduct.com/incident-reporting/>; phone at (517) 353-3922 between the hours of 8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. and 1:00-5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday; by mail at 408 W. Circle Dr., Suite 105, Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824; or by email at ocr.isr@msu.edu.
4. Please notify your local MSU Extension staff after submitting a report.

Shop with purpose: 4-H gifts that give back

'Tis the season to spread joy and support 4-H youth while doing it! Consider the following options in your holiday shopping to make the holidays merry, bright and meaningful!

Michigan Shop 4-H Store: Buy your favorite Michigan 4-H apparel, drinkware, and essentials at the SHOP 4-H Online Store! Offered in collaboration with National 4-H Council, the Michigan 4-H store offers Michigan 4-H branded apparel and other gifts for your favorite 4-H'er, volunteer, alumni, professional or fan! A percentage of all proceeds will be donated to Michigan 4-H. Visit <https://bit.ly/30pdNJw>.



My Pottery Place: Get crafty with 4-H pottery! From mugs to ornaments, you can paint your own masterpiece while supporting youth programs—5% of every 4-H licensed pottery purchase goes to 4-H. Learn more at mypotteryplace.com/product-category/all-products/4-h/.

Mickman Brothers: Decorate your home with beautiful greenery and purpose: 15% of the proceeds from each wreath or evergreen purchased at 4hwreaths.com will benefit 4-H.

Twisted X: Step into the season with style! The Twisted X 4-H Collection has shoes for the whole family and 6% of each pair sold supports 4-H! Learn more at twistedx.com/pages/4h-collection.

Georgia Boot: Built for hard work and big dreams, Georgia Boot is a proud supporter of 4-H. Consider giving their boots, which are ready for any adventure, especially a 4-H project! Shop at georgiaboot.com.

Michigan 4-H Dog Showmanship Manual updated

The Michigan 4-H Dog Showmanship Manual has been updated! A major update to the previous version, this guide provides the basic information needed to compete successfully in 4-H dog showmanship classes. Be sure to check out the resources section of the manual for additional useful books, websites and videos.

View the updated manual at www.canr.msu.edu/resources/michigan-4-h-dog-showmanship-manual.



Michigan 4-H License Plates now available!



Members of the Michigan 4-H community can show their 4-H pride while supporting 4-H youth development programming by purchasing a Michigan 4-H license plate.

The Michigan 4-H license plate will cost \$35, with \$25 of the purchase fee benefiting Michigan 4-H. A \$10 fee will also be charged to benefit Michigan 4-H when the plate is renewed.

License plates may be ordered by visiting Michigan.gov/sos, by mailing in a form or scheduling a visit to any Secretary of State office.

Learn more at extension.msu.edu/4-Hplate

Join the 4-H Future Squad!

Hey, leaders of tomorrow - if you're age 12–19 and ready to grow skills, make friends, and become beyond ready for your future, join the 4-H Future Squad!

4-H Future Squad is a virtual 4-H club that was inspired by Generation Z youth seeking life skill development for a better future for themselves and their peers. This will be the fifth year of the program, which is designed to help youth feel prepared and ready to take on the future and adulthood.

The club will meet twice a month October 2025 through May 2026, virtually through Zoom. Topics for education include financial literacy, college and career readiness, stress management, building healthy relationships, studying abroad, goal setting, nutrition, and much more... based on the topics you share that will help you be beyond ready for your future!

Club meetings for the 2025-2026 year will take place on a variety of days of the week. Current meeting dates and times will be communicated via e-mail. This club can be your primary or secondary club. For more information and to get registered, visit: www.canr.msu.edu/4-h-future-squad/.



Beyond Ready