

Bringing Knowledge to Life in

# Kent County

## Kent County

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### Strategic Priorities for Michigan

In 2006 MSU Extension went through a statewide process to identify the issues that Michigan residents wanted to see addressed through educational programs based on university-generated knowledge.

The process began at the county and regional levels and resulted in the following five strategic priorities toward which the organization will direct its resources, time and attention for the next five years.

- **Developing entrepreneurs**
- **Promoting healthy lifestyles**
- **Paving the way for the bio-economy through research and education**
- **Educating and supporting decision makers**
- **Building leaders for today and tomorrow**

### Kent County MSU Extension helps local businesses save money

Project promotes a grassroots approach to energy conservation

Energy conservation is becoming more important to neighborhood business; energy costs are rising, and more people recognize the environmental impact of energy waste.

Rebuild Michigan, a program of the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth's Energy Office, has supplied a one-year, \$15,000 grant for an energy efficiency project initiated by the Kent County MSU Extension in partnership with the Eastown Business Association and the West Fulton Business Association. Eligible commercial buildings can receive free energy assessments by an energy management consultant, and building owners will receive a report with suggestions on how to reduce energy consumption. Many of the energy-saving recommendations are low-cost or no-cost measures.

The project is coordinated by Extension educator Carol Townsend, whose goal for this project is to assist small business owners in taking energy-saving measures so that they can reduce their utility bills, which would also reduce their carbon emissions. This win-win situation becomes an effective sustainability strategy by promoting both neighborhood economic development and environmental-friendly efforts.

Townsend hopes to expand the program to neighborhood residential areas in the near future. For more information, please contact her at: [townse36@msu.edu](mailto:townse36@msu.edu)

Addresses the following Strategic Priorities for Michigan: **Developing entrepreneurs; Promoting healthy lifestyles**

MICHIGAN STATE  
UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION

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.



## Master Naturalist program offers hands-on learning, community service

Kent County MSU Extension works to promote awareness, understanding and stewardship of Michigan's natural environment by developing a corps of well-informed citizens dedicated to conservation education and service within our community. Known as Master Naturalists, these citizens have been making a positive difference in Kent County for five years according to project coordinator Ginny Wanty.

The next series of six classes leading to Master Naturalist certification will begin on April 19 from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Community Center, Room 101, located at 750 Lakeside Drive in East Grand Rapids. Classes will be offered one Saturday morning each month from April through September. In addition to coursework, participants are expected to complete a 30-hour volunteer requirement.

Locations for the six classes vary, with many offered as outdoor field experiences. Topics include:

- Overview of conservation theory and practice,
- Woodland wildflowers,
- Native trees and shrubs,
- Michigan wetlands habitats,
- Prairie environments and
- Invasive plant species.

Cost for this program is \$195. Register online at: [www.stuckongardening.com](http://www.stuckongardening.com)  
Or contact Ginny Wanty at Kent/MSU Extension, 616-336-3265, or by e-mail at [wanty@msu.edu](mailto:wanty@msu.edu)

Addresses these Strategic Priorities for Michigan:  
**Building Leaders for today and tomorrow;**  
**Promoting healthy lifestyles**

## Birkholz honors local governments

On March 13, four Kent County townships received awards at the first Kent County Citizen Planner Awards Banquet held at Boulder Creek Golf Club. State Senator Patty Birkholz granted the honors as a sponsor of the "West Michigan Challenge" promoting the Citizen Planner Program.

Vergennes Township received the first place award for having 10 officials participate in the Citizen Planner Program. The Lowell community was the first outside northwest Michigan (where the program was created) to host a Citizen Planner program in the summer of 2001. There was a three-way tie for second place. Ada, Cannon and Grattan Townships each had eight participants.

Sen. Birkholz also reported that the Michigan Planning Enabling Act that she sponsored was signed by the Governor on March 12. The Citizen Planner Program will be offering 29 workshops on this new law. A June 4, 2008 workshop is being planned in Grand Rapids.

Greg Northrup, West Michigan Strategic Alliance President, served as keynote speaker and gave some specific examples of how local governments can help revitalize Michigan's economy. Examples included: planning now for future infrastructure needs including wind turbines and creating attractive community assets such as preserved green space, farmland, trails and wireless internet service.



State Senator Patty Birkholz presents the first place award for Citizen Planner participation in Kent County to Vergennes Township clerk and Citizen Planner alumnae Mari Stone.

Addresses these strategic priorities for Michigan: **Educating and supporting decision makers;**  
**Building leaders for today and tomorrow**