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### **MSU Extension begins statewide transition**

EAST LANSING, Mich. -- Every successful organization routinely asks whether what they're doing is working and working well.

Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) is no different. Beginning July 1, MSUE will begin its transition to a new structure that emphasizes responsiveness and focuses on important issues facing the state.

“Meeting the needs of those in our state through the expertise of MSU and doing so as efficiently as possible is what MSU Extension is all about,” said Tom Coon, MSUE director.

The MSUE redesign is meant to capitalize on the expertise that can be offered to the community through Extension's network of educators and specialists and our relationships with local partners, Coon said.

Late in 2008, MSUE started a process to examine its work and how it can focus its resources to better serve the state's residents. The findings of that process, which included more specialized educators in the field, better connections between field staff and campus researchers and a desire to leverage technology to maximize effectiveness, were shared with several audiences around the state.

“The result is a structure that ensures that MSU Extension will remain responsive to Michigan's needs and apply research-based education to contribute to a brighter future for all of Michigan residents,” Coon said.

MSU Extension will be guided by the following principles:

- Focused and specialized programs
- Reduced administrative overhead
- Increased responsiveness
- Enhanced accountability
- Continued presence across the state
- Adoption of emerging technologies

In that vein, Coon said, MSU Extension programming will focus on four statewide program areas, each represented by an institute. Those areas are Greening Michigan: Leveraging Natural and Human Assets for Prosperity, Enhancing Michigan's First Green Industry: Agriculture and Agribusiness, Preparing Michigan's Children and Youth for the Future, and Improving the Health and Nutrition of Michigan residents.

"These are areas where we know we can make a difference. They align with our expertise and with the needs and opportunities that are appropriate for a land-grant university, like Michigan State University, to address," Coon said.

Institute directors have been named and officially begin July 1, however, most have been working toward the transition. They include:

- Rick Foster                      Greening Michigan
- Wendy Powers                Agriculture and Agribusiness
- Julie Chapin                    Preparing Children and Youth for the Future
- Dawn Contreras                Improving Health and Nutrition

MSU Extension staff members, housed in county offices, are now organized into thirteen multi-county districts, each overseen by a district coordinator. MSU Extension will also consolidate budget and personnel functions in one, on-campus business office for the entire organization.

Extension leadership has been meeting around the state with county commissioners to discuss their ideas and to seek their suggestions on how these changes can help meet needs of residents at the county level.

"For us, July 1 is another day on the calendar," Coon said. "We'll continue to offer the services that the people of Michigan have come to rely on. Our transition will take place over the next year. At the same time, we remain steadfast to the goal of serving Michigan's needs."