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Michigan Sugar Youth Project Field Day hosts 90 participants for daylong focus on farming

FRANKENMUTH – More than 90 participants in **Michigan Sugar Company's** Youth Sugarbeet Project participated in the company's annual Youth Project Field Day at the Saginaw Valley Research & Extension Center in July, learning about all aspects of sugarbeet farming. The Youth Project brings young people together from [sugarbeet producing areas of Michigan](#) to learn more about the sugarbeet industry and careers in agriculture.

“Sugarbeet farming and processing are at the heart of the economy in Michigan's Thumb and Saginaw Valley, so it's part of our responsibility to help give a leg up to the next generation of growers, agronomists and processing experts,” said **Ray VanDriessche**, director of government and community relations for **Michigan Sugar**. “The Youth Project provides an important opportunity to foster the grower-cooperative relationship, introduce young people to the latest sugarbeet farming practices and give them a solid introduction to the sugarbeet industry.”

Every year, Youth Sugarbeet Project Participants complete an annual project, participate in the Field Day, attend a summer trip and display sugarbeets or posters at local fairs – all earning points toward completing the program. Points are earned in five categories and the participants who have the highest point totals have the opportunity to win prizes, and be recognized with Premier and Prestige Awards.

This year's program was redesigned by Michigan Sugar Company's agriculture department to better tailor the learning experience and testing to be age specific.

At the July Field Day, participants heard from Michigan Sugar representatives and local experts on a variety of topics, including advocating for agriculture and learning about GMOs from local producer Rita Herford; first aid from Brent Osentoski of Hills and Dales Hospital; insect identification and control with Dr. Chris Difonzo of Michigan State University; ATV Safety with Wayne Bauer from ERST, and careers in agriculture.

“Our cooperative is focused on the future, and it's important to provide young people with the skills they need to be part of agriculture in the Thumb and Saginaw Valley,” said **VanDriessche**. “We appreciate our strong partnerships with producers, communities and local businesses that make the Youth Sugarbeet Project an annual success.”

The Field Day event was co-sponsored by **ACH Seeds** and **Hills and Dales Hospital**.

Photos of the Field Day event are attached. Additional photos, and high-resolution versions, are available on request.

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