



MSU Cascade County Extension Participates In National Early Childhood Education Research



MSU Cascade County partnered with the University of Wisconsin Extension to present the “Block Party” program for 210 parents, children, early childhood educators, administrators, and child care providers. The Extension office provided the participants with various types and sizes of blocks to participate in the program. Parents and teachers watched a video concerning the research about the importance of playing with blocks and a handbook to assist them at home when playing with blocks.

MSU Cascade County Extension cited research which indicates early block play provides aptitude and achievement differences by seventh grade and into high school. Learning basic science concepts is easier if the brain has made space for this idea. Research has shown that understanding math concepts needs to occur before age five and that playing with blocks can assist in this process.

Through play, children learn to share, take turns, and negotiate. Block play teaches impulse control. This control predicts better school performance and less problem behaviors later. Young children who hear more words learn at a young age, more words. Early vocabulary growth

predicts later reading achievement in school. Dramatic (pretend) play predicts greater vocabulary growth in young children.

Organizers of the “Block Party” say they aren't sure who had more fun, the children or the adults building and playing with the blocks and each other. The children built houses, a bumble bee, rainbows; their imaginations were flowing.

The real target audience was the parents. Without exception, they rated the activity very high. Some praise included: Teaching more about the science while working with blocks is essential; Having fun with my child; Asking more questions about the children’s creations; Blocks help with motor skills and hands-on learning; Great family time playing together; Also this lets the children expand their minds and prepare them for kindergarten.

MSU Cascade County Extension was the only Extension office in the state of Montana to participate in the research project. Jona McNamee will present her results at the National Conference for Family and Consumer Science (FCS) Agents at Big Sky Montana in September 2016.



Purple Caps for Babies



Cascade County ranks #1 in the state of Montana for child abuse and deaths due to abuse. MSU Cascade County Extension assisted

Sheriff Bob Edwards in his campaign to prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome in Cascade County by putting their knitting needles and crochet hooks to use, whipping up tiny caps to help raise awareness for Shaken Baby Syndrome. Jona McNamee, MSU Cascade County Extension FCS Agent, put out a request for hand knit or crocheted purple infant hats to pass out to newborns boys and girls at Benefis Hospital.

The goal of the program was to raise the awareness of purple crying, the frustrating inconsolable crying phase that many infants aged two weeks to four months go through, which can result in a shaken baby situation. 1100 purple baby caps were delivered to Benefis Hospital. Caps were made by women from Montana, California, and North Dakota. Three church groups and four Homemakers Extension clubs also hand-made purple caps.



1100 baby caps donated to Benefis hospital.

MSU Cascade County Extension Welcomes New SNAP-Ed Program Manager

Howdy Ya'll, Abigail Lichliter here.

I am originally from Dallas, Texas, but I have lived in Nashville, Tennessee and Austin, Texas before moving to Montana. I received my first Bachelor's degree in Medicine, Health and Society from Vanderbilt University where I explored the complex interplay between health and society and how one's health is influenced by a myriad of factors, from cultural values to geographic location. While living in the southeast, I fell in love with the outdoors. My passion for nature, a desire for change, and nursing school brought me to Great Falls in 2013. Since living here, I have graduated from MSU Great Falls College of Nursing and worked as a Montana No Kid Hungry AmeriCorps Service Member working in the school district. I love cooking, hiking, biking, music and most of all, dancing. I am ardent about curbing the societal barriers surrounding food insecurity and health and I believe the best solutions are those that start within the community. I am thrilled to be a part of the MSU Extension SNAP-Ed (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education) team and use my

passion and expertise to influence health and nutrition throughout the community.



Abigail Lichliter, SNAP-Ed Program Manager, enjoying her passion for healthy lifestyles.

SNAP Ed is the educational arm of SNAP and provides nutrition education for limited resources families. The goal of SNAP Ed is to improve the likelihood that people on or eligible for SNAP will make healthy food choices within a limited budget and choose physically active lifestyles. The eight week long course provides invaluable information on how to stretch your food dollars and make fast, simple nutritious meals for you and your family.

Cascade County 4-H Horse Leaders Host the 2015 Montana State 4-H Horse Show



Ten Cascade County 4-H Horse Leaders along with Rose Malisani, MSU Cascade County Extension Agent, planned and organized the Montana State 4-H Horse Show from September 24-27, 2015 at the King's Arena in Great Falls.

2015 Montana State 4-H Horse Show English Class

There were 125 4-H members and 140 horses competing at the State Horse Show. The 4-H members traveled from

across the state to test their skills in an educational and enjoyable competitive contest. Classes offered included nearly every aspect of the 4-H horse project as well as nearly every skill level of rider. Youth, ages 9-19, entered and competed based on the qualifying guidelines of their county.

The Cascade County 4-H Horse Leaders secured over \$14,000 in sponsorships to offset the costs of the State Horse Show. Over 100 volunteers assisted with the show.

Cascade County 4-H'ers Conquer the Great Outdoors

Each year, an average of 80 4-H youth, ranging in ages 9-18, attend Cascade County 4-H Camp. For three days, youth participate in workshops, games, and traditional youth camp activities. This year, workshops included entomology, edible plants, Zumba, ice cream making, and much more! Cascade County 4-H teens plan and facilitate the entire camp with the guidance of adult chaperones. Camp is the highlight for many Cascade County 4-H youth.



2015 Camp Flag Ceremony

Gardeners and Foragers and 4H'ers Oh My!

Master Gardener Program in Cascade County

Master Gardeners in Cascade County volunteer by a research plot at River City Harvest's community garden, answering questions at the Great Falls Farmer's Market, teaching classes on horticulture, teaching preschoolers about gardening, answering horticulture questions at the Extension office, identifying insects, and answering horticulture questions.

The Cascade County Master Gardeners and MSU Agriculture Agent Rose Malisani assisted Cascade County constituents this year:

- ◇ Answered over 1500 phone calls on horticulture.
- ◇ Visited over 75 constituent's homes regarding horticulture.
- ◇ Diagnosed 51 insects.
- ◇ Sent 18 samples to the Schutter Diagnostics Laboratory.
- ◇ Attended 17 Great Falls Farmer's Markets to distribute MontGuides.



Laurie Kerzicnik, MSU Entomologist Specialist, teaching Cascade County Master Gardeners about insects.

Horticulture education is an essential portion to Master Gardeners. Cascade County Master Gardeners; Rose Malisani, MSU Cascade County Extension Agent; Toby Day, MSU Horticulture Specialist; and Laurie Kerzicnik, MSU Entomologist Specialist taught:

- ◇ 34 Cascade County residents for Level 1 classes.
- ◇ 18 Cascade County residents for Level 2 classes.
- ◇ 2 Cascade County residents were certified as Level 3 Master Gardeners.

Forage Workshops Draws 39 Local Producers to Learn in Cascade County

A forage workshop was organized by Rose Malisani, MSU Cascade County Extension agent at the MSU Cascade County Extension office in conjunction with the MSU Judith Basin Extension's forage workshop. Thirty-nine local producers attended the workshop for three private applicator credits. Speakers and topics included:

- ◇ Dave Wichman, MSU Central Ag Research Center Superintendent and Agronomy Assistant Professor, fertilizer use and rates as well as herbicide use on dryland alfalfa.
- ◇ Emily Glunk, MSU Forage Crop Specialist, presented two discussions. The first presentation focused on alfalfa and sainfoin production in Montana by comparing the legumes as well as how to establish a successful crop, fertilization, harvest management, and proper management practices for both legumes. Her second presentation was on forage testing, evaluation, and analysis interpretation.
- ◇ Cecil Tharp, MSU Pesticide Education Specialist, discussed how to identify and manage alfalfa weevil while preserving beneficial arthropods in forage alfalfa production systems. The presentation included an assessment and discussion of early cutting, tolerant cultivars, insecticides, and biocontrol as an integrated approach.

Cascade County 4-H'ers Sweep State Awards

On July 9, 2015 Cascade County 4-H teens traveled to Montana State University in Bozeman. Each team competed in various statewide contests and earned top spots in their respective contests. As a result, they have won trips to National events to compete. In addition to competing, they participated in several workshops that develop leadership skills, promote community outreach, and develop many other important life skills. Four horse judging and three competitive speech delegates attended the National Western Round-Up in Denver, Colorado in January, while two delegates traveled to Atlanta, Georgia in November 2015 to attend National 4-H Congress.



Cascade County Initial Training for Private Pesticide Applicators

Private Pesticide Applicator Program in Cascade County

There are 266 constituents in Cascade County who hold a Private Pesticide Applicator license. MSU Cascade County Extension hosted 55 people at the Cascade County Private Pesticide Applicator Initial Training in May 2015 at the Montana ExpoPark’s Family Living Center. The initial training is a six hour course on the private applicator license, pertinent pesticide laws, integrated pest management, pesticide safety, reading the pesticide label, calibration, and pesticides in the environment. The program utilizes speakers across Extension and Montana Department of Agriculture. Speakers at the initial training were:

- ◇ Kari Lewis, MSU Glacier County Extension
- ◇ Michaela Hystad, Montana Department of Agriculture
- ◇ Brent Sarchet, MSU Lewis and Clark County Extension
- ◇ Joe Parks, MSU Toole County Extension
- ◇ Rose Malisani, MSU Cascade County Extension
- ◇ Cecil Tharp, MSU Extension Pesticide Education Specialist
- ◇ Tyler Lane, MSU Chouteau County Extension

60 constituents attended the 2015 Golden Triangle Cropping Seminar in Great Falls on January 15, 2015. Speakers and topics included:

- ◇ Kent McVay, MSU Southern Ag Research Center, Crop Rotations and Choices for Dryland Production.
- ◇ Ron Larsen, Montana Seed Growers Association, Certified Seed to Reduce Disease and Weed Challenges.
- ◇ Gadi Reddy, MSU Western Triangle Ag Research Center, Biological Control Strategies of Wheat Stem Sawfly and Wireworm Management Research.
- ◇ John Miller, MSU Western Triangle Ag Research Center, Regional variety trial updates.

A total of 63 private and commercial pesticide applicators attended the 2015 Pest Management Tour on October 8, 2015 hosted by MSU Cascade County Extension.

Applicators heard from:

- ◇ Cecil Tharp, MSU Pesticide Education Specialist, spoke on calibrating ground sprayers using shortcut methods.
- ◇ Emily Glunk, MSU Forage Crop Specialist, discussed forage pests.
- ◇ Kevin Wanner, MSU Cropland Entomologist, presented managing key insect pests damaging Montana cropland.
- ◇ Noelle Orloff, MSU Plant Diagnostician, held a discussion on invasive grass species along with their biology and control.
- ◇ Mary Burrows, MSU Plant Pathologist, visited about common 2015 crop diseases and pests including powdery mildew, stripe rust, nematodes, head blight, pea rust and pea viruses.
- ◇ Fabian Menalled, MSU Cropland Weed Specialist, presented herbicide resistance.

Educational programs such as private applicator trainings, Golden Triangle Cropping Seminar, and Pest Management Tour bring useful educational components to constituents in Cascade County.

Cascade County 4-H Members Bring Warmth to Their Community

Service learning and community engagement is a longstanding tradition in 4-H. Service learning is an opportunity for youth to learn about their community needs and work together to meet those needs through participation in structured opportunities for service and reflection. For the thirteenth year, Cascade County 4-H Members sewed baby blankets over the course of two days to donate to the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program in Cascade County.

The blankets are distributed to local mothers in the county through the City-County Health Department. As the 4-H’ers learn to sew the blankets and lovingly embroider the message “Sewn with love by Cascade County 4-H” on each one, they learn about the WIC program and the mothers that are impacted by their contribution. In 2015, over 250 blankets were constructed and donated, and over 3,000 blankets since 2002. Cascade County 4-H’ers continue to learn and grow through service.



4-H member sews a baby blanket for WIC

Weather Protection, Food Preservation, and Community Partnerships

MSU Cascade County Extension Shelterbelt Program

Cascade County Shelterbelt Program assists residents with building shelterbelts and windbreaks. In 2015, Rose Malisani, MSU Cascade County Extension Agent:

- ◇ Visited over 30 constituents regarding establishing shelterbelts and windbreaks.
- ◇ Taught 23 constituents on April 13, 2015 at the Shelterbelt and Windbreak Workshop held at the MSU Cascade County Extension office.
- ◇ Visited 5 constituents regarding reestablishing existing shelterbelts.
- ◇ Taught 10 constituents at the Cascade Conservation District “Living on the Land” class regarding establishing shelterbelts and windbreaks on April 23, 2015.
- ◇ Taught 15 Judith Basin constituents at the MSU Judith Basin Extension’s Shelterbelt Workshop on April 27, 2015.

MSU Cascade County Extension partners with Montana Department of Natural Resource and Conservation District’s Montana Conservation Seedling Nursery in ordering trees and shrubs for shelterbelts and windbreaks. There were 57 orders for 2015 with a total of 13,665 trees and shrubs planted in Cascade County.



Preserving the Bounty in Cascade County

In an average week from the middle of August until the beginning of October, I answer an average of 15 questions concerning food preservation, said Jona McNamee, MSU Cascade County FCS Extension agent. The increased interest in food preservation is caused by the increase of gardeners in Cascade County. Many gardeners grow their own fruits and

vegetables so they can control the additives in their food, find pride in providing vegetables that are filled with vitamins and save money on groceries. As a result of the growth in interest, MSU Cascade County Extension offered a five-week, hands-on food preservation class. Fifteen participants learned how to make salsa and pickles by using water baths, preserve jams and jellies, and pressure cook squash and chicken. They also learned the step-by-step science behind food preservation and the importance of food preservation.

Participants reported that they learned how to can and preserve food correctly. The importance of food safety was reported in 14 of 15 of the evaluations as being very important.

Food preservation information is distributed to clientele by placing MontGuides in local stores, the Extension office and the Master Gardener’s booth at the Great Falls Farmer’s Markets.

Community Partnerships Promoting Healthy Lifestyles

Recently, SNAP Ed has partnered with Head Start to enroll 14 individuals in the eight week long series. Through this partnership, Head Start provides free childcare to participating Head Start families and helps supplement food costs so that participants may receive a whole meal during class. It is due to partnerships like the one with Head Start that help make SNAP Education an invaluable success for the community.

Impact: 14 individuals enrolled in eight week-long series through Head Start Partnership. 11 out of 14 SNAP Ed participants were unfamiliar with unit pricing before enrolling into the program. Now all 14 are better able to compare food prices at the store and save money on their standard grocery list.

After two weeks, one participant has started planning meals, using recipes and making grocery lists in order save money and provide more nutritious meals for her and her family. One participant ate his first vegetarian meal during the class and admitted to liking vegetables!

Nitrate Quick Tests serve Montana Ranchers

MSU Cascade County conducted 48 nitrate quick tests in 2015. Nitrates are tested in cereal grains that are intended to feed livestock because it can cause abortions or even death in livestock.

Elevated nitrate levels are caused by drought, hail and other stressful factors. However, nitrates are an important factor as they are converted to plant protein which is then utilized by livestock.



New Hampshire 4-H Travels to Montana

The Interstate Exchange Program is a two-year program in which 4-H teens have the opportunity to meet 4-H'ers in other states across the country. In past years, Cascade County has exchanged with delegations from many other states. This year, Cascade County 4-H hosted 12 delegates from New Hampshire for a week in August. Delegates visited local events and landmarks within Cascade County: Charlie Russell Museum, Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center, Giant Springs State Park, Big Stone Hutterite Colony, First Peoples Buffalo Jump, and Little Shell Interpretive Center. The delegation also had the pleasure of traveling to Glacier National Park to hike in the Two Medicine area as well as go on a white water rafting excursion on the Middle Fork of the Flathead River. In June of 2016, the same group of Cascade County 4-H teens who hosted the New Hampshire 4-H delegates will be traveling to New Hampshire for a week. They will tour New Hampshire and surrounding areas of Boston, Massachusetts and Dartmouth University.

Creating Change Within the Community

Part of the role of the SNAP Ed program is to assist in policy, system and environmental changes throughout the county. This helps address food insecurity beyond the individual level into community wide initiatives.

One of those programs is FRESH! Rescue, a food gleaning program that redistributes food that would be thrown away from grocers to kids who have limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables. FRESH! Rescue partners with the 10th Avenue South Albertsons, St. Vincent de Paul and Sunburst Unlimited to distribute fresh produce to 120 - 200 children in the Boys and Girls Club, Juvenile Detention Center, Mercy Home and most recently, Children's Receiving Home.

In the month of September, FRESH! Rescue provided 5,000 pounds of food to these agencies. Not only does FRESH! Rescue increase their access to fresh produce and expose children to new fruits and vegetables such as artichokes, pomegranates, and papaya, but it also allows these agencies to reinvest the grocery money they save back into their invaluable programs.



Powerful Tools for Caregivers Support Group

Jona McNamee, MSU Cascade County Family and Consumer Science Extension Agent facilitates a monthly support group for family members who are caring for chronically ill family members at Sletten Cancer Regional Center. The group members find that they are not alone in their caregiving, and learn from other caregivers who have faced similar challenges. Connecting with other caregivers lessens the feeling of isolation and can help caregivers devise productive strategies for dealing with family challenges. The support group also encourages caregivers to care for themselves and reminds them that it is not selfish for caregivers to attend to their own needs.

Cascade County Extension held two Powerful Tools for Caregivers workshops in 2015. Seventeen participants completed the six week workshop for a total of 108 residents who have completed the program.

“If All Else Fails, Ask An Extension Agent”

During 2015, Jona McNamee, Rose Malisani, Jerrica Seilstad, and Abigail Lichliter delivered educational resources to clientele through newspaper articles, press releases, radio spots, newsletters, and television interviews. In addition to the education that is delivered to visitors to the Extension office, health fair, trade show booths and community events.

In total 46 radio programs, 10 newspaper articles, 10 Homemaker’s newsletters, and 11 4-H newsletters. Numerous MontGuides and Extension fact sheets were delivered to clients.

Cherry Creek Broadcasting stations reaches over 90,000 listeners, the Homemaker newsletter reaches 210 homemakers and partnering agencies. The television broadcasts reach across Montana and into some Canadian providences.

Topics this year that were covered during the “Extension Today” radio program include: home health, office health, wellness, financial management, nutrition, farm and ranch safety, agriculture production, food preservation, 4-H, horticulture, and youth development.

All three Extension Agents send e-mails to 4-H families, Master Gardeners, agriculture producers, and Homemakers groups to remind them of meetings or to forward education from MSU Extension.

Not everyone can attend workshops and classes given by Extension, media allows the Cascade County Agents to reach audiences with research based education that they can apply to their daily lives. Because of these programs the Cascade County Extension receives requests for more information through phone calls or visits to the office. At the fall food preservation classes 10 people out of 16 said that they heard about the class by listening to the radio.

Welcome Aboard!



April McLean joined our team this spring. A proud Montana native, April has called Great Falls home with her husband Ed and their two children for 14 years.

Volunteering and empowering others is her passion. She has served Service members and their families at a National level as a member of the National Guard Volunteer Training Team since 2011, at a State level

as a member of the Montana Family Program Advisory Council since 2014, and at a Squadron and Wing level as a Key Volunteer for the Montana Air National Guard Family Program since 2007. April brings with her eight years of administrative experience and is excited for the challenges and rewards of working in such a diverse, fast-paced office. “Every day brings something new!”



Scott Maunu hails from Minneapolis, Minnesota and he and his family are now happy to call Montana home. Scott enlisted in the Air Force’s delayed entry program in 1983 and entered active duty the following year. During his military career he performed duties as aircraft mechanic, first sergeant, and superintendent. While in the service, he

earned three associate degrees in Aircraft Maintenance Technology, Instructor of Technology, and Personnel Administration and also completed a Bachelor of Science degree. In September of 2013, Scott retired and immediately went to work with Delta at our Great Falls International Airport and remains there part-time. The following year, Scott also began part-time work as an administrative assistant for the County Commission and then transferred to Extension this past August. Scott is excited to be here and enjoys working in this multifaceted office where he says he’s fortunate to be able to continue learning about programs and subjects he had very little prior knowledge of.



Handling Food Safely

Beginning in 2015, the Montana Food Code requires that every retail food service operation have at least one employee who holds a "nationally recognized food safety manager certification" such as ServSafe®.

A certified person must be available during all hours of the operation, they do not need to be present, but accessible. To receive and maintain certification, all individuals are required to pass a certification exam every five years.

ServSafe® training and certification sets the standard in food safety with the most up-to-date and relevant information. It brings together the current best practices to meet the industry's changing needs. Participants in the trainings stay engaged, retain the information better, and understand how to apply it.

To assist the City-County sanitarians with certifying the 162 restaurants and the non-profits who handle food, Jona McNamee, MSU Cascade County Family and Consumer Science Extension Agent, sought and received her certification in teaching and proctoring ServSafe® classes.

In 2015, five ServSafe® classes were held at the Cascade County Extension office. A total of 71 participants and 46 businesses were represented in the classes. The success rate of the participants was an average of 81%.

In addition to offering the eight-hour managers certificate, McNamee offered six, 4 hour food handler classes. Two classes were offered to students in the Great Falls Adult education. The benefit to the 17 students is the addition of the four-hour certificate to their work resume's when applying for jobs after completing their GED classes. Participants scored 85% on a post evaluation.

Two classes in food safety were presented to the Great Falls Public Schools pantry workers. 22 participants representing nine schools participated in a two-hour class on proper cleaning, storing and delivery of foods from school pantries. Each day hundreds of children in Cascade County eat food prepared and served in child care facilities. In order for providers to receive reimbursement from the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) they are required to complete a two-hour food handler course and receive a certification of completion.

MSU Cascade County Extension provided 33 home day care providers and two child care centers a food safety course that teaches participants how to safely handle food to reduce the risk of foodborne illness in their daycare centers. 33 home day care providers received food safety handling covering specific food safety topics such as storage and usage of formula or breast milk, cleaning and maintenance of changing areas and cleaning and sanitizing of toys.

Contact Us



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Montana State University Extension is an ADA/EO/AA Veteran's Preference Employer and provider of educational outreach.



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