Fort Belknap Extension Expands Food Sustainability Efforts, Youth Ag Programs and Healthy Living Efforts!

In response to Fort Belknap being identified as a "Food Desert," MSU Extension in Fort Belknap has taken a holistic and realistic approach to assisting families by creating the Fort Belknap Food Sustainability Program (FBFSP). Numerous residents have shared their excitement for raising their own food while visiting the office, in casual conversations, while attending workshops, and over social media. This reinforces the importance of the FBFSP. The program educates residents in growing, raising, and preserving their own food, which will improve the health of families and communities.

Food Preservation activities increased this year, in response to community members' requests for education on how to preserve healthy, locally grown and harvested foods. Classes in all four communities (Agency, Lodgepole, Hays and Dodson) produced hundreds of jars of preserved foods, including pickles, salsa, meat, vegetables and fruits.

The new orchard at Lodgepole, sponsored by the Wasay Wakpa (Red Paint Creek) Community Council, was supported by generous help from Brent Sarchet, MSU-Extension arborist, and included 72 fruit trees! Additional partnerships include Partnership with Native Americans, an organization that provided grant funding for a complete high tunnel, and local community members who provided sweat equity and irrigation services. The orchard is set next to the Lodgepole Community Garden, which provided approximately 1,000 pounds of fresh vegetables to community members!

SNAP-Ed Nutrition Education Program

The SNAP-Ed program was staffed until July, and has been restaffed as of November 1, 2015.

Youth Classes were conducted in grades one, three, and five in the following schools: Mission Grade School, Hays Lodgepole School, and Dodson School. A total of 117 students participated in lessons focused on increasing fruits and vegetables on their plate, choosing healthier drink options and including 60 minutes of daily exercise.

Adult lessons were conducted across the reservation, also. Adult participants were hosted by Fort Belknap Diabetes Prevention, Fort Belknap Chemical Dependency Center, Aaniiih Nakoda College, and other tribal programs. Cooking Matters at the Store tours were conducted at Albertson's as a reinforcement effort in teaching smart food buying choices.

Policy, systems and environment efforts conducted by the educator also included a collaboration with OPI's Team Nutrition program and Katie Bark, which provided for two small school-based gardens, one at Hays Lodgepole School and one at Lodgepole for elementary school students.

Mid Winter Fair 2015

Agents work hard to coordinate many activities at Fort Belknap's Mid Winter Fair! Tribal programs, local schools, families, elders, and community members break the monotony of cold winter cabin fever by coming together to celebrate the Aaniih and Nakoda Culture. The fair celebrates the unique tribal cultures throughout the fair events. The events include the Welcome Banquet with special honorings, Fiddle and Jig Contest, Pow Wow, Stick Game Tournament, Art Show, Youth Day, Elder Day, and community booths. Each year the Agents encourage new and innovative events for the community to express healthy living. Community member driven workshops were a hit especially the Jerky making workshop. A new contest this year was canned foods, and entries were beautiful!

Fort Belknap community member Dennis Longknife volunteered his time to share his jerky making expertise during the 2015 Mid-Winter Fair at Fort Belknap Agency in Harlem. Participants learned how to pick a good piece of buffalo meat, how to thinly slice the meat, to season and cure it, and how to dry the meat. Dennis successfully makes and sells his own jerky under the Nakoda Jerky: Native American Made in Montana label.

Walk with Ease

The collaboration between MSU-Extension and Aaniiih Nakoda College allowed for the start of a staff and student focused walking club. The club meets weekly at the college, and consists of educating the members in fitness awareness, safe and healthy habits and how to make walking a part of one's schedule. Walking at one's own pace after stretching and warm-ups, of course, rounds out the class time. Participation in the walking club has been warmly supported by the college administration's allowance for 90 minutes of exercise per week on paid work time. Thank you, ANC administration!

Ag Programs

Fort Belknap Livestock Marketing Cooperative

The FBLMC received the Indian Community Economic Development grant to make improvements to their livestock scale in Hays. New loading chutes, larger holding corrals, new border fence and gates, and gravel for the loading road are a few of the improvements of the scale. The ICED grant has allowed the local ranchers to utilize the scale with more ease. With this improvement to the Hays Scale, the FBLMC board aims to increase membership and collaborate with FB Extension for agriculture and ranch training development. The FB Ag Agent works closely with the board to provide administrative support, communication with local ranchers and farmers, and outreach education. The board also serves as the Community Loan Approval Committee for Junior Agricultural Loans and Rural Assistant Loans through the Montana Department of Agriculture.

4-H and Youth Development

The 4-H and Youth Development program at Fort Belknap Extension is at a new and experimental stage. The interest to start 4-H clubs throughout the reservations is strong therefore Extension is in the early stages of recruiting adult leaders for archery, horsemanship, health/cooking , and crafts along with club leaders. 4-H activities such as Healthy Cooking on a Budget, Crafts, Horse Play Days, and Gardening are currently being implemented in Hays and Lodge pole communities. .

Along with traditional 4-H activities, a total of 12 youth are currently working on Junior Agricultural Loans with Walt Anseth, Montana Dept. of Ag, and the FB Ag Agent to start and/or increase their cow herd. These loans allow youth to learn the steps of applying for a loan, ranch budgeting, ranch record keeping, herd health and expansion, and exchanging hard physical labor for lease, equipment use, and feed.

The goal is to expose and educate the local youth in exploring the agricultural fields that create opportunities to best utilize our local natural resources.

Noxious Weed Program: The Fort Belknap Noxious Weed Program has been working on implementing the FB Noxious Weed Strategic Plan. A community Weed Pull Party occurred in August in Hays. Families and community members volunteered to pull the noxious weeds around the town of Hays. 25 attendees worked hard to fill a truckload of weeds and then discussed noxious weeds and door prizes occurred over lunch. A Weed Committee Meeting occurred in September. The meeting attendees asked many questions as to how and when pesticide application will be implemented. With the aid of the Weed Committee and Kim Goodwin from MSU Bozeman, the ag agent submitted resolutions that were passed by the Fort Belknap Community Council to implement the plan. The ag agent and committee is currently working on the administration of a qualified Weed Manager to record noxious weed infestations, record pesticide applications, and to aid the land owners in any noxious weed concerns. An application for the 2016 Noxious Weed Trust Fund has been submitted.

MSU Extension Fort Belknap Personnel and Partners

Liz Werk, Agricultural Agent, transferred from the FCS Agent position to Agricultural Agent in April, 2015. Liz has worked for the Fort Belknap Extension since 2010. She hopes to bring current ranching and agricultural techniques to enhance the ranch performance while encouraging youth to experience the ranch lifestyle.

Hillary Maxwell moved into the Family and Consumer Science Agent positon in June. Her experience and community involvement as the previous SNAP Ed Nutrition Educator made a perfect fit for the position. Hillary has done outreach education throughout Fort Belknap for over 20 years . Her passion for gardening and healthy living steers her drive for community education and development.

Colleen Filesteel FDPNE Administrative Assistant's extensive administrative experience, keeps up to date files, records, and budgets for the FDPNE grant and other Extension programs.

Collaboration Partners:

MSU Bozeman Extension:

Heritage Tree Orchard Project, Brent Sarchet & Toby Day

Peter Kolb: Wasay Wakpa Shelter Belt Project and reservation wide shelter belt education

Kim Goodwin: MSU Bozeman Dept. of Land Resources and Environmental Sciences

Joel Schumacher: Solid Finances

Tribal Programs:

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families/477

Chemical Dependency Center

Fort Belknap Head Start

Natural **R**esources **C**onservation **S**ervices

Bureau of Indian Affairs

Fort Belknap Forestry

Fort Belknap Senior Centers

Housing

Vocational Rehab

Aaniiih Nakoda College

Diabetes Prevention ProgramHealthy Heart

Tribal Health Department

Fort Belknap Planning Department

Contact Us

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

Fort Belknap Reservation

Phone (406) 353-2656

Email: fortbelknapextension@gmail.com

www.msuextension.org

Hillary Maxwell
Family & Consumer Science Extension Agent; 4-H Development

Liz Werk
Agriculture Extension Agent; 4-H Development

SNAP-Ed Nutrition Assistant

Colleen Filesteel
Administrative Assistant

MSU Extension
Fort Belknap Reservation
656 Agency Main St.
Harlem, MT 59526

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