



The Light of Liberty County Extension Shines Brightly Across the County

Liberty County Extension covers a wide array of topics every day. Within the areas of agriculture and natural resources, 4-H, family and consumer sciences and community development Liberty County Extension seeks to be an avenue to distribute research-based information. This dispersal of information takes form in meetings, both formal and informal in agriculture and family and consumer sciences. In 4-H it quite often involves making sure leaders are trained and youth are able to take advantage of opportunities to learn valuable skills that will enhance their lives. In community development it means building from the ground up, making sure that Liberty County will remain a fertile place to plant the seeds of residence, nourish the crop of community and economic development and have a place to store the seeds of the harvest so that a bright future remains.



The crop yield doesn't count until the crop is in the bin. Seeding and spraying are just a couple of the variables that can affect the outcome. (Photos courtesy of Janice Hendrickson)

Pesticide Education at One's Fingertips

There is an aging population of growers and ranchers in Liberty County. However, in recent years, there have also been an increasing number of the younger generation returning to the farms and ranches. Every five years existing private pesticide applicators need to accrue six pesticide education credits. Those wishing to obtain their license for the first time, such as the younger generation, must take a closed book exam or attend a full day pesticide education class. In 2015 approximately 40 individuals attended a full day class offered in Liberty County to obtain their private pesticide applicator license. Components of pesticide education were broken up into one hour segments. Topics covered included pesticide safety and handling, product labels, pesticides in the environment, pesticide laws, calibration and integrated pest management. This class helped the next generation to learn about various aspects of pesticide safety. This license will help participants remain legal in their application of restricted use pesticides. Applicators who attended the class also were able to save time and money by taking the test locally versus having to travel long distances.

Midge Trapping Expands

Orange wheat blossom midge monitoring continues in Liberty County. In 2015 close to 30 pheromone traps were distributed to willing growers throughout the county. Growers typically took three traps and distributed them in spring wheat fields that were close to a water source, whether it be irrigation or reservoirs. Traps were monitored from the early boot stage until after flowering was complete. Trap counts were then given to the Extension office for inclusion on the web-based Pestweb site. This allowed any grower in the county the ability to check for midge pressure close to their crops. Scouting thresholds were reached in several different fields in the county, predominantly in irrigated spring grains. In some cases growers did not recognize what midges looked like and were able to visit with the Extension office and receive confirmation regarding identification. More growers throughout Liberty County are now able to positively identify midge presence based on visual features, allowing growers to be better prepared for midge infestations in future years.

4-H Stretching and Learning

Air Rifle Program Hits Its Target

Shooting sports are among the fastest growing 4-H projects in Liberty County. In the 2014-15 4-H year 12 youth took the air rifle project, with it being the first year in 4-H for nine of those youth.

New 4-H'ers learned first about gun safety and how to safely handle a gun. With gun safety always at the forefront of their minds, youth were then taught how to shoot in three positions, prone, kneeling and off-hand. Benefits of the air rifle program included more than just accuracy, though. Youth involved learned how to handle stress effec-



A 4-H air rifle participant reacts to a bullseye shot by his teammate during a family fun night of shooting.

tively through proper breathing techniques as well as being able to focus despite distractions. Youth involved in the 2014-15 year were also assisted by the addition of four adult volunteers who became certified in 2014. One of those individuals also attended a national shooting sports training in California, making Liberty County one of the few counties in the state to have two nationally-certified shooting sports instructors. With a shooting sports program that continues to grow in youth and leaders, 4-H can be assured of hitting the target for years to come.

Demonstrating the 4-H Way

Youth in Liberty County have the opportunity each year to give demonstrations and illustrated talks at a county event day. In 2015 county event day was coupled with a small animal showmanship clinic which was opened up to 4-H youth in surrounding counties.

Twenty youth, ranging from Cloverbuds to junior members demonstrated their skill at public presentations. 4-H age youth were also able to practice interview skills in preparation for the local fair by going through an interview process. Cloverbud members had an additional opportunity to speak in front of an audience by reciting the 4-H pledge.

Small animal showmanship classes in cat, dog, poultry and rabbit were open to youth regardless of their involvement in a specific project. Approximately 15 youth from four counties learned proper small animal handling techniques and safety measures.

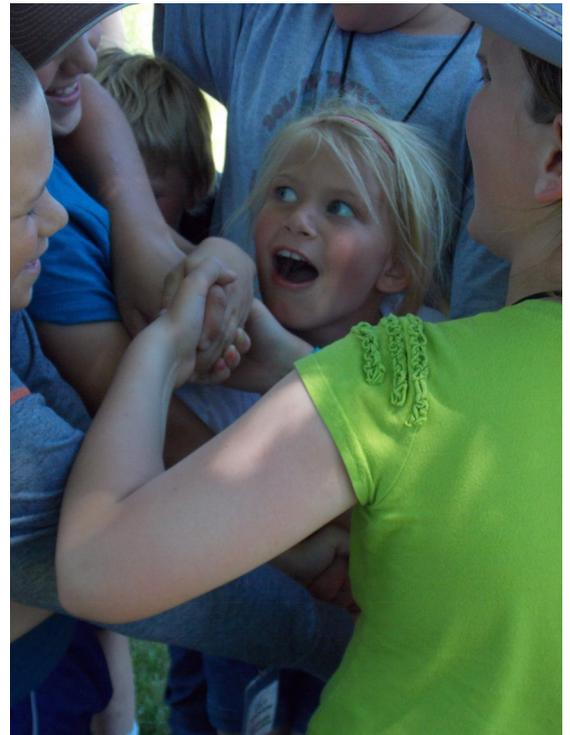
All of these experiences allowed 4-H youth the opportunity to build their confidence, while practicing valuable speaking skills that will benefit them throughout their lives in and out of 4-H.

Which Way to 4-H Camp?

Seven Liberty County 4-H members attended the multi-county 4-H camp at Camp Kiwanis in 2015. Youth participated in various games and workshops including dancing, canoe safety, archery and orienteering.

All camp participants took part in a group orienteering exercise where they learned about compasses. After an introductory course in compass basics, youth divided into groups of three and were challenged to use their new knowledge in finding objects hidden around camp. This exercise accomplished several goals. It allowed youth the opportunity to practice navigating with a compass, teaching them how to read compass directions. Additionally, dormant math skills were utilized by youth to figure out their own personal walking pace as well as how to work effectively as a team.

For the 2014-2015 4-H year Liberty County had 52 youth and 34 adult volunteers enrolled in over 30 projects. That represents a 75 percent increase in youth enrollment over the past five years in Liberty County.



A Liberty County 4-H member enjoys a "knotty" game of the human knot at 4-H Camp.

Family and Consumer Sciences

Making Applesauce

The practice of home canning foods is not as common as it once was. For this purpose, Liberty County Extension was invited into Chester-Joplin-Inverness High School this spring where consumer science students were instructed on how to make applesauce. Approximately 10 students learned about food safety and acceptable preservation techniques. For some students this was the first time they had been exposed to the concept of home canning and many of the students expressed an enthusiasm for wanting to learn the concepts.

Food Safety Awareness

Food safety issues have become an increasingly important part of life, including in rural areas such as Liberty County. Liberty County Extension taught 24 representatives from various local non-profit organizations about principles of food safety. Many of these groups were taking food safety training in order to serve food at the weekly Farmers' Market in Chester. With at least one representative from an organization being food safety trained, local non-profit groups can now serve meals at the Farmers' Market. This will add to the weekly economic impact that the Farmers' market provides during summer months. Participants were taught food safety principles concerning food contamination, proper food temperatures, and hygiene practices that will benefit them in public and at home.

Mastering Gardening

Master Gardener classes have not been offered in Liberty County since 2013 to allow for interest to build in the program. In 2015 a Level 1 Master Gardener class was again offered in Chester. Four Master Gardener participants met once a week for eight weeks to learn research-based principles of gardening. A Level 3 Master Gardener assisted the Liberty County Extension agent in teaching each of the classes. This Level 3 Master Gardener attended Levels 1 and 2 in Liberty County as well and was able to give back to his community by assisting in Level 1 instruction.

Students of the class were taught about a variety of topics including soils and nutrients, plant growth and development, annuals and perennials, pruning, lawn maintenance, small fruits, and integrated pest management. In addition to the local Extension agent and the Level 3 Master Gardener, Toby Day, M.S.U. Extension Horticulture specialist, also presented to the class.

To obtain a full Level 1 Master Gardener certification, class participants were expected to complete 20 hours of community service by the end of the year. One participant included her family in this endeavor as they helped the local assisted living facility in planting and maintaining a garden,

with produce to be used locally at the facility. With the facility employees being engaged in resident care primarily and residents being unable at times to do the physical labor associated with gardening, this service is vitally important to the success of the facility gardening program.

Helping in Succession Planning

The Golden Prairie Community Foundation and M.S.U. Extension partnered in 2015 to bring Dr. Marsha Goetting, M.S.U. Extension Family Economics Specialist, to the area not once, but twice.

In March area residents learned and participated in the estate planning and transfer of wealth class. Representatives from M.S.U. Extension spoke to 29 individuals and couples, teaching about the intergenerational transfer of wealth occurring statewide and also its impacts in Liberty County. In Liberty County almost \$37 million will transfer from one generation to the next in the next 10 years.

In March, in addition to speaking to an evening adult



Dr. Marsha Goetting, M.S.U. Extension Family Economics specialist, visits with Liberty County residents about estate planning practices.

class, Dr. Goetting also presented to high school age students about the importance of the right of survivorship and how that can affect even them at their ages. In her adult classes Dr. Goetting was able to illustrate how important it is to begin estate and succession planning now. According to a survey taken at the time, 43% of the participants didn't have an estate plan. At the conclusion of the program 92% of those surveyed said that they would discuss estate planning with their spouse or family. Participants, be they youth or adults, were able to come away from the classes with a better understanding of estate planning principles and know how to better prepare for the future.

Golden Prairie Community Foundation Begins Fundraising Efforts in Earnest

The Golden Prairie Community Foundation was founded in 2014 due to a USDA Rural Development grant in part funded by Montana State University Extension. With a local advisory board and an affiliate agreement signed with Montana Community Foundation in late 2014, the Golden Prairie Community Foundation began fundraising and board strategic planning efforts in 2015.

Fundraising appeal letters and brochures were sent to approximately 1500 mail boxes in nine different communities with ties to Liberty County. Approximately \$3,000 was raised through this process, with monies going into an endowment account held with Montana Community Foundation. The Golden Prairie Community Foundation has five years to reach a goal of \$25,000 to permanently endow the account.

Golden Prairie Community Foundation board members also completed 100 hours of board training. Training included two days of comprehensive strategic planning and hosting a transfer of wealth event for the community. Board



Golden Prairie Community Foundation board members participated in several Extension-sponsored trainings in 2015, including this one held in Chester.

members also hosted a spring convening meeting with representatives from the Montana Community Foundation, M.S.U. Extension and other area community foundations. This convening allowed for the sharing of ideas regarding how to fundraise and how to be more efficient community foundations. After the completion of these training hours the community foundation was awarded \$1000 for use as distributable or grant funds. In the fall of 2015 the community foundation put out grant applications to all area non-profit organizations. Five organizations submitted grant applications and three applications were accepted from three different communities. Funds awarded to these organizations will go towards projects such as renovation and expansion of community buildings as well as community events. Fundraising efforts for the community foundation will continue into the future with the impacts to benefit Liberty County residents for years to come.

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