

YOUTH ISSUES

Extension worked with the tobacco prevention specialist to plan a CSI event during **Screen Free Week** to help educate elementary students about the dangers of smoking. More than \$200 was donated for prizes for Screen Free Week.

Joining forces with youth issues coalition members, Extension helped host a **“Social Networking” workshop** presented by Allison Kosto with the 4-H Center. The purpose of the presentation was to help parents and teachers understand the dangers of social networks and how to help their children/students stay safe. Concerns about underage drinking at Prom and during branding season prompted Extension to write an article about the potential consequences of “social hosting.”



Contact Us



EXTENSION

Powder River County

Mary Rumph
Agriculture Extension Agent; 4-H Development

Julie Riley
Family & Consumer Science Extension Agent; 4-H Development

Kelda Page
Administrative Assistant

Powder River County Extension
PO Box 200
Broadus, MT 59317

Phone (406) 436-2424

E-mail powderriver@montana.edu

Web www.msuextension.org/powderriver

www.msuextension.org

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EXTENSION

Powder River County

2015 Annual Report

Powder River County Extension Responsive. Active. Involved. Informed. Engaged.



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- ⇒ People Partner Grants

YOUTH ISSUES

- ⇒ Screen Free Week
- ⇒ Social Networking

AGRICULTURE

Noxious weeds are a high priority in Powder River County, having the potential to invade, reduce land values and render grazing lands useless. Twenty-nine landowners completed a survey and ranked noxious weeds as their top concern, followed by estate planning, pests (insects and rodents), livestock nutrition and crop and forage production.

Forty producers increased their knowledge of noxious weeds at the annual Summer Weed and Pest Tour. The primary target weed this year was medusahead. Montana State University Extension Weed Specialist Jane Mangold shared identifying characteristics and cautioned land stewards to be on the alert for the perennial invasive grassy weed that has the ability to degrade plant communities by forming monocultures and reducing suitable habitat for both livestock and wildlife.



Another noxious weed of concern is St. Johnswort, which is creeping in along the highways and off the forest lands in the Western part of the county. On the tour, participants saw the invasive weed in its element.

Nearly all of the noxious weeds gain entry into the county along the highway corridors and from the Forest Service lands. Fortunately, Extension is able to work closely with the District Weed Board and Weed Coordinator to secure federal funding to assist with the control of noxious weeds. Through grants, the Weed District has secured more than \$200,000 over the last three years for the control of noxious weeds and for employing a full-time weed coordinator. Two landowners joined a poisonous hemlock grant program and sprayed their hemlock for the first time this year.

An Extension priority is providing producers with the opportunity to obtain re-certification credits to keep their private applicator license renewed. Extension provided two programs for private applicators to receive credits toward license renewal. In addition, office staff assisted 13 new private applicators in obtaining certification; and assisted six prospective commercial applicators with study resources. Possessing a private applicator license allows for the purchase and use of restricted pesticides.

In addition, Extension wrote several articles regarding weeds; identified 25 noxious, invasive and nuisance weeds and provided control recommendations.

Pest control

Precipitation levels and timing contributed to an explosion of annual weeds and prairie dogs this summer. Control of prairie dogs and pocket gophers was a topic of concern during the Summer Weed and Pest Tour. Effective tools for control are becoming less available due, in part, to environmental and human risk. Participants of the tour gained knowledge about what products were available and effective, and learned best management practices.

Livestock Health, Feed & Water

Forty-nine forage samples were screened for 31 producers to detect nitrate levels dangerous for livestock consumption. In addition, the water testing meter was used on two livestock water sources, both tested within acceptable ranges. Forty-one participants attended a program featuring stocking rates and seasonal grazing, winter feed supplements and forage quality. As a result of the program, one producer requested the power point presentation on the stocking rates; another requested information on testing forage and sent in samples for protein and energy analysis.

As a result of several producers bringing in barley regrowth, and sudangrass/sorghum samples prior to grazing, Agent Mary Rumph published an article in the newspaper regarding fall grazing of alfalfa and annual crops. She also provided sampling information and a hay probe to three producers interested in testing forage for protein and energy.

Information was shared on preparing the cattle herd for winter and protein supplementation through a radio release and newspaper article. Extension also provided information to the public on grass tetany; the causes, prevention and treatment of scours in calves; best management practices for handling vaccines; the importance of colostrum for newborn calves and lambs; and researched drug-free cattle definitions for a livestock producer.

Rumph worked extensively with a producer to test forage for mold and mycotoxins; the test results were negative.

Crop Production

One of the topics at the annual Agriculture Winter Series was the management of alfalfa and integrated pest management. In addition, Extension provided information on overseeding old alfalfa stands; identified army cutworms and provided control options; and wrote an article for the paper encouraging others to scout for cutworms. Rumph researched wheat stripe rust, fungicide treatment and the feeding of treated wheat to livestock. In addition, she researched chemical treatments for drying hay; and provided information on post-harvest following an application of malathion and paraquat, respectively.

Financial Support - \$5,000 of donated premiums and awards were distributed among Fair exhibitors, between 4-H and open class. The 4-H Market Livestock sale generated \$58,265.44 for 39 exhibitors; the beef averaged \$3.12/pound; sheep \$4.67/pound and swine \$4.40/pound. Additionally, \$5,234 was generated for volunteer organizations, including the volunteer Fire Department, scholarships, First Responders and 4-H Council. The silent auction, organized for non-livestock projects to recoup some of their expenses, raised \$476 for 22 items sold by 17 exhibitors.

The primary fundraising event for the Powder River 4-H Council is the Fairbarn sign project. The signs are \$100 for a three year period. This was a sign renewal year with 60% of the proceeds going to the 4-H Council and 40% to the 4-H clubs. Forty-eight signs were sold for \$4,800. These funds are used to support 4-H youth and volunteer involvement in county and state 4-H events.

Exhibits – Sixty-five interviews were conducted by six judges to evaluate the depth of knowledge youth had of their fair projects. Seventy livestock entries were exhibited. Two-hundred fifty non-livestock entries were exhibited in 4-H; and over five hundred exhibits were entered in the Open Class Division.

4-H Camp — Eleven youth; three teens and County Agent Mary Rumph attended 4-H Camp Needmore. The delegation joined other counties for a total of 140 youth. Mary led a “duct tape” craft project in line with the theme “Under Construction.” The three teen counselors worked with groups of 12-15 youth and provided leadership and guidance throughout the camp.



Six youth participated in the annual 4-H Horse Clinic focusing on the Ranch Horse project. Roping and showmanship skills were two areas volunteer instructors worked on with youth. One volunteer met weekly with youth to practice Horsemanship skills.

Eight youth gave county demonstrations; four Teen 4-H members applied to be Teen Counselors at 4-H Camp and attended Teen counselor training; two Teen 4-H members assisted Agent Rumph with a Farm Safety Puppet show, reaching 15 Kindergarten students at the Elementary school.



Rumph taught a **quality assurance workshop** at a club 4-H meeting, teaching nine members and five adults the difference between subcutaneous and intramuscular shots, the difference in needles and how to read a vaccine label.

Two 4-H clubs applied for and received **People Partner Grants**, providing \$772 back for community projects. One project, a flower garden at a cemetery, required planting flowers and daily watering by the Mizpah Masters 4-H club members. The other project, “Feeding the Hungry Children” was organized by Teen 4-H member Lindsey Riley. Riley is a member of the Governor’s Youth Council to Fight Childhood Hunger. Her project is providing healthy snacks for children at the Elementary School. Riley is also a member of the Powder River Trailblazer’s 4-H Club, which supported her initiative in helping feed hungry students.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

“It’s a Bug’s Life” After-School Program attracted 58 Kindergarten through fourth grade students - 77 percent of the students in those grades were involved.

- Fourth grade students read with Kindergarten students.
- Reading volunteers who read with each child ranged in age from 10 to 86.
- Two hundred thirty-three books were read over a five-week program.
- Teens and adults taught group activities including games, crafts, and even a treasure hunt for puncturevine, an invasive weed, in the school yard.
- A site change for the second grade students utilized the Powder River Manor, involving manor residents in activities and enhancing multi-generation relationships.



Santa’s Secret Shop is a community service event for elementary-aged children to shop with the assistance of a 4-H teen. The experience provides the young shopper independent, yet controlled shopping for a variety of low cost gifts.

4-H Mini-Congress – Eleven teens facilitated the annual 4-H Mini-Congress for 21 participants. Teens selected a theme, planned workshops and interacted with the younger participants. The teens had numerous opportunities to problem solve and provide leadership. One change the teens made for next year is to invite students in third grade to boost participation and provide a fun and educational event for younger members, too.

Summer Fun Day! Thirty-seven youth participated in Summer Fun Day. Seven teens developed leadership and facilitation skills through organizing the event, and teaching fun and educational workshops.



“Carnival Lights and Country Nights”

There is no doubt in rural communities that the County Fair is a summer highlight. That certainly is the case in Powder River County. This year, the theme was “Carnival Lights and Country Nights,” because, for the first time in four decades, a carnival was part of the Fair entertainment. Extension worked closely with volunteer Fair board members and coordinated with several community agencies and organizations to facilitate the Fair. In combination with the Powder River Chamber of Commerce, the board sponsored the carnival. The Fair board also coordinated with the Farm Bureau to include ATV Safety, Alive at 25, and the Ringling 5 concert. Extension also joined forces with the tobacco prevention specialist to have a “tobacco free” day at the Fair and with the Matched Bronc’s organizer to assist with the Friday night rodeo.

Powder River 4-H has 17 leaders and 54 4-H members enrolled in 62 projects. The shooting sports program has gained momentum with an enrollment of 20 members.

Teens take the lead in county-wide events:

Achievement Night was held in early November. Seven Teen 4-H members facilitated the event and organized ice breakers for the participants. Sixty-two youth and 18 adults were recognized for their membership. Beef and hog carcass awards were announced, as well as club secretary, reporter, treasurer and scrapbook awards and top fair exhibitors in both junior and senior divisions.

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

Powder River County Living Healthy... Local Impact

Physical activity

- Reduces the risk of dying from coronary heart disease and of developing high blood pressure, colon cancer, and diabetes.
- Can help people with chronic, disabling conditions improve their stamina and muscle strength.
- Reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression, improves mood, and promotes general feelings of well-being.
- Helps control joint swelling and pain associated with arthritis.
- Can help reduce blood pressure in some people with hypertension as reported from the Center for Disease Control.

The Arthritis Exercise Program and the Strong Women Program in Powder River County are on-going health and exercise programs for middle-age and older adults. The programs provide adults access to a safe, structured and effective training. Participants are made to feel comfortable regardless of their current fitness level so they can safely participate and gradually build the strength, endurance and flexibility beneficial to health.

Participants of the Arthritis Exercise Program completed fitness assessments in the fall and spring last year. Assessments included endurance, strength and flexibility. Height, weight and blood pressures were also measured. Participants improved their endurance by 23 percent and their flexibility by 48 percent, and reported an average weight loss of five percent.



In Powder River County, 30 people participated in the physical activity programs, or 1,344 hours of structured, physical activity.

Participants stated:

- ◆ I take less arthritis pain medication.
- ◆ I’ve discontinued arthritis medications as a result of the class, saving \$55 each month.
- ◆ I’ve had both neck and back surgery and the exercise classes have improved my movement and strength in both.
- ◆ I was diagnosed with fibromyalgia in the 1980’s, and the exercises do not strain my muscles and have increased my flexibility.
- ◆ I’ve had back, hip and ankle surgery, and find that I feel much better with the arthritis exercise class, and my balance has improved.
- ◆ This class has been great. I seem to have more energy when I’m done than when I first came and I’ve had quite a workout. I move easier than when we began the class.
- ◆ Doing exercise we neglect at home twice a week has helped being more limber. Just getting in touch with others every week is beneficial.
- ◆ It has helped me when driving. It’s easier to turn my body to look behind me when changing lanes. The dose of laughter is very good!
- ◆ Helped to be able to bend and lift easier. My one hip is bad and the exercises help.
- ◆ I got stronger in my arms and back, enjoyed the class and friendship.
- ◆ I lack motivation to exercise so exercise classes have worked well. I’ve made new friends and enjoyed exercising with them. My shoulder is much better and I can now sleep on it.

Strong Hearts Healthy Communities

Powder River County was selected to be one of 12 communities in Montana to participate in a Cardiovascular Disease Research project called **STRONG HEARTS**, created in conjunction with Cornell University and Montana State University Extension Service. The six-month, 48 class program is in full swing.

Thirty-one women were screened; however, only 13 women qualified for the study. The women participated in a baseline screening and blood draw. They wore accelerometers to track their physical activity, and completed seven daily dietary recalls.

“It’s an exciting project to be a part of,” explained several of the participants. Another woman stated that she has lost 11 pounds since the program began. Another woman reports that she has decreased a pant size.

Participants are learning to make small lifestyle changes by increasing physical activity and the amount of fruits and vegetables they eat. They are wearing fitbits provided by the study, and participate in aerobic exercise, strength training and learn how to make healthy changes to their lifestyles.



Walk with Ease

Walking to Alaska, and Shape Up Montana concluded with a celebration in May. Overall 30 people increased their physical activity and walked over 19 million steps during a 3-month period wearing pedometers to track their steps.

Most of the people felt they increased their physical activity and reported the following benefits of wearing a pedometer:

- It helped quite a bit, I thought a lot more about walking short trips instead of driving,
- I notice how my heart rate can change
- I aimed for 10,000 steps each day. Some days it was no effort and sometimes I checked my pedometer early in the evening and realized I needed to take a walk!
- There were times I elected to walk instead of driving!! Even when I was tired, when I walked I felt re-energized!



Mental Health in the Classroom

The ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) Study is one of the largest scientific research studies of its kind, with over 17,000 mostly middle income Americans participating. The key concept underlying the ACE Study is that stressful or traumatic childhood experiences can result in social, emotional, and cognitive impairments.

Powder River County Extension taught 13 people, primarily teachers, and helped them understand the ACEs study, which determined that children with trauma such as physical and sexual abuse (there are 10 categories) are more likely to experience alcoholism, depression, obesity, smoking (there are thirteen adverse health risks) in their adult years. There is a direct “dose-response” relationship. Many children experiencing trauma have PTSD-like symptoms.

Therefore, it’s vital to create a compassionate classroom, to help youth find a caring adult and safe environment at school. It helps school-aged children learn to cope and thrive.

Two presenters talked about Childhood Protective Services and gave teachers contact information if they believe a child is being abused.

Participants reported:

- Principles of creating compassionate classrooms were excellent and are ideas that we can use in classrooms and with our own children;
- It was interesting learning about the many resources available and the procedure for reporting abuse and neglect;
- I feel more prepared to deal with an individual in a suicidal situation;
- I am surprised at the statistics that prove suicide is a very scary crisis here in Montana;
- Thank you for offering this class, it has provided useful tools to offer a new teacher in rural school districts.

ASIST training was part of the coursework for those eight people taking the course for graduate credit. Another six people from both law enforcement and the school took the ASIST Training, what is called CPR for those in mental crisis. Participants felt the training was extremely worthwhile. One person has said that she is already using the tools learned from the ASIST course. We also received \$300 from the Eastern Montana Service Agency (ESAA) to support the training.

Financial

Financial literacy is something we can benefit from at all stages of life. From saving for a college education to getting by in retirement, many people today are feeling extreme financial anxiety. Many Americans are unfamiliar with even the most basic economic concepts needed to make saving and investment decisions. Research shows that more than half would fail a basic finance quiz. This lack of financial knowledge presents serious barriers in home purchases, retirement planning, and other financial choices. A well-informed consumer is critical to a strong and stable economy.

Powder River County hosts

Solid Finance Webinars are an online financial literacy program sponsored by FINRA and MSU Extension Service. One hundred people attended the programs that covered Retirement Income, Estate Planning and Managing Your Money.

In Powder River County,

- ♦ One participant sought expert advice on annuities;
- ♦ Sold an estate planning packet to one client;

Participants said they understand:

- How little expenses add up over time
- The importance of keeping a household inventory
- The importance of letting someone know where financial information is kept
- Understand “needs” versus “wants”

Steps participants plan to take are:

- ♦ Add to their emergency fund
- ♦ To use better passwords for security