

Extension Partners with Local Boys and Girls Club

Horticulture, Youth Development, and Family and Consumer Sciences programs sought out by club

With the growth of Richland County due to the Bakken Oil formation, the need for out-of-school care for youth in the area is becoming increasingly important. The local Boys and Girls Club is one entity that provides youth in Richland



Youth in the Boys and Girls Club summer program complete the lesson on character development, taught by Josie Evenson, Richland County 4-H/Youth Development Agent.

County a safe environment to learn and develop important life skills. Administrators of the local club sought out Extension to aid in providing programming and expertise in the areas of horticulture, food safety, culinary skills, nutrition, science and technology, animal science, leadership and character building.

Through Richland County Extension's community garden the Boys and Girls Club was able to rent ten, four foot by eight foot beds and use the fresh produce that they grew to supplement snacks and meals in their summer program. The fresh produce provided an opportunity for the youth to have nutritious snacks and meals, as well as to experience a variety of foods in their diet. Members of the club's summer program were educated on planting a garden, proper watering techniques, garden maintenance and harvesting. A daily field trip to the community garden plots was added to the summer program to ensure the beds could be properly maintained.

Also during the summer program in a collaborative effort, an Extension Agent went to the club four different days to teach workshops. The summer program had up to 25 youth in attendance. The first workshop was on space and rockets. Youth learned the parts of a rocket, the GPS system in the

rockets, about rocket fuel and the flight process. Club members were then able to make a rocket out of edible materials. The second workshop was on leadership and the importance of knowing one's self to become a better leader. The youth were able to complete an art project that depicted them and their personalities. The third week the focus was on animal science. Members of the club got to play a game introducing them to many factors of animal science and husbandry. The final workshop was on character building in preparation for the upcoming school year.

During the school year, an agent worked with three program leaders to educate them on food safety, going over personal hygiene in the kitchen, safe internal cooking temperatures, sanitation, and how to prevent food borne illnesses. The agent then taught sixty youth about healthy snack choices including fresh fruits and vegetables and other healthy snacks that they could prepare for themselves. With the understanding that, as the children mature, they will potentially find themselves at home by themselves or taking care of siblings, club members were instructed on safety in the kitchen including microwave and can opener safety.

This partnership has proven beneficial for youth in Richland County. Youth have been provided a safe place to learn and grow, while learning about horticulture, nutrition and youth development.

Tri-funded Support

The Richland County Extension Office is very appreciative of the financial support that is provided to ensure that non-biased, educational programs are available to the citizens of the county. The Richland County Commissioners: Loren Young, Shane Gorder, and Duane Mitchell along with the State of Montana and the United States Department of Agriculture provide the funding necessary to accomplish this mission.



Family and Consumer Sciences and Agriculture/Livestock Production

Partnering with the Richland County Nutrition Coalition



The Nutrition Coalition is an organization whose main goal is to educate Richland County Community on healthy choices. The state of Montana has a 26.4% rate of obesity. The average rate for the U.S is 35%. Creating a healthy weight will help decrease potential health risks for our community members. This is an issue the coalition is trying to help improve in the community. One of the ways to reach the community to educate them on healthy decision making is through the Health Fair. This year the Health Fair drew in an estimate of 325 people. I worked with the Nutrition Coalition on the discussion of gluten intolerance and celiac. Research estimates that 18 million Americans have gluten sensitivity. 1% of the U.S. population have been diagnosed with celiac, but a large percent of the population is unaware that they have an allergy. We reached the audience with information about what is gluten, symptoms, who to contact, and healthy gluten free options. An average of 20 people were sitting in on our discussion. The information provided allowed 90% of the audience to connect and said they were going to see a specialist about their gluten problems.

Alternative forages and nitrates

Weather for the growing season in 2015 was less-than favorable for Richland County hay producers. As such, ranchers were scrambling to try and find suitable alternatives to supplement dwindling hay supplies.

Many producers turned to alternative forages such as oat, wheat and barley hay and others still seeded millet and/or sorghum sudangrass in a last-ditch effort to try and get something established that could be harvest for forage.

Upon harvesting these alternative hay crops, however, producers became concerned about the potential for nitrate poisoning when/if their cattle or sheep consumed the forage. As such more than fifteen producers brought samples of these forages and others into the Extension Office to have them sampled for nitrate. More than half of the samples were shown to contain some level of nitrates as identified by the nitrate quick test and most of those samples were then sent to a certified laboratory to determine what level of the potentially deadly compound was present.

Without this service Richland County livestock producers would be unable to assess whether nitrates were present in the hay being fed to their livestock. If these forages were fed and not tested, the potential economic loss to the livestock industry in Richland County could have been substantial. Prussic acid poisoning was of concern for producers harvesting sorghum, sudan, and sorghum-sudangrass hay and timing of alfalfa cutting was also of concern as producers wanted to get as much production as possible out of their forages but did not want to sacrifice the overall health of the plants and the livestock being fed. The agricultural agent met one-on-one with several producers in this situation to discuss the risks and potential rewards associated with each of these scenarios.

Insect monitoring programs

Orange wheat blossom midge and mosquitoes carrying viruses are two insect issues facing Richland County small grain and livestock producers.

Orange wheat blossom midge is an insect pest that feeds on the developing wheat kernel. As part of a state-wide monitoring effort, the agricultural agent set two traps in spring wheat fields to monitor for the presence of this pest. Orange wheat blossom



Agricultural/Livestock Agent Tim Fine checks the mosquito trap.

midge adults were found at both locations but, when working closer with the cooperating producers, it was determined that the levels of adults found did not warrant an insecticide application. As wheat prices were not as high as in previous years, this recommendation not to apply insecticides contributed to making the harvested wheat more profitable.

The cache valley and west Nile virus are spread by mosquitoes. Cache valley virus is a concern for sheep producers specifically but west Nile can be contracted by animals and humans alike. For the fourth year, Richland County has been one of the sites in Eastern Montana where mosquitoes are trapped and shipped to the veterinary entomology laboratory at Montana State University in Bozeman. None of the mosquitoes have been found to be carrying the cache valley virus but there were some that were found carrying west Nile. There have been no reports of humans contracting the west Nile virus in Richland County but knowing that the disease is present in mosquitoes allows the agricultural agent to disseminate information related to preventing the spread of the disease.

4-H/Youth Development

Youth Engage in Learning

As youth grow, it is essential that they are engaged in learning. Youth that are engaged in learning are self-motivated and creative. The 222 active 4-H members in Richland County 4-H are able to partner with 126 certified volunteers to be involved experiential learning. This learning takes place in project and club work as well as county and state wide 4-H events. Youth in Richland County are able to participate in events including Speech and Demonstration Day, Fashion and Quilt Revue, Craft Day, Quality Assurance, Livestock Judging, Shooting Sports, Camps, Community Service Activities and the Richland County Fair. Members are also given the opportunity to participate in state wide events such as Ambassador Fall Training, Montana 4-H Rec Lab and State 4-H Congress. As youth engage in learning they gain critical life skills for the future.

Youth Serve as Leaders in Richland County

Life skills, including leadership is an integral part of the 4-H program. In 4-H we strive for youth to gain leadership skills as well as to put those skills into practice. During the 2014-2015 4-H year sixteen senior members in Richland County 4-H met once a month to promote 4-H, organize and conduct local 4-H events, and continue to gain important life skills. The Junior Leaders hosted a 4-H Winter Carnival, conducted a successful door to door food drive, collected pop tabs to donate to the Ronald McDonald House and hosted a dinner and dance fundraiser. The 4-H Winter Carnival is an annual event that is open to all members in Richland County 4-H. This year thirty one youth and two adults were a part of this night of learning and engagement. With an influx in population, this event has been instrumental in allowing member of Richland County 4-H to build relationships with other youth in the county. The Junior Leaders have also had ample opportunity to practice service to others. As a group, they planned and implemented a door to door food drive in February collecting 394 pounds of food to donate to the local food bank. The group also collected pop tabs throughout the year to donate to the Ronald McDonald House in Billings, MT. They were able to collect approximately 111 pounds of pop tabs. Through the local recycling center, the pop tabs earned \$83.25 and the pop tabs are also given to the Ronald McDonald House, doubling the donation. The Junior Leaders also hosted a dinner and dance fundraiser, with all proceeds of \$1,341.68 going to the Ronald McDonald House, the Matthew House and the Domestic Violence House. A Junior Leader is quoted in saying *"Donating the money we make to these organiza-*

tions is something I like. We all know people who have used these places and that hits close to home." The yearlong collaborative effort of this group has proven beneficial for our community, all while providing youth the opportunity to develop and practice valuable leadership skills.

Youth Engage in Quality Assurance Trainings

"I learned how to halter break my steer and that was really helpful."
-Richland County 4-H Member

Many youth that are enrolled in 4-H programs are involved



Local veterinarian demonstrates proper halter breaking of a 4-H steer.

in market livestock projects. Ensuring that these youth are given the chance for education on management practices that will guarantee that they are

raising high quality, safe and wholesome products for consumers is essential. In December Richland County 4-H held one of two Quality Assurance training for the year. At this training seventy eight youth and twenty seven adults were able to hear from the Extension Agent, local veterinarian and livestock committee. Those in attendance learned what vaccinations are needed for market steers and how to properly give them, proper food and nutrition needs for cattle, proper shelter for animals and what signs to look for to identify the health of cattle. They were also given a demonstration with a live calf on how to safely and properly halter break. This demonstration proved extremely valuable throughout the 4-H year. Many youth and adults reported the ease of halter breaking after attending this training. In April Richland County 4-H held the second Quality Assurance training. At this training twenty five youth and sixteen adults were able to hear from the Extension Agent, local veterinarian, and livestock committee. This training covered vaccinations, proper food and nutrition, proper shelter and exercise for market lambs, market hogs and market goats. Youth were then given the opportunity to practice giving vaccinations through a hands on demonstration. Quality Assurance trainings are valuable to 4-H members and parents. Providing them with up to date, research based information has proven to increase the quality of the end product as well as providing youth with animal science knowledge that they will carry with them the rest of their lives.

Pipeline Reclamation Workshop

What to do after the pipeline is installed and issues arise

As oil production continues to be a major source of income for residents in Richland County, the various nuances of the industry continue to present challenges. One such challenge landowners face is dealing with businesses that install oil and natural gas carrying pipelines.

In order to help landowners and pipeline installation companies address these challenges, the Richland County Extension office teamed up with the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Research Station and the Richland County Soil Conservation District, Richland County Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to conduct a pipeline reclamation workshop.



Participants at the 2015 Pipeline Reclamation workshop listen as Deb Gilbert, Richland County DES coordinator, gives an overview of spills that happened within the county borders.

The focus of the workshop was to strengthen the communication chains between local landowners and pipeline installation and reclamation businesses. To accomplish this industry speakers were invited to speak about the processes involved in reclamation, landowner rights, and the proper processes and procedures to follow should a spill occur.

Landowners commented that they were happy to learn what steps and agencies were available to provide

assistance should there be an issue with a pipeline crossing their property while industry representatives were pleased to become more familiar with what is expected of them from the beginning of pipeline installation through the reclamation process.

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