

4-H/Positive Youth Development

Demonstrations and Public Speaking

More than 130 4-H members participated in the county demonstration program building the life skills of communications, planning and organizing, self-motivation, responsibility, self-discipline and learning to lead. These life skills reward demonstrators in their adult lives. 4-H alumni testimonials credit experience gained via the Sanders County 4-H Public Speaking Program as very valuable.

Camps

4-H camps provide positive youth development in an outdoor setting. Programming offers campers a greater chance to learn, develop life skills and attitudes that will help them to become self-directing and productive members of society. Sanders County 4-Hers have the opportunity to participate in Multi-County 4-H Camp (coordinated by Extension Agents in Lake, Lincoln, Mineral, Missoula, and Sanders counties). Cloverbud Camp (Flathead, Flathead Reservation, Lake, Lincoln, Mineral, Missoula, Ravalli, and Sanders counties) offers Cloverbuds, youth aged 6-8, and their parents, an opportunity to share in the camping experiences together. Through planned activities, Cloverbuds develop a sense of confidence and communication skills.

4-H Congress

Sanders County 4-H members earn the opportunity to compete at the Montana 4-H Congress Contests. This year a small but talented delegation represented Sanders County in the Demonstration, Fashion Revue, and Horse Skill-a-thon contests. Anna Snell took first place at the Fashion Revue with a beautiful teal wool coat. Anna reported that she made the coat because she wanted one like it and wanted to further develop her sewing skills. Entering the coat in the Fashion Revue was an afterthought. Anna is already applying the life skills she is learning through 4-H.

Fair

Over Labor Day weekend each year, around 140 Sanders County 4-H'ers, their families, and leaders come together for the Sanders County Fair. The purpose of the fair is to enrich the learning experience of the 4-H member. It serves as a learning laboratory for youth.

The learning experience of the 4-H fair goes far beyond the winning of ribbons. It provides a backdrop for youth to learn important life skills. 4-H members learn the importance of evaluation based upon pre-described standards; to communicate with adults through interview judging; to learn how to ask questions and to obtain knowledge; to develop a sense of teamwork and cooperation; to learn that life is constantly changing; to learn to be a humble winner, and to develop positive sportsmanship skills; to develop one's self to the fullest potential; to use knowledge for the betterment of one's community, home, family and self; to volunteer one's time and skills to accomplish a common good; to build leadership skills by working with staff and volunteers; and to feel good about one's self and personal accomplishments.



Sanders County 4-H member prepares to canoe with his camp counselor at Multi-County 4-H Camp on Loon Lake outside of Bigfork



Sanders County Congress Delegation in front of Montana Hall on the MSU Campus.



Sanders County 4-H beef project member presents her poster on trimming cattle hooves to two interview judges during the Sanders County Fair. The project interviews are an integral part of members learning at the fair.

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Aquatic Invasive Plants

Currently in its seventh year, the Sanders County Aquatic Invasive Plant Task Force (AIP Task Force) continues its work targeting invasive aquatic vegetation, primarily Eurasian Watermilfoil, in the lower Clark Fork River system. The Task Force is comprised of representatives from multiple public and private entities that share an interest in the welfare of Noxon Rapids and Cabinet Gorge reservoirs. A set of bylaws binds the Task Force to the Sanders County Board of Commissioners, who act as program sponsors. MSU Extension agent Jason Badger serves as chairman of the AIP Task Force.

Past efforts focused on defining the extent of the infestation of AIP (aquatic invasive plants) in the lower Clark River drainage. Dr. John Madsen, UC Davis, and Dr. Kurt Getsinger, US Corp of Engineers, conducted herbicide trials to better plan the effective use of aquatic herbicides in a flow through system. All treatments prior to 2014 occurred in Noxon Rapids Reservoir. During 2014 treatments were also conducted in Cabinet Gorge Reservoir, but with moderate success.

During the 2015 season, water exchange evaluations took place on Cabinet Gorge Reservoir to better understand how water flows would affect potential treatments. Treatments occurred during late July and early August. A total of 140 acres were treated in Noxon Rapids Reservoir, while 30 acres were treated in Cabinet Gorge Reservoir. Herbicide rates and timing were based upon data collected during plot trials. Post-treatment vegetation analysis occurred in mid-October and will take place again one year after treatment, in order to estimate the effectiveness of the treatment. In the past, control of Eurasian watermilfoil has been estimated at 90 percent, which is considered excellent. Treatment applications were conducted by Clean Lakes, Inc. with the method being variable depth injection (Littline). The primary focus of the project is to reduce infestations of Eurasian watermilfoil to a “maintenance level” on Noxon Rapids and Cabinet Gorge reservoirs. Being an integrated program, management strategies include mapping, chemical treatment, education, bottom barriers and two boat check stations, separately funded through Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. Treatment costs in 2015 came to \$179,000.

Soil Analysis

Analysis and interpretation of soil samples is a service that is offered to residents of Sanders County through MSU Extension/Sanders County. In 2015, our office has submit-



Determining soil profile near Heron, MT in April 2015.

ted 19 soil samples from 12 different clients to a private lab in Nebraska for analysis. These samples represent a wide range of clientele including homeowners and hobby gardeners to commercial farmers. Soil analysis describes soil characteristics and forms the basis of making soil amendment recommendations. Soils education has been, and continues to be, a very popular service in Sanders County. Some clientele submit samples each year and use the results/recommendations to build soil management programs to boost crop production over time.

Farm Management Plans

Our office worked with five different land owners/producers to develop individual management plans for their respective properties during 2015. These plans vary from managing their land for wildlife to diversified forage production. One particular highlight comes from a producer in Thompson Falls. We discussed species and varieties, analyzed soil samples and made fertilizer recommendations, and implemented appropriate and effective weed control techniques. In spite of the



What's left of a 350 ton hay crop near Thompson Falls, MT in November 2015. All but 40 tons have sold.

drought and grasshopper infestation, his forage crop yields were above average and he was one of the few producers in the county that produced enough crop to sell. In fact, of the 350 tons he produced this year (alfalfa, alfalfa/grass mix, and grass hay), all but 40 tons has sold at this point. The quality of his hay was excellent and he was able to get a premium price.



Surveying a reclamation site for a re-vegetation plan near Thompson Falls in March 2015.

Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage Program

Administered by the Montana Department of Agriculture and certified inspectors from governmental organizations, the Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage Program's goal is to reduce or eliminate the spread of noxious weed seeds on public lands. Only certified forages are allowed on government managed lands. At the same time, producers may market certified weed free forage above uncertified retail prices. MSU Extension Agent Jason Badger is the inspector for Sanders County. In 2015, only two local producers requested certification and both passed inspection. The poor growing condition induced by drought and the ravaging effects of a grasshopper infestation prompted several other producers to forgo the expense and effort this year. This program offers positive economic and environmental impacts. Producers receive more money for product while minimizing the risk of spreading noxious weeds to our public lands.

Master Gardener

In 2015, 12 Sanders County residents signed up and attended the Level 1 Master Gardener course. Prior gardening experience varied from zero to very familiar. Response was so good and enough people have inquired that there may be another Level 1 class as well as a Level 2 class offered in Sanders County during 2016. Many of the students implemented what

they learned during the course and have reported that they achieved great results. Most of these same students have indicated that they will be signing up for Level 2 next year, and relationships have been built that extend beyond Master Gardener into other agriculture related activities and issues.

Grasshopper Infestation

There was a huge two-striped grasshopper infestation throughout Sanders County in 2015 that adversely affected crop production. Between the lack of precipitation and the grasshoppers, dryland forage production was about 20-25% of normal. Our office worked with USDA-APHIS to arrange for a bait-spreading vehicle to be housed in Sanders County and loaned out to local producers so they could alleviate some of the grasshopper damage. We also consulted with many landowners individually and explained treatment options.

Undergraduate Extension Internship

MSU Extension in Sanders County hosted Mady Braught, an undergraduate intern, for eight weeks this summer. A junior studying Agricultural Education at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo, California, Braught was well-suited for the position which focuses primarily on 4-H/Positive Youth Development work. During her internship Braught made several significant contributions including: aligned animal project interview questions with 4-H curriculum; provided one-on-one and group fitting and showmanship education to beef, sheep and goat project members; provided support to a teen leader completing a service project; and provided significant support to livestock leaders and members during the Sanders County Fair. Through this internship, MSU Extension in Sanders County was able to offer additional support to the Sanders County 4-H community while at the same time contributing to educational development of a student who may pursue a career in Extension.



A Sanders county 4-H'er braces her market lamb during the showmanship class at the Sanders County Fair. This first year sheep member worked with the MSU Extension Intern to build her fitting and showmanship skills.

Family & Consumer Science

Strong Hearts Healthy Communities

Thompson Falls is one of six Montana communities selected to participate in the Randomized Controlled Intervention Stage of the Strong Hearts Healthy Communities (SHHC). SHHC is a research project that is evaluating a program that will help prevent cardiovascular disease in rural communities. Cornell University has chosen several communities in Montana to conduct the research and is working in conjunction with Montana State University and Extension in those towns. If the results of the study are favorable for positive change, the programs will potentially be replicated in rural communities all across the nation.

Throughout the summer we screened 39 women interested in participating in the study from the Thompson Falls and neighboring communities. Of those eligible, there are 11 participating

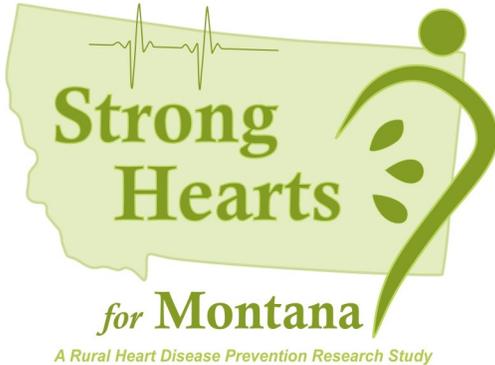
in the 24-week community-based randomized controlled intervention trial. This group meets twice per week, for one hour each time, for approximately six months and focuses on eating and physi-

cal activity for a healthy lifestyle. At seven weeks into the program, we are already receiving reports of improvements in the lives of our participants, which they attribute to SHHC. Improvements include sleeping better, more energy and stopping the use of painkillers.

This group is also participating in six monthly community events during that period as part of the “Heart Club” portion of the curriculum. The group has chosen a Heart Club mission *to increase and encourage physical activity through the development of an indoor exercise/activity program*, which they are in the process of planning and implementing. Thompson Falls SHHC group will continue to meet twice weekly through the end of March, 2016.

Strong Women

One by one, women in Sanders County have been getting stronger with Strong Women. The Strong Women Strength Training program was developed at Tufts University to increase strength, muscle mass, bone density, and balance in women. Those who attended the sessions twice a week for two to four months reported moderate to considerable improvements in general health and balance, feeling stronger physically, doing everyday activities more easily, increased weight they are able to lift and flexibility. Through this program, women of all ages in the county will continue to improve their quality of life.



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