

Family and Consumer Science

Strong Hearts for Montana

Strong Hearts for Montana is a research project that is aiming develop programs that will help prevent cardiovascular disease in rural communities. Harlowtn is one of several rural Montana communities that has been chosen by Cornell University to conduct research in.



Wheatland County has a unique opportunity to participate in this project and serve as a model for rural communities across the nation. Participants in Wheatland County are dedicated to the project and excited to be participate.

As part of the study, women who met the participation guidelines attend two classes each week for 24 weeks. Each class is one hour long and involves aerobic exercise, strength training, education about improving nutrition, and a healthy snack. The aerobic exercise is building the relationships of the women involved, and improve their physical fitness. Many participants are increasing their activity and the number of steps they take in the day based on what they are learning during class.

Strength training is an important component of women's health. Adding strength training to the class helps participants feel more confident in being able to participate in these activities.

Education about health is a key component of the class, as are alternative food choices. Participants have had the opportunity to sample food items they may not have ever tried before, and also try new ways to prepare foods that are more heart healthy. Participants have been pleasantly surprised by the recipes and are

easily incorporating them. One participant has added breakfast to their daily routine, and can already tell the difference in their health.

One of the topics covered is being mindful of what participants are eating and how much they are exercising. Participants track their exercise and activities outside of class and log their progress. Participants have commented they are cooking different foods and are more aware of their food choices.

Participants are also investigating ways they can be involved in the community and make changes that will have a positive impact on access to healthy foods or physical activity. The group is building community leadership and also becoming more aware of opportunities found in the community to help them sustain the positive impacts of this program. Participants have found ways to continue to sustain the program and encourage other community members to join as a result of their being a part of the Strong Hearts, Healthy Communities program.



Participants in their team shirts that one of the members developed for the group. We are working for Heart Health One Piece at a Time.

4-H and Youth Development

Teen Leadership Camp Growing Resilient Leaders



The most important thing I learned at Teen Leadership Camp is that “my (leadership) core is me” commented one sixth grader after participating in an activity about authentic leadership. In its sixth year, Teen Leadership Camp (TLC) is the product of a powerful collaboration between volunteer Jean Wallace, Wheatland County Sheriff’s Officer Sheila Crowe and MSU Wheatland County Extension Agent Mandie Reed. Camp is funded by a generous grant from the Callant Foundation.

The camp for middle school students develops the core characteristics of resilience while in a leadership context. Each year the camp is planned by a group of dedicated camp counselors who are in high school.

Youth showed a significant increase in the resilience score of counselors and campers as a result of attending Teen Leadership Camp. Youth also report an increased awareness of their own leadership skills and that they are more willing to accept leadership positions in their community as a result of attending TLC.



TLC camper telling jokes working on her communication skills.

Wheatland County 4-H

Wheatland County has four active 4-H clubs serving the needs of community youth. There are 45 youth members age 6-19 who are engaged and learning valuable life skills while mastering skills in their project areas. Each of the clubs are run by dedicated and enthusiastic leaders who are creative and enthusiastic.

The Cloverbud Club is a new addition this year. This very busy group has been very active in the county. They partnered with the Lucky Leprechauns After-school club to host a color run as an end of the year celebration.

The Wheatland County Ambassador Team has been working with the Silver Sage 4-H Club to take on big community projects. The group is currently in the process of working with the City of Harlowton to have their plans approved for a playhouse in the playhouse village as part of the Chief Joseph Park Renovation. The students have selected the design and once it is approved, will be responsible for all phases of construction.



TLC campers working together to navigate a course and practicing their team building skills.

Community Development

Chief Joseph Park Playground Renovation



Community attending fundraising event to support the playground renovations.

Wheatland County Extension Agent Mandie Reed has been working with the Harlowton Moms Group and the City of Harlowton to spearhead a major playground renovation

at Chief Joseph Park. The Moms Group is truly a grass roots group that meets to share resources and offer each other support. When they felt that there were issues that needed to be addressed with Chief Joseph Park, they took a leadership role in helping address them.

Together, Wheatland County Extension and the Harlowton Moms Group have raised \$75,000 in grant funds and is actively applying for additional funding. The Moms Group has also taken a role in fundraising. Other groups have joined the partnership and fundraising efforts. The Harlowton Kiwanis Club hosted an event to raise funds for the project.

The Silver Sage 4-H Club is also actively partnered with the group. They are excited to be involved. Last year, they painted the existing swings and provided a little touch up to the existing playground equipment. They have written and received a grant to build a playhouse in the playhouse village that will be a part of the new playground.

Together, this community group is planning to build a destination playground that addresses the needs of all visitors with different abilities. The playground will compliment the upgrades that are being completed in the adjacent campground and will create a great family-centered area for the community to recreate.

Within a short walk, there is a fishing pond, a fishing access on the Musselshell River, the Smoking Boomer Rail Trail and a Frisbee golf course. The vision for the playground is impressive and exciting, and so is the success that has followed.

Silver Sage 4-H club after giving existing park equipment some TLC. They painted the swings, the garbage cans and the bench.



Real Colors: Real Impacts

Real Colors is a research-based tool that helps participants better understand themselves so they can better understand others. Wheatland County Extension Agent Mandie Reed is a certified facilitator of the program and was able to offer the program at multiple venues this year, including the staff at Harlowton High School. Participants commented that the program will directly improve their ability to communicate with other staff members and with their students. Youth who participated were excited to learn more about themselves and why they communicated certain ways.

Harlowton Advantage Program for Youth

Wheatland County Extension is proud to partner with the Harlowton Advantage Program for Youth (H.A.P.Y) to offer quality afterschool programming. The Wheatland County Extension office received a Montana Out of School Time grant to provide additional programs and enhance the afterschool program.

Youth involved in the program have the opportunity to experience 4-H projects and practice new skills. One of the most impactful projects was sewing. Youth made rice bags and pillow cases. They were able to select their own fabric, cut out the pattern, pin the project, and help stitch it together.

The partnership added 63 hours of additional personnel to the program. The additional hours increased the number of hours that program leaders were able to spend offering one on one help for youth and expand the programs that could be offered.



Students with Wheatland County Extension Agent Mandie Reed working on their sewing projects at the Harlowton Advantage Program for Youth.

Contact Us



EXTENSION

Wheatland County

Mandie Reed
Wheatland County Extension Agent

Kathie Newland
Administrative Assistant

Wheatland County
201 A Ave NW, PO Box 733, Harlowton MT 59026

Phone (406) 000-0000

E-mail reed@montana.edu

www.msueextension.org

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