

## Blaine County Embraces Change

Within the last year, the Blaine County Extension Office has seen many changes. In October 2013, Ben Hauptman became the new Agriculture Agent, filling a position that had been vacant for over a year and a half.

At the end of December, long-time Administrative Assistant Rita Langford retired, leaving a void in the office. Denie Carey joined the team in February 2014, becoming the new Administrative Assistant and 4-H Program Assistant. In August, Blaine County Extension welcomed Kendra Seilstad as the new Family & Consumer Science Agent. The position had been vacant since February when former Agent Teresa Terry left to pursue another career.

Ben Hauptman is a Montana native, having grown up in Drummond. He is an alumni from MSU-Bozeman with a bachelor's degree in Natural Resources and Rangeland Ecology. Previous to working for MSU Extension, Ben worked for South Dakota State University as the Ag Research Manager/Specialist at the West River Ag Center. Ben has been a valuable part of the Extension program here in Blaine County. Denie Carey grew up on a cattle ranch in Central

California and attended college at California State University. She graduated with a major in biology and a minor in philosophy. Denie moved to Portland in 1981 and worked for Nike for 25 years. During her time

working with Nike, she also lived and worked in Asia for 15 years. After five years back in the States, Denie relocated to the Highline in Blaine County. Her wide-range of skills and experiences make her a valuable member of the team.

Kendra Seilstad is a Montana native from Denton. She graduated from Montana State University-Bozeman with a bachelors degree in Elementary Education. Kendra worked as an elemen-

tary teacher for five years, three of which were here in Chinook. Her educational background will be an asset to the program, since teaching and evaluating is a large component in Extension.

The new Blaine County Extension team looks forward to meeting the needs of the residents of Blaine County and providing them programs and information so they can make informed decisions which will positively impact their lives.



**Ben Hauptman, Kendra Seilstad, and Denie Carey make a great team for Blaine County Extension.**

## Welcome to Blaine County



**The Extension office is located behind the Blaine County Courthouse.**

Blaine County is located in North Central Montana between the Missouri River and the Canadian border. The population in Blaine County stands at just over 6,600 people, with approxi-

mately half of these individuals residing on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. Agriculture is the major industry in the county, with the major enterprises of cattle and wheat production. Over 8.3 million bushels of

wheat are produced each year from Blaine County's 235,500 acres of farmland. There are over 53,000 mother cows in the county supported by an irrigated hay base located along the Milk River, enhanced by irrigation supplied by the Corps of Engineers St. Mary's diversion project.

The Blaine County Extension Service has a strong partnership between Blaine County and Montana State University. This unique partnership provides research-based information and educational programs in the areas of Agriculture, Family & Consumer Sciences, and 4-H Youth Development. MSU Extension is dedicated to improving the quality of people's lives by providing unbiased research-based education and information.

# Agriculture

## Small Grain Test Plot Provides Important Information

Area farmers continue to benefit from the information provided by the off-station variety test plot located at the Cederberg Farm in Turner. This plot has a 32-year history of providing local answers to production issues that area farmers struggle with. For the first 20 years the plot was directed at addressing the performance of

various crops under different fertility treatments. This information has provided a sound fertility recommendation for area farmers that is driven by

profit potential of the area land. Currently the focus of the trial is to evaluate the performance of various small grain varieties as they are affected by infestation of the insect pest Wheat Stem Sawfly. Spring Wheat, Durum and a combination seeding of spring wheat varieties are being evaluated for resistance to Wheat Stem Sawfly. Producers have indicated that this information is important so that they can make profitable cropping decisions with the best variety selection to maximize their profits. The plot tour held in July each year attracts an average of 30 producers representing over 35,000 acres of Blaine County farmland.



**Peggy Lamb, Agronomist Northern Ag Research Center explains the performance results for the wheat varieties at the Turner Test Plot.**

## Nitrate Testing in Forages Helps Producers

High nitrates in forages have been an issue that Blaine County livestock and forage producers have faced throughout the years. Nitrates in forages can be a concern especially in plants that become stressed from factors such as drought or excess fertilizer. Typically, plants will use nitrogen from the soil as the chemical nitrate. Nitrate is converted by the plant into protein. When stressful events occur, the plant is unable to

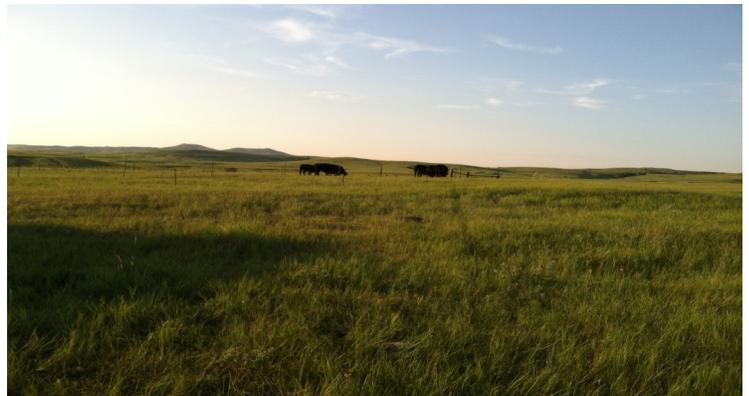
change the nitrate into protein and there is an excess of nitrates stored in the plant. This is a problem because livestock can suffer from nitrate toxicity by consuming forages high in nitrates. This can lead to poor performance and can also cause death in an animal in less than 24 hours. Considering the high cattle prices that producers are currently enjoying, being able to limit the factors that could lead to lighter cattle or the loss of livestock is critical. The Extension office helps producers by providing them with a way to test their forage for the presence of nitrates. Stems are tested using a sulfuric acid solution to test the plant for the presence of nitrates. Producers are able to know within minutes if their forage contains nitrates or not. If there

is a presence of nitrates, the Blaine County Extension Office provides the delivery of samples to an objective lab to analyze the forage to determine the level of nitrate present. The Extension Office

can then help producers interpret results and provide information on how to safely feed forages.



**Using the Nitrate Quick Test, the Extension Office lets producers know if their forage tests positive for nitrates. Stems will turn a dark blue or black color with a positive test.**



# Pesticide Education in Blaine County

## Pesticide Education

The Pesticide Education Program began in 1983 when the Montana Department of Agriculture and MSU Extension signed an agreement in which Extension assists with the Private Applicator Training (PAT). County Extension Agents serve as the PAT coordinator in their respective counties, and provide continuing education credits to private applicators by putting on educational programs, workshops, and speaking at grower meetings throughout the county. Private applicators are required to accumulate six credits for every five year cycle to keep their license. Blaine County currently has over 120 private applicators with restricted use pesticide licenses so providing educational programs throughout the year helps them remain current on their credit requirements.

## Extension CRP Workshop

In 2013 the amount of land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) has continued to decline. There has been a large number of CRP acreage located on the “highline” area of Montana due to high winds in the area and the likelihood of erosion of sandier soils. MSU Extension was able to provide producers with a workshop regarding the removal of CRP lands and how to transition beyond CRP contracts. Dr. Kent McVay, MSU Extension Cropping Systems Specialist with the Southern Agricultural Research Center in Huntley, Montana, and Cecil Tharp, MSU Extension Pesticide Specialist, toured the Golden Triangle to visit with the region’s growers about this important topic. Dr. McVay discussed obstacles that growers faced as they removed CRP acres, and talked to producers on how to successfully put those acres back into production. Cecil Tharp spoke with producers about how herbicides will affect the environment as growers use herbicide as a control measure for weed and pest control on these lands. Additionally, Tracy Harshman from the Farm Service Agency (FSA) was also able to answer further questions about CRP removal guide-

lines and give an update on the new Farm Bill that had been recently passed.

## Soil Fertility & Glyphosate Resistant Kochia

Blaine County Extension held a program for area producers to update them on the recent development of glyphosate-resistant kochia in Montana. This program focused on informing producers that frequent use of glyphosate and chemicals with similar modes of action has caused kochia to develop a resistance to these chemicals. The program also focused on the best management practices that growers should use to prevent the development of chemical resistant weeds. These practices included using crop rotations, targeted tillage, and being able to rotate chemicals with different modes of action while using them at the full labeled rates. Soil Fertility Specialist Dr. Clain Jones also presented to the producers a variety of subjects including understanding soil and tissue samples, effectiveness of foliar nutrient application, and he also spoke on technologies used to reduce nitrification. Dr. Jones was able to convey the importance of having healthy soils and knowing how fertile the soil is. The presentation helped the producer’s ability to make informed decisions when they are purchasing fertilizer and how to best apply that fertilizer to minimize loss. Since fertilizer is one of the highest input costs that producers face today, it is very important to utilize soil information in order to not over apply and waste fertilizer, or under apply and reduce yields.



**Glyphosate resistant kochia can persist in a producers field after applications of pesticides.**

# Family & Consumer Sciences

## StrongWomen Still Going Strong

Blaine County has offered the StrongWomen program for the past three years to middle-aged and older adults. Although this program is a fitness program designed for women, it is available for everyone in the county. Through this strength training curriculum, women can maintain muscle mass, strength, and function as they age.

Due to transitions within the Extension office, the local StrongWomen



Dedicated to their personal strength and fitness, women attend three StrongWomen classes a week.

found themselves without an official leader for a few months. However, many of the women stayed dedicated to the program and continued to meet and work out. Once newly hired Extension Agent Kendra Seilstad is trained in the program, she plans on continuing to strengthen the current program and to offer more classes for the community.



## Supplemental Nutrition Education

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) offers a free educational program to all SNAP, WIC, or HeadStart eligible people. This program provides hands-on nutrition education with a research-based curriculum through a series of lessons. Joann Beard, Blaine County's SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educator, has been providing this important program for thirteen years. The series of lessons presents individuals with information and practical tips for choosing healthier foods, preparing meals, learning appropriate food safety practices, modeling good food choices for family members, and incorporating ways to be more physically active. Along with learning healthy nutritional information, the participants also learn financial tips to help them stretch their food dollars so they can afford to buy, eat, and live better.



Joann Beard, Blaine County's SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educator, has teamed up with the Montana Cattlewomen's Association to provide graduating participants of the SNAP-Ed program with a crockpot, beef roast, and other ingredients to make their first of many healthy crockpot meals.

Participants stated that they were willing to try new fruits and vegetables as a result of the program. They also noted that they are making better food choices and making fruits and vegetables more available within their homes. Youth participants have shown an increase of snacking on fruits and vegetables as a direct result of trying them within the program. SNAP-Ed is an important program for many individuals and is an important factor in creating a healthy community.

## Health and Wellness

Blaine County Extension focuses on the needs of families, individuals, businesses, and the community by providing programming in the areas of Food and Nutrition, Health, Family Issues, and Personal finances. Due to higher health care costs and their impact on business, employee wellness is of the utmost importance. Businesses are affected both directly (health care costs) and indirectly (absence of work and reduced work productivity). Wellness programs are a valuable tool for cutting health care expenses. Proactive approaches to wellness are accepted as both cost-effective and necessary for successful benefits program. Blaine County Extension is an advocate of wellness programs, and is a contributing member of the county wellness program. As an advocate of health and wellness in Blaine County, the Extension program continues to focus on healthy home and work environments, healthy eating habits, stress management, and financial management for individuals.

# Family & Consumer Sciences

## Grandma's Yellow Pie Plate

Extension Agent Kendra Seilstad has been invited several times as a guest speaker to the Harlem Homemakers monthly meetings. During the October meeting, she gave a mini-presentation on *Who Gets Grandma's Yellow Pie Plate?* This was adapted from a larger program that was originally developed out of the University of Minnesota Extension and has become popular in many counties through Montana State University Extension.

Personal belongings such as jewelry, coin collections, quilts, or family photographs are oftentimes referred to as non-titled property because there are no legal documents (such as titles) to indicate ownership. Although many people write wills in regards to the distribution of

their home, savings accounts, or vehicles when they die, the transfer of non-titled property is not included in the process. When these decisions aren't made during ideal circumstances, the transfer of personal belongings can create potential challenges among family members. The *Who Gets Grandma's Yellow Pie Plate?* workshop provides the needed information about transferring non-titled property, how to open up family communication and make decisions, and to lessen any conflict that may arise. One of the biggest struggles discussed is how to decide what is "fair." Since people may have different perceptions of what is fair, family tensions can rise during the process of transferring personal property.

The transfer of non-titled property is an issue that impacts everyone regardless of financial status or cultural background.

## Food Preservation: You CAN Do It!

When done correctly, food preservation can be a safe and economical choice to get the most out of your harvest. According to the up-to-date guidelines from the USDA, there are only two safe methods for canning food: the hot water bath method, and the pressure canning method. In both methods it is important to use equipment that is in good condition and is properly working. Blaine County Extension offers free pressure canner testing to verify the accuracy of dial gauges. All pressure canner gages should be tested every

year to ensure accuracy, which is vital to ensure safe food preservation.

Kendra Seilstad teamed up with Fergus County Extension Agent Denise Seilstad to teach Blaine County residents the recommended safe canning methods for both Hot Water Bath

and Pressure canning. This Mother-Daughter team worked together to teach all experience levels of canners about the science behind food preservation and proper techniques. The highlight of the class was all the hands-on experience in the kitchen pickling cucumbers and pressure canning green beans.

The purpose of canning is to destroy the microorganisms that cause food to spoil or that become health hazards. Improperly canned foods have the potential to allow *Clostridium botulinum* spores to germinate and produce the deadly toxins responsible for botulism poisoning. Providing research-based information on the proper canning techniques can prevent illness and even death. Through safer canning methods, increased awareness, and early poisoning detections, botulism related deaths have fallen 50% in the past 50 years.



Busy preparing the fresh green beans, participants discuss canning tips.



A participant carefully placing the prepared jars in the canners.

# 4-H in Blaine County



## 4-H Program

The Blaine County 4-H program offers a wide range of educational and leadership opportunities for its youth. 4-H is the state's largest out-of-school youth program. Throughout the process, youth develop the life skills that are both relevant today and in their future.

Blaine County 4-H program boasts:

- 97 Youth members
- 6 County 4-H clubs
- 46 Adult leaders/volunteers
- 5 Teen Ambassadors
- 10 Teen Leaders
- 14 Cloverbuds
- 6 Participants in Shooting Sports postal match
- 5 Camp Counselors
- 1 Participant in Montana 4-H Congress (which is during the Blaine County Fair)
- 95 Blaine County Fair participants
- Countless volunteer hours of leadership, community service, and program promotion.

New and experienced members are able to engage in opportunities to be actively involved with not only the 4-H program, but their community as well. These opportunities include county events, camps, club meetings, project work, and much more.

Blaine County 4-H is supported by the 4-H Council and the Blaine County 4-H Foundation. Both organizations provide financial assistance to the youth involved in the 4-H program.

Studies show that youth who are involved in 4-H activities experience greater educational

achievements, are more civically active, are more likely to attend college. The 4-H Youth Development programming creates an environment for youth to reach their greatest potential by acquiring knowledge, developing life skills, and strengthening their values. Blaine County 4-Hers are encouraged to

develop these life skills and become self-directed, productive, contributing citizens of our county.

## Fair Time Fun

The Blaine County Fair is a yearly event that brings young and old together with a wide-variety of activities and events for the whole family to enjoy. The 4-H and FFA exhibits and events are a large part of the festivities. The fair is a great opportunity for young 4-H members to exhibit the projects that they had been working on all year. There are hundreds of projects available to our local youth. These projects provide wonderful opportunities for learning various content knowledge, developing competencies, and gaining vital life skills.

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## 4-H Camp

Blaine County 4-Hers participate in a multi-county 4-H camp. This camp gives youth a chance to experience educational activities in an outdoor environment. This provides youth a unique setting in which to learn about life skills, science, and leadership. 4-H camp is financially supported by the Blaine County Council and local 4-H Clubs, which ensures that any youth may share in this learning experience.



Young 4-Hers enjoying their shift at the Chuckwagon during the Blaine County Fair, one of many opportunities members have to provide a service to their club and community.



Learning canoe safety is an important class at 4-H camp.



Blaine County 4-H campers and camp counselors.

# 4-H in Blaine County

## 4-H Youth Lead by Example

The caring support of Blaine County's 4-H adult volunteers and mentors inspires and motivates our youth to work collaboratively to reach a common goal, help younger members, and give back to their community. We have a strong 4-H leadership program involving both Teen Leaders and 4-H Ambassadors. Blaine County's 10 Teen Leaders and 5 Ambassadors are actively involved in helping with a variety of events throughout the year including serving at the



Blaine County Teen Leaders served tea and light snacks at the annual Women's Tea. This is one of many events that the Teen Leaders help with throughout the year.



Blaine County's 4-H Ambassadors and Foundation Leaders are all smiles as they prepare for the county's annual 4-H Foundation Breakfast.

the Woman's Tea and at the 4-H Foundation Breakfast. Their big fundraiser is

the annual Valentine's Day Dinner put on in Chinook. They help to organize the event, along with

selling tickets, setting up, and serving for the dinner. Throughout the fair our 4-H Ambassadors are busy helping with a wide-range of tasks including helping with large and small animal shows, handing out awards, and helping with the 4-H livestock sale.



## Livestock Quality Assurance for 4-H Youth

Every year Blaine County youth are able to enroll in a wide-variety of livestock projects through 4-H. The experience of raising an animal gives youth first-hand knowledge of what it takes to raise a quality livestock animal. Part of the education process involves livestock youth members attending a Livestock Quality Assurance class. By attending a quality assurance class, youth will learn how they are involved in the food production industry. Quality assurance stresses the importance of raising



4-Hers dedicate countless hours to working with their animals and getting them ready for the fair. Many 4-Hers become attached to their animals through this process..

high quality livestock ethically and being able to produce a healthy, safe food product. Additionally, youth learn about providing appropriate facilities for their animals, proper feeding and nutrition, and having a proper health care program for their animals. This program has been very helpful to Blaine County 4-H to build the trust in the community that the livestock are properly fed and cared for during the entire process. This has been evident through strong community support at the Blaine County Youth Livestock Sale.



## Challenged Accepted

MSU Extension has been celebrating its Centennial this year and put out a state-wide Centennial challenge. The intention was to encourage others to lend a hand and give back to their communities in various ways. The Extension Office, Ben Hauptman, Kendra Seilstad, Denie Carey, and Joann Beard donated 100 homemade cookies and muffins to each of the Harlem and Chinook Senior Centers (200 total). They also extended the challenge to the Blaine County Courthouse to collect 100 pounds of food for the local food banks. However, the Sheriff's department upped the stakes and further challenged each department in the County to try to **each** collect 100 pounds of food. The Extension office was full of pride as each department began to drop off their collected items to be



**Paradise Pals 4-H Club with their 106 pounds of non-perishable food they donated to the Chinook Food Bank.**

weighed and counted. The Blaine County Courthouse brought in over 605 pounds of non-perishable food (538 items) that were split up evenly and donated to the food banks in Harlem and

Chinook. Along with collecting items, the Blaine County Health Department also collected 78 pairs of gloves and 32 hats to give to those in need. Blaine County Extension also challenged the county's six 4-H clubs to participate in the challenge. Throughout the year, many clubs set up window displays, donated money to local schools and volunteered in their community. Community service is a big part of the 4-H program, along with actively working on various projects and events. The Paradise Pals 4-H Club collected 106 pounds of non-perishable food for the Chinook Food Bank, while the Bear Paw Buddies 4-H Club donated 100 food items. The Big Flat 4-H Club donated 100 minutes to the Harlem Senior Center, bringing pizza for everyone, playing Bingo, and providing prizes for the winners. The White Pine 4-H Club donated 100 minutes to the Chinook Senior Center, playing games and reading with the residents. The outpouring of support and participation was outstanding. This was such a testament to the wonderfully supportive county that we live in!



**Non-perishable food donations by Blaine County employees.**

### Contact Us



**EXTENSION**

**Blaine County**

[www.msuextension.org](http://www.msuextension.org)

Montana State University Extension is an ADA/EO/AA Veteran's Preference Employer and provider of educational outreach.

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