Welcome to Broadwater County

MSU Extension in Broadwater County is a three-way partnership between Broadwater County, Montana State University and the United States Department of Agriculture. This partnership provides educational programs in the areas of Agriculture/Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, Community Development and Family and Consumer Sciences.

Broadwater County is a fast-growing county and currently has a population of about 5,747 (2016 estimate). The county encompasses 796,000 acres of a unique mix of agricultural land, small acreage subdivisions, rural communities and range or forested land. The county is also home to Canyon Ferry Reservoir, the most visited body of water in the state. About 45% of the county is public land, making the area a popular choice for hunting, fishing, hiking and snowmobiling. Primary industries include agriculture, manufacturing, mining and services. Townsend is the county seat and home to the MSU Extension office.

The county Extension office provides a unique set of services and educational resources to meet the diverse and changing needs of local clientele. The office houses one full-time Extension agent, Allison Kosto, and a part-time administrative assistant, Tammy Rauser.

The MSU Extension Office in Broadwater County extends unbiased research-based knowledge from the university to local citizens. Extension provides every resident access to relevant information and educational opportunities such as public services, workshops, community meetings, resources and more in the areas of agriculture and natural resources, youth development, community development and family and consumer sciences.
Embracing diversity in MSU Extension

A day in the Extension office is never the same. You never know who will walk through the door and what they will bring. For the first time, the Extension agent tracked clientele and content areas of office inquiries (walk-ins, emails, phone, text messages or social media). The graph shows the distribution of the topic areas (excluding 4-H). A majority of the time was spent working with pest identification and control (disease, insects and vertebrates), lawn, garden and tree care, crop and forage production (including nitrate testing and hay inspections), and weed identification and control. There were fewer inquiries in the areas of family and consumer sciences, estate planning and livestock and range management.

A variety of programs and services were offered to address local issues. Agricultural programs included a Crop School, Spring Pest Update, Small Acreage Management Institute and a Fall Rancher Roundtable. The Extension agent teamed up with the Master Gardeners to reintroduce Backyards of Broadwater, a self-guided lawn and garden tour of innovative landscapes in Broadwater County. A food preservation class on canning was held in the early fall. The office maintained the no-till drill, which seeded 435 acres during the year. Monitoring took place for the Orange Wheat Blossom Midge. One midge was caught early in the season, but the pest has not caused any economic damage in the county.

While many parts of the state experienced extreme drought in 2017, Broadwater County was just on the edge. There was a wet spring and an extremely hot and dry summer. As a result, a few of the common issues of the year were locoweed, sweet clover, voles and tree health. By accurately diagnosing issues and providing management resources, individuals and businesses can save time and money avoiding unnecessary or ineffective pesticide treatment and fertilization.

Longtime Volunteers Receive Award

In September, John & Missy Rauser were recipients of the Montana 4-H Tribute to Volunteer Excellence Award for Lifetime Volunteers at Montana 4-H Leadership Forum. John & Missy have made a lasting contribution during 24 years of service to Montana 4-H.

John was a member of the Crow Creek Clover 4-H Club from 1972 to 1980. When their oldest daughter was of 4-H age, John's former club had been inactive. Together, John and Missy revitalized the club starting with just five members. Because of their energy and excitement for 4-H, the club continued to grow and eventually split into two thriving clubs. The Crow Creek Clovers remains the largest club in the county today.

Another major project they took on was improving the 4-H building at the fairgrounds. They developed a vision to make the building a viable meeting place for the community. They worked hard to fundraise to add a kitchen and bathrooms. They continue to be dedicated to improve the building as needed. Recently this included an upgrade of the kitchen with new cabinets and appliances.

Individually, they have also made major contributions to the county 4-H program. John was on the Livestock Committee for 20+ years and Chairman when he retired. He was the countywide swine leader for many years and a member of the 4-H Council for 20+ years, holding nearly every office, but spent a majority of the time as Treasurer and President. Missy was extremely active on the 4-H Council for 20+ years serving as Secretary and President. She was instrumental in growing and leading the County 4-H Teen Club for 15 years.
Missy facilitated the County 4-H Exchange Program from 2001-2012, leading exchanges to Pennsylvania, Florida and Maryland.

Their contributions don’t stop at the county line. They were both on planning teams for Montana 4-H Leadership Forum. They assisted with Multi-County 4-H Camp by leading workshops and chaperoning. John served multiple terms on the Montana 4-H State Livestock Committee. As president of the Montana Pork Producers Council, he is a champion for 4-H in the swine industry and shares his knowledge at statewide programs.

John and Missy recently decided to step down from their leadership positions. They wanted to quit while volunteering was “still fun.” However, they remain an invaluable resource when called on, and left big shoes to fill. Undoubtedly, Broadwater County 4-H is better today because of their involvement.

Operation Rolling Cows

When it comes to disaster and emergency planning, you always hope that you never need to use your training. When the MSU Extension office organized a training on livestock truck accidents in September, participants never expected to use the information so quickly. However, on November 11, a semi-truck carrying calves tipped on its side on Highway 287. Freshly trained emergency responders and community members leapt into action, instituting the livestock truck accident emergency response plan.

The plan was created as part of a previous training, a partnership between MSU Extension, Disaster Emergency Services and Rural Fire Departments. The full-day training had over 50 attendees representing fire fighters, EMTs, law enforcement, ranchers, truckers, veterinarians, livestock inspectors and community members. Livestock truck accidents are unique. Human safety is always the top priority, but the safe and humane treatment of animals also becomes an important factor. The training focused on the livestock aspect.

The morning focused on discussion groups. Dr. Jeanne Rankin, MSU Extension Agro-Security Coordinator, led the group through a scenario, worked through the plan and allowed opportunity for discussion. Presenters talked about issues surrounding accidents including euthanasia, working with hogs and international shipments.
The afternoon of the training was hands-on. Participants walked through an upright cattle semi-trailer and learned about its structural design. A basic cattle-handling demonstration was done. A semi-trailer that had been in an accident was placed on its side so participants could discuss building a containment area, doing an extrication and practicing safety. On the evaluation, participants shared the most important concepts learned including construction, structure and inside design of a cattle semi-trailer, how to move cattle, knowledge of Canadian livestock shipments, to avoid lights and bright clothing, resources available, cattle line of sight and flight zones, euthanasia (don't shoot between the eyes), and handling hogs.

After the November accident, the follow-up review provided further guidance for how our county can continue to strengthen our response plan to ensure the safety of emergency responders and the safe, humane treatment of livestock. Some of the outcomes included strengthening the community resource list and designing it so that each portion of the county is represented. The fire department had suggestions for improving safety on the highway during times of peak traffic. Without a doubt, because of the training, crews working on the accident, rescuing animals and working in the trailer were better prepared.

**Improving Small Acres**

In May, MSU Extension hosted the first Broadwater County Small Acreage Management Institute. The purpose of the program was to help small acreage landowners identify issues and develop solutions on their land. Topics included noxious weed law and identification, shelterbelts, healthy plant communities and grazing management. The program ended with a tour of a local property which has a year-round grazing rotation for horses on five acres. The property owners discussed their irrigation system, forage management, rotation and lessons learned from the process.

Because of the program, many land owners planned to make changes. According to the program evaluation, some of these included using different grazing practices, improved weed control methods, establishing a shelterbelt and using a more scientific approach to land management. A couple of the landowners followed up with MSU Extension after the program to work with the agent to develop weed or grazing management plans.

In addition to the program, the Extension agent spent a considerable amount of time working one-on-one with small acreage landowners with issues related to pasture and grazing management, pest identification and control, tree health and care, soil sampling and analysis, and range health.

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**John Ascheman talked about his irrigation system at the small acreage management training.**
Safe, happy and healthy: Babysitters Train

In May, MSU Extension coordinated a Babysitting Class with the 4-H Military Program from Lewis & Clark County. Lack of quality daycare is an issue in Broadwater County, especially during summer months when children are out of school. The purpose was to train youth for the summer and throughout the year to help provide a more safe, healthy environment for children and infants. The two-day training focused on safety, child development, nutrition, entertaining children and business marketing. More than half a day was focused on safety, first aid and CPR.

Nineteen youth attended the class. The ages of participants ranged from 10-17. Participants were asked to share at least one thing that they will use and responses included:

- First aid (most common response)
- Child development - Be flexible with each age group and don’t treat them all the same.
- Using healthy snacks.
- Remain calm and cool.
- Always ask about allergies.
- I have the confidence to ask adults questions.
- Be safe. Always lock the doors.

Because of the training, several babysitters were able to obtain regular summer jobs. MSU Extension is now contacted by community members seeking babysitters and is able to help connect families to trained babysitters.

Growing 4-H Youth Development

4-H in Broadwater County is growing and expanding. During the 2016-2017 4-H year, 113 youth were enrolled in 4-H Clubs. Club enrollment has grown by 32% over the past two years. Because of the growth, a new club was formed during the fall: the Elkhorn Clovers 4-H Club. This is the first new club in the county since 1986, when the Winston Eager Beavers 4-H Club was formed. Additionally, 70 youth participated in non-traditional 4-H programs including a special interest program and school enrichment.

It is possible to reach this many youth through the contributions of 4-H volunteers working with MSU Extension. Capacity building and volunteer recruitment continue to be a central goal of the program. There were 39 certified adult volunteers serving in leadership roles this year. This represents an 86% increase in volunteer support, primarily new project leaders, over the past two years. Volunteers with Broadwater County 4-H contributed over 2,400 hours of time, and the value of their time to the 4-H program is estimated at over $50,000.
Broadwater County 4-H members shared the impact of 4-H through their 4-H stories:

- “In my cooking project, I learned basic cooking skills including how to measure dry and wet ingredients and safety practices while cooking.”
  – Anna Beatty, 10 years old

- “I learned that in times of need, we as 4-Hers and community members need to band together to lift up those who need our help. We must love them and do everything we can to show them we care.”
  – Allyson Kamps, 14 years old

- “…if it is one lesson I learned this summer, it is that showing isn’t about the banner, and it isn’t about the money, it’s about friendships and making memories. Because in the end, you are never going to remember every little thing you won, you are going to remember the people who helped you get there.”
  – Kady Braaten, 14 years old

- “The leadership, confidence and skills I have gained from this organization have helped me tremendously to navigate social and educational experiences and will continue to do so as I move into my senior year and on to my college life.”
  – Grace McDonnell, 17 years old

- “4-H has allowed me to make friends across the state, improve my leadership skills, and give me the confidence to keep taking new steps in my journey through life.”
  – Tyler Noyes, 17 years old

2017 4-H Contest Extravaganza: Hooked on Cooking. Photo by Allison Kosto