Welcome to Carbon County

Carbon County is located in south-central Montana and has a population of just over 10,000. The county is dominated by the Beartooth Mountains and the Pryor Mountains. The Clarks Fork River, Rock Creek, Red Lodge Creek, and many other tributaries originate from the Beartooth Mountains. These rivers and streams provide water for agricultural irrigation, communities, and recreation. Prevalent industries of the county are agriculture, recreation, and tourism. Agriculture is the main industry in the county - livestock, small grains, alfalfa and hay production, and irrigated crops dominate the area. Most agricultural business in the county is owned by families who have lived in the county for many generations. Several areas of the county are being developed into small acreage properties and homes for residents who do not make a living from agriculture. In the last 10 years, this unique group has been growing in Carbon County. Their needs and interests vary greatly from more traditional agricultural producers; Extension programming has been adapted to meet these needs while continuing to support traditional agricultural producers. These population demographics exhibit a more diverse Extension clientele than in many Montana counties.

The combination of these groups creates a diverse and dynamic 4-H and Youth Development program in Carbon County. 4-H in Carbon County has been increasing annually, from 185 youth members to over 300 in 2017. With this dramatic rise in membership comes more demand for educational programs, as well as an increase in the scope of 4-H programming efforts. The educational needs of this group range from specific project areas to leadership and citizenship, to adult volunteer education.
Farm Business Planning Workshop Series
A need that has been identified in Carbon County is agricultural business planning and transition planning. A course entitled ‘Planning For On-Farm Success’ was brought to Carbon County to address this need. The classes focused on providing business planning, marketing, and financial planning for beginning agricultural producers and producers looking to make a change in their operation. One producer reported, “Classes like this are really informative and I always learn something new.” Planning For On-Farm Success was a nine-week mixed media series for beginning farmers and ranchers and agricultural producers looking to make a change in their operation. Half of the class was taught via webinar by the Community Food & Agriculture Coalition presenters and the other half hosted local speakers and activities. Workshops ranged from business strategies to farm law. Participants reported the largest gain in knowledge on topics of financing, managing on farm risk, and financial decision making. One young farmer reported, “The strategic planning section really opened up communication between family members and allowed us to develop a business plan.”

Private Applicator Training Classes
The Montana Private Applicator Training (PAT) Program is coordinated by MSU Extension through a Memorandum of Understanding between the Montana Department of Agriculture and MSU Extension. At the county level that means providing trainings for local landowners and agricultural producers on how to safely and effectively use pesticides that require this license. The current certification cycle ended in 2017 for the PAT license holders within the region, which increased the need for local trainings to recertify. The MSU Extension office in Joliet hosted and taught two local trainings this year with over 60 people attending. Trainings focused on noxious weed identification, pesticide mixtures, pesticide safety, pesticide in the environment, and more. Instructors ranged from MSU Extension specialists to local and neighboring Extension agents. By the end of these classes, agricultural producers and landowners in attendance not only received credits to recertify their Private Applicator License, they also reported learning new information about pesticides. One landowner reported, “Great presentation, it was informative and fun to participate and I learned some great material.” Another reported, “This was the best PAT program they have ever had.”

Local producers gained skills to apply pesticides safely and effectively on rangeland.
**Unique Teen Leadership Opportunities**

Over the past year, several new teen leadership opportunities in Carbon County have included a leadership trip to western Montana, a teen led 4-H Project Day, and an opportunity to present to MSU President Waded Cruzado and MSU’s College Deans on the President’s Bus Tour. One of the main goals of the 4-H Exchange program is to get youth outside of their comfort zone and expose them to new areas and cultures. This goal was achieved by exploring the western side of Montana on a bus tour in August. The exchange group explored and learned about natural science in Glacier Park, lived history in the Old Montana Prison in Deer Lodge, learned about local culture at Flathead Lake, and had fun at the Silverwood Theme Park in Idaho. This trip incorporated many life skills including teamwork, science, problem solving, and leadership. Teens worked with the leaders and Extension staff to plan and implement the trip. One 4-H member reported, “I have never traveled without my family before and I made some really cool friends and learned a lot.”

4-H Ambassadors is a program that provides opportunities for teens to develop their leadership and communication skills. The Carbon County 4-H Ambassadors set goals and projects at the beginning of the year and work with Extension staff, leaders, and district leaders to work toward these goals. The Carbon County 4-H Ambassadors planned and taught a day-long program aimed at getting members’ projects ready for the fair. Teens led workshops related to beef showmanship, robotics, swine showmanship, sheep and goat showmanship, rabbit and poultry showmanship, photography, and cake decorating. The day was a true success; younger members learned from older members and teens gained valuable leadership experience.

The Carbon County 4-H Ambassadors also planned and implemented a Prom Dress Drive to collect and distribute affordable prom dresses to teens in the community, promoted 4-H by visiting schools, planned and led a Cloverbud Camp, and even spoke to Montana State University President Waded Cruzado and the Deans of MSU’s Colleges during their stop by Carbon County on the President’s Bus Tour. These teens, under guidance from the MSU Extension office, prepared presentations on the importance of 4-H and Extension and each spoke in front of this prestigious group. This opportunity instilled a sense of true accomplishment in the youth and showcased their true leadership and public speaking abilities. Each teen discussed the importance of 4-H in their lives and highlighted their education in leadership, communication, science, and organizational skills through 4-H.
4-H SEAL Leader Training

The need for trained volunteer leaders has increased with the growing 4-H numbers in Carbon County. To meet this need and promote positive youth development principals within the current volunteer base, MSU Extension agents in Carbon, Yellowstone, and Musselshell/Golden Valley counties created and implemented a training program for area volunteers. The first class focused on identifying the Real Colors of the volunteers and how their personalities relate to being an effective leader. The Real Colors Personality Test was connected to leaders’ work with 4-H members and ways to improve the 4-H experience. During the second class, participants learned about generational differences, the experiential learning model, and how to run a successful club meeting. Participants reported that information on generational differences was interesting and would aid work with youth and volunteers. The final class of the series was taught in partnership with the Montana State University Agricultural Education Division and the students and faculty of the Philosophy of Extension class and MSU Extension. This class focused on how to be a successful project leader. Local Extension agents worked with graduate and undergraduate students to design, implement, and teach a class focused around the needs of 4-H project leaders. This class provided a service learning and practical, hands-on experience to the university class and a unique training opportunity for 4-H leaders. Over 30 leaders from the three counties attended the trainings and gained information on how to become a better leader. New 4-H leaders were recruited and trained through this program and veteran leaders were given new tools for working with diverse audiences. Leaders who attended ranked the program with an A grade and one leader reported, “I really didn't know what to expect. Great ideas! Excited to use some of these ideas to make the experience the best for each kid!”