



Through the Ashes

Not unlike much of Montana, Blaine County was affected by devastating wildfires this year. The largest fire in Blaine County this year was the East Fork fire which started on the Rocky



Donated items came flooding in and while some volunteers organized them on the tables, others loaded up vehicles and brought supplies out to the fire crews.

Boy Reservation on August 27th and quickly spread into Hill and Blaine Counties. It ended up burning over 21,896 acres, mostly private land, in Hill and Blaine counties. Local people quickly scrambled to try to contain the fire. Blaine County Extension got involved with the fire

relief efforts on August 31st when Extension Agent Kendra Seilstad designated the Extension office as a dropping off point of food or supply donations. After a few hours, donations began to flood in, and she quickly combined efforts with Tess Langford, another local woman who was also collecting supplies. That afternoon they moved everything to one central location, the Chinook Eagles, to create a more concentrated effort.

“There were so many people that just came in and would bring things, and then they would just stay and help,” Langford commented about the



Local ranchers quickly came together to help their neighbors gather and move livestock to safety.

amazing support from the community. The Chinook Eagles quickly became a place where people could show up anytime and help prepare meals, organize supplies, or prepare emergency kits.

“It’s not something we planned,” commented Seilstad. “A few of us just stepped up and started helping however we could, and soon others followed. Before we knew it, we were an organized group

of volunteers directly providing much needed food and supplies to the men and women out fighting the fire.”

Although she initially volunteered simply because this is her community, Seilstad admitted that because she was an Extension Agent, she was able to utilize the resources she had available to her to make more of an impact. As the fire quickly spread, producers worked fast to move cattle to neighboring pastures away from the fire danger. She was able to perform Quick Nitrate tests to help determine if the forages would be

safe for the cattle or if they needed to move them further to other pastures. Also, while meals were being made and packaged for delivery, Kendra was also able to help ensure that proper food handling and the storage of hot and cold foods were done correctly, which was important for the safety of the over 150 people they fed each day.

The fire relief crew worked closely with the local Disaster and Emergency Services (DES) as well as the local land owners who were working around the clock defending their livelihood. Our crew was instrumental in opening lines of communication between the various groups, along with insuring that everyone was receiving food and supplies. Accounts were opened at local business for donations, which flooded in from around the state. The funds were

used to purchase fuel and supplies throughout the fire, and 100% of what was left once the fire was contained went to those directly affected by the fire.

“When you see a need, you just help people whether you know them or not.” (Tess Langford)



Taking a short break to grab a hot lunch and rehydrate before heading back to the fire lines.



Crews worked around the clock building fire lines and fighting back the flames.



Kendra Seilstad (center) and Tess Langford (right) load up a vehicle with food and supplies to send out with Pam Wendelin-Unruh (left) who delivered them to the fire crews.

Welcome to Blaine County



The Extension office is located behind the Blaine County Courthouse.

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

tion. Over 8.3 million bushels of wheat are produced each year from Blaine County's 235,500 acres of farmland. There are over 60,000 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.

Blaine County MSU Extension 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. Blaine County MSU Extension is dedicated to improving the quality of people's lives by providing unbiased research-based education and information. Call or stop in and find out what Blaine County MSU Extension can do for you.

Family and Consumer Sciences Education

Blaine County residents consult with Kendra Seilstad, our Family and Consumer Sciences Agent throughout the year to answer questions ranging from food preservation and safety to financial planning. During canning season, clientele utilize the Pressure Canner Gauge testing service to assure their pressure canner is working properly, while others take advantage of research-based information and one-on-one consultations to help them safely can at home. Such information and training help to reduce the chance of under processing or unsafely canning foods, thus reducing the risk of foodborne illness.

Food Safety education is an important step to prevent the spread of foodborne illnesses. It is important that everyone who works in the food service industry, from concession workers to kitchen managers, to obtain food safety education and training. Extension is one of the main educators who offers Food Safety training to the public. We don't want the cost of trainings to deter people from receiving this important education, which is why we provide all of our ServSafe® courses at minimal costs. Those requiring the ServSafe® certification benefit from having local trainings available, making it convenient and economical.

Health and Wellness is a strong focus in Blaine County's FCS programming. Two human services programs are provided here in Blaine County. Diabetes Empowerment Education Program (DEEP) provides six weeks of self-management education to help people with diabetes to live better and make better choices. Living Life Well is a six-week program for people with chronic disease designed to help foster the needed day-to-day tools to manage chronic diseases such as asthma, arthritis, cancer,

heart and lung disease, or depression.

Blaine County MSU Extension participated in a Healthy Hearts for Rural Women, (Strong Hearts) research project with Cornell University. Eleven women, over 40 years of age, physically inactive, and overweight participated in the study. Cornell University is currently compiling the data.

Kendra Seilstad represents Blaine County Extension on the Mental Health Local Advisory Council (LAC). The LAC is a coalition of community members interested in accessing, planning, and strengthening public mental health services within our community. Our main goal is to promote mental health wellness by improving accessibility to services through education and reducing the gaps or barriers to needed resources. With the ever-rising concern of mental health issues, especially among our youth, Kendra became certified in the Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM) curriculum. This program targets youth 7th-9th grade and is designed to promote mental health awareness through five interactive sessions. We are expected to deliver the YAM program this Spring, starting with the Chinook Schools.



Holding food at the proper temperatures is important in preventing the growth of pathogens.

Blaine County 4-H Youth Development

The Blaine County 4-H Youth Development program serves youth ages 5-19 with the help of adult volunteers and community supporters. During the 2016-2017 4-H year, there were 133 youth enrolled in 4-H, which was up from the previous year, along with 39 adult volunteers who were enrolled as certified leaders. After the startup of a new 4-H club this year, we now have seven 4-H clubs throughout the county.



Cloverbud, Wacee Simenson winning the hearts of the crowd with his intense swine showmanship skills during the Open Class division at the fair.

Also, the Big Flat 4-H club in Turner created a special after-school group this year for their Cloverbud members, filled with lots of hands-on learning activities.

We offer a variety of workshops and learning opportunities through our 4-H programming: Project-

based workshops/clinics, such as dog clinics, Shooting Sports, or Cake Decorating workshops; certification courses, such as Livestock Quality Assurance, or ServSafe®; or county events, such as Project Day or Mini-Congress. These opportunities give youth a hands-on experience to learn by doing.

Blaine County 4-H'er participate in a multi-county 4-H camp for those ages 9 to 13. This gives our youth a chance to experience educational activities in an outdoor environment, while learning about life skills, science, and leadership. Of the 121 youth who attended camp this year, 29 were from Blaine County. 4 of our Teen Leaders were counselors; planning camp, putting on workshops, and being positive role models for the younger 4-H members. 4-H camp gives youth an opportunity to learn in a safe, different environment and participate in hands-on activities that may not normally be available to them such as canoeing, archery, and other projects that utilize STEM curriculum.



Blaine County Campers and Teen Counselors take time before the dance to pose for a group picture.

This was the second year of implementing ServSafe® training for all our 4-H Chuckwagon workers who help serve food

during the fair. With a rising concern for food safety, and our desire to set a trend for other fair concession food booths, our 4-H program decided to be proactive and require food safety training for all of our 4-H youth and adults. Over 128 youth and adults participated in ServSafe® training for concession workers this year, which was a 32% increase from last year.



Junior 4-H members intensely showing their market steers during the stiff competition of the Junior Showmanship Class.

The Blaine County Fair is a yearly event with a wide-variety of activities and events for the whole family to enjoy. This is a great opportunity for our youth to exhibit the projects they have been working on throughout the year. The overall number of exhibits entered were up 15% from last year, and the number of market animals remained the same. Although we were experiencing extremely high temperatures, the youth and volunteers did an amazing job keeping all the animals well hydrated and cool throughout the fair. Fair concludes with the Youth Livestock sale which gives the market animal kids an opportunity to sell their animals. Most of the kids save this money in preparation college and/or starting their own livestock operation. The Youth Livestock sale would not be possible without the hard work of our 4-H Volunteers and the generous support of our buyers.

The 4-H year was finished out with the annual 4-H Achievement Night dinner and awards ceremony. This is a great opportunity to recognize all the hard work and celebrate the accomplishments of all the 4-H'ers, while recognizing and thanking all of our wonderful leaders and community supporters.



Falyn Cecrle proudly poses with her duck as she patiently waits for the poultry show.



Erik Pula exits the Sale Ring with his market hog with some help from our 4-H volunteer Merle Young.

Blaine County Extension Embraces Change

2017 brought some significant changes to the Blaine County Extension Office. After four years as the Agriculture Agent, Ben Hauptman moved back to his home county in May and became the Extension Agent in Granite County. This left the Blaine County office without an Agriculture Agent for over 9 months. In the interim, the Extension office made it a priority to continue to provide certain important agricultural services to area producers, such as submitting forage samples for feed analysis and nitrate levels, submitting water samples for livestock use, and performing Quick Nitrate testing within the office.

Blaine County was in a major drought this year which directly impacts crop and forage production, and can even affect wa-

ter quality. Due to these stressed conditions, it was important to make sure that the available forages were safe for livestock consumption. Available water sources were also affected as the water levels and sulfate levels became more concentrated. The continuation of agricultural services at the Extension office was greatly appreciated by our local producers.



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 in color with a positive test.

Supplemental Nutrition Education



The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) offers a free educational program to all SNAP, WIC, or Head-Start eligible adults, along with nutrition and physical education to youth in

qualifying schools. The SNAP-Education program provides hands-on nutrition education with research-based curriculum through a series of lessons. Joann Beard, Blaine County's SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educator, has been providing this important program in Blaine County for the past sixteen years. However, this year, when the Fort Belknap SNAP-Educator's position was vacant and unable to be filled, Joann graciously took on those responsibilities as well, and expanded her area of service to include the Fort Belknap Reservation.

Over the past year, Joann taught over 159 classes to youth and adults, with an average of 3.63 classes per week. She provided SNAP-Education to 308 youth and adults through 27 total programs.

In the schools, Joann teaches a series of six action-packed nutrition lessons, from the "Youth Understanding My-

Plate" (YUM) curriculum, to first, third, and fifth grade students in qualifying schools. During these lessons, youth learn about the importance of food safety, MyPlate, grains, fruits and vegetables, dairy, protein, and physical activity. There are five schools who currently qualify for SNAP-Education in the Blaine County/Fort Belknap area.

The series of lessons in the adult curriculum 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 how to stretch their limited food dollars while providing healthy, nutritious meals for their families.

Participants stated, that as a result of the program, they were willing to try new fruits and vegetables. 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.

Contact Us



EXTENSION

Blaine County

Kendra Seilstad

Family & Consumer Science Extension Agent; 4-H Youth Development

Brenda Jones

Administrative Assistant; 4-H Program Assistant

Joann Beard

SNAP-Ed Nutrition Assistant

Blaine County Extension

400 Ohio St. Chinook, MT 59523

Phone (406) 357-3200

E-mail blaine@montana.edu

Web <http://msuextension.org/blaine/>