Welcome to Carbon County Extension

This past year in Carbon County Extension Agent Nikki Bailey has hosted, facilitated, and taught many educational classes in the areas of agriculture and natural resources, 4-H and youth development, gardening, and much more. In addition to these programs, MSU Extension in Carbon County also provided research-based resources and individual instruction to constituents in many areas. The most prevalent topics answered through one-on-one instruction were questions related to nitrates in forages, cover crops, land and pasture leases, and identification with control recommendations for plant diseases and insects.

4-H in Carbon County continues to grow in both membership and activities. Working with adult and teen leaders, the MSU Extension in Carbon County has been able to offer new and exciting programs and educational opportunities for 4-H members. This report highlights several exciting 4-H and agriculture programs facilitated in the last year by MSU Extension in Carbon County.

“Reach for the Stars” 2016 4-H Rec Lab

4-H Rec Lab is a statewide event that travels around Montana and is hosted by a different region each year. This past year Rec Lab took place in Joliet. This event focuses on building leadership and project skills in teens. Rec Lab kicked off with 200 teens and numerous adults from across Montana exploring their artistic side while building leadership skills with Karen Grosz from Canvas Creek Team Building. 4-H’ers spent the next day in interactive workshops with topics ranging from outdoor cooking to drones. Everyone had a chance to learning something new, including many innovative crafts and exciting games. Each workshop focused on skills that the teens could take back and share with their club and community. The banquet keynote speaker, Adam Lee Brooks, shared a message of self-acceptance, leadership, and the importance of speaking up. Both teens and adults walked away feeling inspired to be an agent of change in their lives and the lives of others.

Rec Lab provided an opportunity for Carbon County 4-H Ambassadors and other teen leaders to gain leadership and teamwork skills. Each Ambassador worked with the Extension Office, 4-H leaders, and 4-H members from other counties in the district to organize Rec Lab. This provided an opportunity for the teens to truly make the event their own. One 4-H teen was quoted saying, “I really enjoyed being a part of the planning and set-up of Rec Lab; I learned a lot and made some really good friends.” Through participation in Rec Lab, Carbon County teens gained hands-on experience leading a group of peers and had the opportunity to gain skills to take back to their clubs and communities.

The 2016 4-H Rec Lab was a huge success, leadership skills were developed, talents were shared, and fun was had by all. It was a pleasure to host this event in Carbon County and everyone involved walked away with new life skills, proving that 4-H is the place that gives everyone the chance to “Reach for the Stars.”
Completion of the 4-H Exchange Cycle

Last year, MSU Extension revived the Carbon County 4-H Exchange program after 20 years of no activity. In June, the 4-H Exchange group completed their exchange traveling to Dauphin County, Pennsylvania.

As a part of this exchange, teens gained valuable leadership and citizenship skills. The group traveled across the eastern part of the country and got to experience Niagara Falls, Pennsylvania agriculture, the beach, Hershey Park, the Appalachian Trail, Gettysburg, and much more. Travelling to and living in others’ homes and communities was an eye-opening experience for the teens. Montana teens learned that although there are cultural differences between east coast people and ourselves, there are also a lot of commonalities and lifelong friendships were created. Due to this exchange, a Pennsylvania teen is now looking to attend Montana State University in the fall. Carbon County 4-H’ers gained a better understanding of accepting cultural differences, traveling wisely, budgeting, leadership, and teamwork.

4-H Camp 2016

4-H Camp 2016 featured new and exciting training for the camp counselors and an increased enrollment of both counselors and campers from Carbon County. An effort was made by the MSU Extension staff in Carbon, Yellowstone, and Stillwater counties to refocus camp counselor meetings back on camp counselor training and teen development. Throughout the numerous meetings teens learned more about how to manage young 4-H members, the eight essential elements of 4-H, and how to be a better leader at camp. The outcomes of these trainings were amazing. The teens became more connected as a group and the planning process became more focused and impactful. Teens created new activities to replace bygone and stagnant traditions. They designed activities that focused more on cabin bonding including a camp-wide mystery, cabin skits, games, and competitions. The result was a fun and successful 4-H Camp with a new style. Due to these new changes, over 90% of campers felt they found a place they belonged with their cabin, a group of 4-H’ers that they did not know before camp. Over 85% of campers indicated they learned life skills they can use in other areas of their life. These skills included how to make new friends, tolerance, and responsibility. All teen counselors agreed that they were able to practice leadership skills at 4-H camp and they all made new friends. The 2016 4-H Camp was a camp of positive change and more purposeful programming, which as the evaluation results show, was a valuable project for all involved.

4-H Project Day & Teen Leadership

MSU Extension and the Carbon County 4-H Ambassador team have had a productive year. Along with planning Rec Lab, recruiting new ambassadors, and teaching a Cloverbud Camp, the group also met the need of more project education in the county by hosting a 4-H Project Day. The 2016 Carbon County 4-H Project Day featured expert teen leaders and adults who discussed showmanship tips, nutrition advice, and demonstrated show fitting on all show animals from beef to poultry. To meet the needs of all 4-H members, the day also included indoor project rotations including robotics, cake decorating, photography, and art. The teen ambassadors gained leadership and teaching experience through peer teaching. 4-H members learned basic project skills and connected with other 4-H’ers from across the county. One mother reported, “That project day was a great idea. My son learned a lot at the event and more importantly afterwards he wasn’t afraid to ask for help from the older members at the fair.” It was a great day where connections were made and project knowledge was shared and learned.
Producer Education Series

During the spring of 2016, MSU Extension in Carbon County hosted an educational series for farmers and ranchers. Topics focused on forage varieties, cover crops, land leasing, and farm transition planning. Over 60 agriculture producers were reached through these workshops. Producers explored the viability of cover crops in their operations and learned about alfalfa variety selection and stand establishment with Dr. Emily Glunk. Agricultural producers and small acreage landowners studied the ins and outs of land leasing with Kate Fuller, MSU Extension Farm Management Specialist. Producers learned what to have in a grazing leases and tools that could be used to determine reasonable rates.

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Horticulture Workshops & Field Visits

Small acreage needs over the past year focused on gardening and horticulture topics, weed identification, and disease diagnosis. Carbon County MSU Extension has been meeting these needs through numerous field visits and group presentations. One such presentation was at the Beartooth Billings Clinic during a lunch and learn event. MSU Extension presented a program on gardening in small spaces, including container gardening, creative back porch options, and strawbale gardening. This program empowered homeowners to plant small gardens and try new gardening techniques that were both effective and affordable.

Throughout the year, numerous house visits identified a multitude of disease problems and abiotic disorders in trees, garden vegetables, and field crops. These house visits saved small acreage landowners and homeowners money and time through the specific identification of their horticulture issues. Horticulture diseases identified in the area this year included Stigmina needle blight, powdery mildew, and multiple abiotic disorders. During home and field visits, many weeds were identified and recommendations were given for control of weeds and best practices in topics of water management, grazing, and garden nutrient management on small acreage properties.

Estate Planning Workshops

As the farming and ranching population of Carbon County ages, the need for estate planning has become evident in the local communities. To meet this need, Carbon County Extension brought Marsha Goetting, MSU Extension Family Economics Specialist to both Joliet and Red Lodge communities over the past year.

Participants ranged from longtime farmers and ranchers to small acreage owners and town residents. Topics focused on property transfer and the best estate planning options for each family. These workshops were very well received and each person walked away with at least one tool to use in their estate planning. Participants then sought additional individual instruction and resources from Carbon County, MSU Extension.
The 2016 year has brought many successes to the Carbon County, MSU Extension Office, both Extension office staff and 4-H members have received awards and honors. Extension Agent, Nikki Bailey along with a team of agents from Stillwater and Gallatin counties and the faculty of MSU’s Agricultural Education Department, received the National 4-H Agents Association award for Excellence in Teamwork. This award recognized the collaborative effort between MSU Extension and MSU AGED on the planning and implementation of a Natural Resource Science Discovery 4-H Day Camp.

Carbon County 4-H excelled at a national level for both parliamentary procedure and shooting sports. A team of four Carbon County teens coached by Extension staff and local volunteers earned fourth place in the Parliamentary Procedure competition at the Western Region Roundup in Denver. The Carbon County 4-H Shooting Sports Team placed first at the Montana State 4-H BB Gun Shoot and qualified to attended the Daisy National BB Gun Shoot in Arkansas. At nationals, the team finished 9th in an event with 58 teams. The 4-H members on this shooting sports team also placed well individually at both the state and national shoot.

Looking into 2017, Carbon County, MSU Extension is planning more educational opportunities based on identified needs and input from stakeholders. Look for programs related to farm business planning, Private Applicator Licenses, expanded opportunities for 4-H project related activities, 4-H leader trainings, and 4-H leadership opportunities. Several specific programs to be offered include Planning for On Farm Success, Montana Master Gardener, and a Carbon County 4-H Communication Day. Planning for On Farm Success focuses on providing the business and risk management skills needed for new and beginning farmers and ranchers to be successful. The Carbon County 4-H Communication Day will provide training and the opportunity for excellence in areas of speech and communications at a county level. In 2017, Carbon County Extension will continue to strive to meet the needs of Carbon County through educational opportunities for both youth and adults.