Farmer’s markets have been successful throughout Montana. There are 61 in Montana, anywhere from two-vendor markets to markets that occur throughout the summer with numerous vendors. The only market in Southeastern Montana is held in Miles City. With the number of local growers, gardeners, crafters, and small businesses there was an opportunity to host a successful market in Fallon and Carter Counties.

MSU Extension Fallon/Carter Counties offered a leading role in organizing a market for the local community. A group of seven volunteers was organized and developed the market. The vision was to establish and support activities that create a sense of community, social gathering and foster economic growth in the local community. The long-term goal is to create an annual farmer’s and crafters market that is run by volunteers and is supported by the community.

The 2016 Products of the Prairie market was held September 10 at the Fallon County Fairgrounds in Baker. It was held in conjunction with Fallon County’s Annual Fall Festival and was a family friendly event with kid’s activities, and produce and craft vendors. Our vendors offered high quality locally-grown and handmade items. The event was organized by the Products of the Prairie Board with support from Northwest Farm Credit Service, Mid-Rivers Communication, Red Ants Pants Foundation, Summit National Bank and Ag Partners LLC.

The Products of the Prairie market created an opportunity to strengthen the local economy and encouraged healthy lifestyles, increased knowledge of agriculture, and inspired small business owners to market their local products and talents. Products of the Prairie created a place where local farmers and crafters could sell their food and art at a higher profit margin, which benefited the local economy. The event brought people together, strengthening the fabric of a community and created a “spillover” economic effect for other downtown businesses.

To help prepare businesses to participate in the Products of the Prairie Market MSU Extension in Fallon/Carter Extension hosted workshop series.

- **Planning for Business Success** MSU Extension in Fallon/Carter Counties offered a six-week “Planning for Business Success” course to help build successful businesses. The goal of the curriculum was to provide business owners with the tools and strategies to thoroughly and clearly define business concepts and understand marketing, financing options, and risk management. New and experienced business owners benefited from this course. There were a wide range of businesses represented, from main street business to farm and ranch operations, from businesses in planning stages to others that have been operating for over 10 years.

- **Master Gardener Level 1** A six-week Level 1 Master Gardener class was offered in 2016 in Baker. This year we had MSU Extension Horticulture Specialist Toby Day, MSU Extension Forestry Specialist, Peter Kolb, and Lauren Kerzienik from Schutter Diagnostic Lab help teach the course.
Handling Calving Difficulties

MSU Extension in Fallon-Carter Counties hosted in calving expert Dr. Robert Mortimer to present a “Handling Calving Difficulty” workshop in Baker. Mortimer previously was a DVM and Associate Professor with the Veterinary College at Colorado State University. He presented a well-received workshop that discussed normal versus abnormal calving, signs of calving, and how to manage a difficult birth.

The workshop was filled with practical information for ranchers. The majority of the 80 participants felt the program could have a long-term economic impact on their operation. The changes producers intend to make as a result of the program include, getting heifers to lay down on their right side when calving, slow down with trying to assist, educate their help, try different pulling methods, handle calves differently after birth, and make sure all calves get colostrum as soon as possible after birth. A year after the workshop, producers are still sharing information they learned.

Livestock Water Quality Testing

Water is the most important nutrient for livestock. A quality and safe water supply is essential to the production of healthy livestock. If water is not suitable for consumption, it can adversely affect the growth, reproduction and productivity of livestock.

Since 2012, we have seen elevated levels of total dissolved solids, specifically sulfur and sodium, in livestock water. Additionally, B & C Ag Consultants in Billings, Fallon County Veterinary Service and other Extension offices indicated that similar results showed up across the state. Some producers have been forced to fence off reservoirs and dams or are unable to use pastures with water dangerously high in sulfates.

Producers are encouraged to test their water if they are questioning its quality. MSU Extension in Fallon-Carter Counties will test for Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) free of charge. Several producers have taken advantages of this. In 2016, over 130 water samples were tested in the Fallon/Extension office. At $25-$45 for a Livestock Water Analysis, we have helped save producers $3,250 to $5,850, plus the cost of shipping. Additionally, there is economic value in the number of livestock that may have been saved from drinking poor quality water and weight gain on calves that may have been improved if they were put on higher quality water.

Nitrate Testing of Forages

2016 was a dry year for the area, which brought an increase concern for nitrate levels in small grains and other crops. High nitrate feeds that are fed to cattle can lead to chronic problems, abortion or even death. While a free qualitative nitrate test has been available for many years, this year a new quantitative test was offered to give producers a more accurate estimate on nitrate levels. This year, 120 forage samples were tested. Twenty-two percent of the samples were at 2,500 ppm of nitrates and were considered cautionary. Seven percent of the samples were 4,000 ppm or higher and recommended to feed at no more than 50% of a ration to prevent health concerns in cattle. The ability to give producers quick nitrate results helps with forage harvesting and balancing rations to minimize health problems in livestock.
4-H Camp at Camp Needmore
Fallon County 4-H, along with the 4-H Programs in Carter, Custer, Prairie, McCone, Garfield, Wibaux, Rosebud-Treasurer, Powder River, and Dawson counties partner to plan and implement the Southeast Montana 4-H Camp for youth third through sixth grade. 4-H Camp is held at Camp Needmore. 4-H Camp was held in June and was attended by 129 youth, 15 teen counselors, 7 adult chaperones and 14 Extension Agents/educators.

Camp Needmore is the ideal playground for our 4-H camp. The kids are outdoors all day and are able to camp in rustic cabins. All youth are partake in eight hands-on educational workshops, campfires, games, and meals. 4-H Camp is a great opportunity to get kids outside to learn about nature, gain skills and meet peers. The object for 4-H Camp is to gather kids from Southeast Montana to spend time outdoors in a safe learning environment to gain knowledge about nature, disconnect from technology, and make friends.

Workshops at 4-H Camp provide a variety of activities to meet the needs of diverse interests: fishing, shooting sports, crafts, woodworking, rappelling, dance, and a nature hike.

The generous support from the U.S. Forest Service through a “More Kids in The Woods” grant allowed us to supply 4-H Camp with updated rappelling and safety equipment and cover the wages for our camp cook and our experience workshop educators and obtain supplies.

HEART of 4-H
Fallon County Volunteer Darold Brown was a 2016 Montana 4-H Hall of Fame recipient. Brown has been a fixture at the Southeastern Montana 4-H Camp for over 30 years helping with the rappelling workshops.

Brown does much more than just being an instructor. When one tells an eight year old 4-H member to step out to the edge of the cliff with a rope holding him/her, it’s not easy to convince them to take the first step. Brown is the master at knowing whether soft words of encouragement, gentle teasing, or gentle reassurance is the key to getting them over the edge. One cannot underestimate the impact to a young person of overcoming their fears to walk down the cliff and the thrill and feeling of accomplishment they experience.

SUMMER FUN SERIES
Youth and adults in Fallon and Carter Counties were invited to

Families enjoyed an Outdoor Adventure in the Chalk Buttes of Carter County. They learned about the history of Carter County and had a picnic lunch.

4-H Youth eagerly learn about the new 4-H Cake Decorating project from a 4-H leader and expert cake decorator. Youth practiced their new skills and decorated a cake to sell at the County Fair.
There is a long tradition of Homemakers Clubs in Fallon and Carter Counties. Despite membership decreasing for many years, Homemakers Clubs are regaining popularity in the local, rural communities. These volunteer organizations work to improve the quality of life for families and communities through leadership development, volunteer service and education. Clubs meet for exchanging of knowledge, social gatherings and community services. In addition to monthly club meetings, the clubs host a Spring and Fall Fallon-Carter Homemaker Council Meeting. The meeting is a great time for Homemaker members from across the counties to gather, learn and grow. The Spring Meeting was focused on Do-It-Yourself Crafters, while the Fall Meeting educated about sex trafficking. Furthermore, each club does community service projects each year. This years’ projects included painting the bleachers at the Carter County Rodeo Arena, servicing meals at community events and purchasing and donating tables to the community Event Center.

There are six active clubs in Fallon and Carter Counties with a total membership of 82 (up from 64 in 2014).

MSU Extension Fallon-Carter Counties strives to meet the growing needs of the Homemakers Clubs, by hosting educational programs and workshops. Additionally, all members are supplied with a quarterly Fallon-Carter County Extension Homemaker Newsletter.

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