Both the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers flow through parts of Richland County and the confluence of these two large rivers is located just to the north and east of the county. Richland County also has areas of rocky badlands and dense prairie cover. These features make for excellent habitat for deer, waterfowl, and upland game birds which makes hunting and outdoor recreation an activity that many residents and visitors participate in. Because of these activities, there is a good chance that youth in the county will be exposed to a firearm or a bow and arrow at a young age. The 4-H Shooting Sports program provides youth with engaging activities that convey the safe and responsible use of both firearms and archery equipment in an educational, safe, yet still fun environment.

**Rifle, Pistol, and Archery:**
Members enrolled in the rifle, pistol, and archery projects through 4-H met monthly to hone their skills and improve marksmanship. Throughout the year eight volunteer leaders met with 32 youth, working one-on-one, creating a positive relationship with a caring adult, where the youth developed important life skills that will aid them throughout their lives. Most importantly, the volunteers worked with the youth on safe practices. Volunteers taught sight pictures, shooting positions, different types of firearms, bows, targets and ammunition. During the one-on-one sessions the youth gained goal setting skills, confidence and decision making skills. Guest speakers, specialists in their respective area, were asked to give an educational lesson once a month. This year the speakers included avid outdoorsmen, competitive archers and a local game warden.

**Shotgun:**
The shotgun program was re-energized in 2016 and 8-10 youth met weekly during the months of July, August, and into October to hone their skills at shooting clay targets flying from a trap house. At each event, participants shot 20 clay targets and recorded their scores. In addition to shooting, participants learned about how to safely operate shotguns, different gauges of shotguns and how to shoot a moving target.

**Tri-funded Support**
Richland County MSU Extension is very appreciative of the financial support that is provided to ensure that non-biased, educational programs are available to the citizens of the county. The Richland County Commissioners Loren Young, Shane Gorder, and Duane Mitchell, along with the State of Montana and the United States Department of Agriculture, provide the funding necessary to accomplish this mission.
Youth Participate in Experiential Learning

Two hundred twenty-three Youth, 11% of the school aged youth in Richland County, are engaged in learning through the 4-H program. The youth partner with 150 adult volunteers to acquire decision making skills, develop a positive self-concept, learn lifelong skills and understand the value of citizenship. Mazie Madison, a nine year old Richland County 4-H member reported “4-H has been a good thing for me. It has made me more confident. It has taught me to be a person that is proud of what they are doing.” Youth in the 4-H program participate in club meetings, service learning projects, events and activities that all aid in their growth and development. They also enroll in learn-by-doing projects that aid them in the experiential learning process. In Richland County the top projects are beef, visual arts, foods and nutrition, swine, woodworking and photography.

Youth Serve as Leaders in Richland County

Leadership is an integral part of the 4-H program, where we strive for youth to gain leadership skills as well as to put those skills into practice. During the 2015-2016 4-H year, 21 senior members in Richland County 4-H met once a month to promote 4-H, organize and conduct local events, and continue to gain important life skills. The Junior Leaders hosted a 4-H Winter Carnival and a dinner and dance fundraiser. The 4-H Winter Carnival is an annual event that is open to all members in Richland County 4-H. This year 46 youth and three adults were a part of this night of learning and engagement. With an influx in population, this event has been instrumental in allowing members of Richland County 4-H to build relationships with other youth in the county. The Junior Leaders also hosted a dinner and dance fundraiser, with all proceeds of $1824 going to a local 4-H family that lost everything in a fire. The yearlong collaborative effort of this group has proven beneficial for our community, all while providing youth the opportunity to develop and practice valuable leadership skills.

Food Safety and Science

Foods and nutrition is a popular and ever growing project in Richland County 4-H. This year to provide a hands-on educational workshop for all members, a pie baking day was hosted. The MSU Extension Agent, along with two certified volunteers, taught the youth and adults food safety and science. Twenty-six youth and 11 adults were taught the importance of safe practices in the kitchen such as proper hygiene, how to identify tools, how to safely use baking tools and proper behavior in the kitchen. They were also taught how to read a recipe, identify proper ingredients for a recipe, measure and mix ingredients for a recipe and properly bake pies. Approximately 63 pies were made to be served at the Richland County Fair.
Weed Identification Workshop

Richland County MSU Extension partners with the Northern Plains Agricultural Research Laboratory (NPARL) to plan and organize an annual dryland field day. At the 2016 field day, the Extension Agent and a Biological Science Technician from the NPARL teamed up to identify 14 weeds at the field day location. These weeds were flagged and field day participants were asked to individually identify each of the flagged weeds. At the end of the field day, the Extension Agent went over each weed with the participants and identified distinguishable characteristics. Participants who correctly identified the most weeds were awarded prizes and all participants received free weed identification booklets.

MSU Extension Hosts Board Development Workshop

There are several not-for-profit and government-appointed boards in and around Richland County. Many times, board members are either appointed or they are asked to join them without much direction in regards to how a board should function.

In an effort to provide guidance and leadership Richland County MSU Extension hosted professionals from the Montana State University Local Government Center. More than 20 people attended the four-hour workshop representing county government, city government, and local not-for-profit organizations. The workshop focused primarily on the roles and responsibilities of board members, but also gave participants insight into the legalities associated with various boards and how to conduct successful meetings.

Participants were appreciative of literature distributed during the workshop and one participant quoted that he “was not aware of some of the stipulations associated with serving on his particular board.”

Lower Yellowstone Wool Pool has banner year

In 2016, the Lower Yellowstone Wool Pool collected 8,268 pounds of wool, nearly 2,000 pounds more than the previous year. Through the efforts of the pool, this wool was able to be sold for a total of $10,300 meaning that each producer that contributed to the pool averaged approximately $1,030 before pool and shipping fees were paid. The average price contributors received for their wool was $1.24 per pound across all wool classes.

Producers contributing to the pool continue to express gratitude to Extension staff for organizing, collecting, bagging, and coordinating the shipping.

Montana continues to be a large contributor to the nations total wool production. Many smaller producers, however, do not have large enough lots to market wool on their own and pools like the Lower Yellowstone Wool Pool ensure these producers still receive good prices for their product.

Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) Short Course

January of 2017 will bring new regulations in how livestock producers will be able to purchase and use certain medically-important livestock medications. These new regulations will require that, prior to purchasing certain medicated feeds, producers have an established veterinarian-client/patient relationship, and will require that producers have a VFD form filled out.

In August, Richland County MSU Extension hosted MSU Beef Specialists Rachel Endecott and Megan Van Emon to discuss the new rules and what producers must do in order to assure compliance. In all, 15 producers, veterinarians, and Extension Agents from across northeastern Montana were in attendance to learn about the rule and ask questions of the experts. All participants were given VFD binders to take back to their operations and businesses that contained informational sheets and protocols related to the VFD ruling.

Glyphosate resistant horseweed was identified in Richland County, which prompted the Extension Agent to conduct a weed identification workshop.

Agriculture/Natural Resources/Community Development

MSU Beef Cattle Specialist Rachel Endecott discusses the new regulations associated with the VFD rule.
Area Teachers Participate in Training

In June, 17 teachers representing schools from across northeastern Montana attended a training in Sidney put on by eight MSU Extension Agents, and an additional 30 teachers attended the same training hosted in Plentywood. All of the teachers were given an online evaluation after completion of the course. Of the participants who replied 80% of the teachers who attended the training received their OPI Renewal Credits, while 5% received a MSUN Undergraduate Credit and 15% received a MSUN Graduate Credit. The theme of this training was a historical Montana unsolved murder mystery. The two-day training challenged local educators to work in groups to solve the historical murder. As teachers attended workshops, they were given methods and tools to use in their own classrooms. 65% of the teachers report that they have used the materials provided to them at the training in their classrooms. The opportunity to earn credits and have professional curriculum provided locally saves time and travel costs for these teachers.

Teachers from across northeastern Montana participate in the “murder mystery” teachers training workshop.

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