During the fall of 2015, MSU Extension in Rosebud-Treasure County began planning the return of the Forsyth Community Garden. Shortly after, two enthusiastic Forsyth Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America members, Mickey Bidwell and Lex Heberle, called the Extension office in hopes of partnering with Extension to aid in planning and implementing a revived community garden for the town of Forsyth. Extension Agent, Melissa Ashley, Bidwell and Heberle met several times to begin working out the logistics of a new garden. MSU Extension was awarded a special project grant from the Community Foundation of Northern Rosebud County and plans for a community garden were no longer simply pen and paper.

Melissa stated “It was great being able to show Bidwell and Heberle the process of planning a community project, working together with local government such as county commissioners and city hall, writing grants and the impact this project had on so many different groups of people within their own community.” Bidwell and Heberle prepared an illustrated talk about their involvement with the community garden to present at the State FCCLA convention. They received a gold medal at state and continued to the National FCCLA convention in California where they also received a gold medal.

As temperatures began to rise, gardeners itched to plant their seeds and watch them grow. Each gardener came with their own gardening practices and were excited to meet fellow gardeners and learn new methods from each other. The Rosebud Conservation District secured a plot in the garden to showcase the soil health benefits and production ability of a non-traditional, no-till garden. At the fall clean-up day, a BBQ was held that highlighted dishes made from produce grown in the community garden. By the end of the growing season, gardeners were asking to expand their garden plots next year as well as start their own composting station.

One gardener praised the community garden for helping her become more active. By getting up early to tend her garden before work hours, she began to walk for half an hour each morning after she visited her garden plot. Another gardener that lives away from his family during the work week celebrated his time in the community garden because it provided him an opportunity to work outdoors and grow his own food.

With the help of the community gardeners, Ashley grew a pumpkin patch in the community garden. These pumpkins were harvested and 13 large pumpkins were given to the Family Consumer Science classes and Forsyth FCCLA chapter. Students learned how to bake, process and preserve fresh pumpkin. Later, students made the preserved pumpkin into pies for the Forsyth Samaritan’s Pantry Thanksgiving Dinner donation. The pantry donated 58 complete Thanksgiving dinners to families in need. Forsyth students and FCCLA members supplied the pantry with 35 pies to help complete their dinner boxes. Thirty-five families in the community ate pies at Thanksgiving that were grown, baked and donated locally.

Through the good works of the Forsyth Community Garden, MSU Extension was able to bring individuals together that share a common interest in community development and enhancement, growing and sharing locally produced food as well as helping others in need. Ashley noted that “The community garden had a much greater impact on so many more individuals than I had expected for its very first year! I am excited about everyone wanting to be involved in such a great project. Bidwell and Heberle plan to continue their FCCLA project with the community garden and we have high hopes of adding raised beds this year to accommodate an even wider range of garden enthusiasts. We plan to keep producing locally grown food for the Samaritan’s Pantry and can’t wait to see what other great projects stem from the Forsyth Community Garden!”

Community Garden Helping Feed the Community
Forsyth Community Garden Aids Local Food Bank in supplying Thanksgiving Dinners

During the fall of 2015, MSU Extension in Rosebud-Treasure County began planning the return of the Forsyth Community Garden. Shortly after, two enthusiastic Forsyth Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America members, Mickey Bidwell and Lex Heberle, called the Extension office in hopes of partnering with Extension to aid in planning and implementing a revived community garden for the town of Forsyth. Extension Agent, Melissa Ashley, Bidwell and Heberle met several times to begin working out the logistics of a new garden. MSU Extension was awarded a special project grant from the Community Foundation of Northern Rosebud County and plans for a community garden were no longer simply pen and paper.

Melissa stated “It was great being able to show Bidwell and Heberle the process of planning a community project, working together with local government such as county commissioners and city hall, writing grants and the impact this project had on so many different groups of people within their own community.” Bidwell and Heberle prepared an illustrated talk about their involvement with the community garden to present at the State FCCLA convention. They received a gold medal at state and continued to the National FCCLA convention in California where they also received a gold medal.

As temperatures began to rise, gardeners itched to plant their seeds and watch them grow. Each gardener came with their own gardening practices and were excited to meet fellow gardeners and learn new methods from each other. The Rosebud Conservation District secured a plot in the garden to showcase the soil health benefits and production ability of a non-traditional, no-till garden. At the fall clean-up day, a BBQ was held that highlighted dishes made from produce grown in the community garden. By the end of the growing season, gardeners were asking to expand their garden plots next year as well as start their own composting station.

One gardener praised the community garden for helping her become more active. By getting up early to tend her garden before work hours, she began to walk for half an hour each morning after she visited her garden plot. Another gardener that lives away from his family during the work week celebrated his time in the community garden because it provided him an opportunity to work outdoors and grow his own food.

With the help of the community gardeners, Ashley grew a pumpkin patch in the community garden. These pumpkins were harvested and 13 large pumpkins were given to the Family Consumer Science classes and Forsyth FCCLA chapter. Students learned how to bake, process and preserve fresh pumpkin. Later, students made the preserved pumpkin into pies for the Forsyth Samaritan’s Pantry Thanksgiving Dinner donation. The pantry donated 58 complete Thanksgiving dinners to families in need. Forsyth students and FCCLA members supplied the pantry with 35 pies to help complete their dinner boxes. Thirty-five families in the community ate pies at Thanksgiving that were grown, baked and donated locally.

Through the good works of the Forsyth Community Garden, MSU Extension was able to bring individuals together that share a common interest in community development and enhancement, growing and sharing locally produced food as well as helping others in need. Ashley noted that “The community garden had a much greater impact on so many more individuals than I had expected for its very first year! I am excited about everyone wanting to be involved in such a great project. Bidwell and Heberle plan to continue their FCCLA project with the community garden and we have high hopes of adding raised beds this year to accommodate an even wider range of garden enthusiasts. We plan to keep producing locally grown food for the Samaritan’s Pantry and can’t wait to see what other great projects stem from the Forsyth Community Garden!”
Next Generation Gets A Head Start
Support From 4-H Alum Ignites Young Producer’s Dream of Starting a Herd

The Rosebud-Treasure County 4-H program received an outstanding donation of a registered heifer calf from a gracious local 4-H alumna. The donor stated that when she was a 4-H member, she was awarded a heifer calf from a local donor who gave her the opportunity to evaluate his herd and choose her own project animal. This memory was so impactful as a young producer and 4-H member that she wanted to share this same great experience with the next generation of hard-working 4-H youth.

A formal application was sent out to every 4-H member in Rosebud and Treasure counties. Once all applications were returned to the Extension office, Melissa Ashley, the local Extension agent, and the heifer donor reviewed each enthusiastic application. Members were asked to write about the facility, feed schedule, feed ration and appropriate care they would provide this heifer if they were to receive her. They were also asked to explain how they plan to use the asset in the future.

After much deliberation, Ashley and the donor came to a decision. Adaline Reilly, a 13 year old member of Rosebud Roundup 4-H club was awarded the registered Black Angus heifer calf. Reilly has been a 4-H member for five years and keeps busy year around with her other livestock projects: market swine, market lamb and breeding lamb. She is very excited to begin her cattle herd and thankful for such a great opportunity. Reilly will show her heifer at the Rosebud-Treasure County Fair in July 2017 as a yearling.

Reilly wrote in her application, “I understand the cost of starting a herd and this donation heifer will help me achieve my goal of starting my own herd. I would use the money that I get form selling the calf that this heifer produces for a bred heifer. I will plan on buying a bred heifer each year from the sale of my calves to increase my herd. The money I earn from calf sales will go into savings for college. Also, I could use the money to buy a horse of my own so I could help out on the ranch more!”

The 4-H program is such a rewarding experience for generations past, present and future. MSU Extension Rosebud-Treasure County was able to deliver an avenue for such a supporting 4-H alumna to reciprocate the generous donation a 4-H alum had once given her. In doing so, a young producer gets the opportunity to begin her own herd.

Livestock Barn Gets a Facelift For Generations To Come

After serving as the livestock barn for hundreds of 4-H members for over 70 years, the old white beef barn at the Rosebud County Fair Grounds finally met its expiration date in 2015. Depreciated beyond the point of restoration, the white barn was finally dismantled. After pieces of the barn were salvaged for memorabilia, years of planning a new livestock facility were underway the following spring of 2016.

Cement was poured, steel beams raised and finishing touches put on. The new hog-sheep-goat barn was built just in time for the 2016 Rosebud-Treasure County Fair. On the cement floor, hog stalls were placed centered around drains in the floor, while on the dirt, lamb and goat stalls were pieced together. Many 4-H and FFA families came together with helping hands for the final push to prepare the livestock facilities for fair the following week.

If this outstanding livestock facility will withstand as many years and 4-H’ers as the old white beef barn, it will no doubt accumulate as many cherished memories from 4-H and FFA members and their families as the barn before it.
Community Foundation Reaches Exciting Milestone
$100,000 of giving back to Northern Rosebud County

In 2007, a family from Nebraska gave Northern Rosebud County the gift of lifetime; not just money, but an opportunity. A chance to create a permanent source of funding to help support the people and communities of Northern Rosebud County. Swede Schlesinger, a long time rancher who had recently passed away, left his estate to his extended family in Nebraska. These folks saw an opportunity to honor their loved one be creating a forever legacy. They set up a permanent endowment for the benefit of Rosebud County through the Montana Community Foundation.

Montana Community Foundation was in search of a local group to take the lead of building and managing the newly formed endowment. At the time, the small community of Forsyth was deeply engaged in the Extension-led community development program, Horizons. These two endeavors matched up well, and MSU Extension took the lead on developing and implementing a local board to oversee the growing local community foundation.

Nearly 10 years later, the Community Foundation of Northern Rosebud County has flourished. 2016 marked an incredible milestone. $100,000 has been given back to the people and communities of Northern Rosebud County through strategic grants supporting a wide variety of improvement projects. One grant went to the local Boy Scouts organization who oversaw the rebuilding of the local hospital helipad. A much needed improvement, the helipad has been used over 30 times to safely transfer emergency medical patients to facilities in Billings. Living in a rural area, the helipad is a necessity. Without the Boy Scouts working with the Community Foundation, the task of rebuilding the pad would have been left to the non-profit medical facility, increasing the financial burden of a small, rural hospital.

Another grant went to the local food bank to purchase upgraded equipment. In 2016 the Forsyth Food Pantry gave out enough food to feed over 800 people. The new freezer and refrigerator allowed the pantry to receive and store more perishable necessities. This Thanksgiving the pantry gave out 58 complete meals to families in need. Some of the pumpkin pies in these meals were made from pumpkins grown in the local community garden, which was another project started by MSU Extension and funded by the community foundation.

Lastly, over $15,000 from the community foundation has been invested back into the local school system, supporting youth. Over 90 different projects have received support from the community foundation.

Almost 10 years since its beginnings, the Community Foundation of Northern Rosebud County has become a very important resource in Northern Rosebud County. Small, rural communities are increasingly faced with a variety of challenges, one specifically is locating and securing the funds needed to carry out improvements. Through the creation and continued development of the local community foundation, MSU Extension has helped facilitate and lead the way to sustaining the communities of Northern Rosebud County.

A Novel Market for Local Goods
Starting a Community Market

MSU Extension in Rosebud-Treasure County is planning the beginnings of a community market. After speaking with individuals in the community, it became apparent that providing an outlet for people to sell their locally grown produce, handmade goods, homemade goods and other products would be well received. A community market is both a farmer’s market and a crafter’s market. Individuals will be able to showcase their goods to sell, as well as promote their business, organization or club.

The desire to buy local is a fast-growing trend that allows communities to support their own local economy. Supplying this local market will increase the community’s knowledge of local agriculture as well as inspire small businesses in southeast Montana. A community market will also create a sought after market for consumers to purchase unique, high-quality, affordable products made right here in Montana.

COM rmmUNITY FOUNDATION of Northern Rosebud County

For further information, please contact:

Lori Franz
Montana Community Foundation
2405 Command Drive
Billings, MT 59101
(406) 248-4830
lfranz@montanacommunityfoundation.org

FORSYTH COMMUNITY MARKET
LOCAL PRODUCE · HANDMADE GOODS · ENTERTAINMENT
FIRST & THIRD THURSDAY AT 4:30 PM JULY-SEPTEMBER

www.msuextension.org
For the past five years, a group of Forsyth-area women have been gathering faithfully every Tuesday and Thursday to build muscle and friendships. They lift weights while also staying up-to-date on each other’s lives. Strong Women, a community-based strength training program for women, was designed by Dr. Miriam Nelson of Tufts University. The research behind the program indicates that women 50 years old or older who actively engage in a regular strength training program can maintain muscle mass along with bone density as they age.

MSU Extension adopted the program and many ladies across the state, for the first time, began exercising in a different way—lifting weights. The very basic program, taught by trained MSU Extension Agents, provides women the opportunity to learn how to lift weights in a very safe, non-threatening environment. The local program has been so successful, it hasn’t stopped. In 2016, MSU Extension Agent Jennifer Anderson applied for and received a $2,500 grant from the Holy Rosary Health Care Foundation to purchase additional weights for the programs in Forsyth and Broadus. The extra weights come in handy for a number of reasons, but mostly it provides the participants with the equipment needed to work hard. Anderson notes, “Many of the participants are progressing at the same level, so we need multiple sets of specific weights. Plus, the weights are expensive to purchase and can be a barrier for some participants.”

It’s no wonder the program has such a great following. When discussing the benefits of it, the participants are quick to respond. Increased stamina, better balance and feeling stronger are repeatedly-heard benefits. Recently one participant went as far to say her cholesterol was better because of the added exercise and strength training and her doctor agreed.

Extension sponsored programs like Strong Women are an asset to the community. In many small, rural towns there are very few opportunities for people to engage in these kinds of activities led by a trained instructor. With the growing aging population in rural communities, it is increasingly important to provide folks with the opportunity to stay healthy so that they may continue living independently at home and be vital members of the community.