4-H member Sackett Andres waits for a question from a shooting sports judge. Sackett was participating in 4-H interview judging during the 2016 Lake County Fair.

4-H Activities, Training and Travel Energize Lake County Extension

“To me, 4-H is all about leadership, learning, and loving. By giving back to the community and teaching the next generation of youth, 4-H has taught me how to become a better citizen. I’ve gained a larger understanding of the world that we live in and overall it’s been one of the best experiences of my life.” Natalee Wheeler, 2016 high school graduate and 11 year 4-H member

Volunteers Make the Difference

Almost 60 adult volunteers serve as certified leaders for 4-H clubs and projects throughout the county. Volunteers organize and run club meetings, provide project instruction in more than 30 project areas, coordinate and contribute to events, fundraise for activities, lead record keeping workshops, training and numerous other leadership opportunities.

Impacts:

- More than 2,000 volunteer hours were contributed, equivalent to more than $45,000 in contribution of community time.
- A caring adult positively impacts a 4-H member’s life.
- Youth learn useful skills such as decision making, record keeping, self-discipline and self-confidence.

Four adult volunteers, Christina Evelo, Amy Vaughan, Karen McLeod and Teresa Cullis, attended the 2016 Montana 4-H Leadership Forum in Lewistown. While there, they improved leadership skills and explored new 4-H curriculums while networking with 4-H leaders from around the state.

Lake County 4-H Shooting Sports volunteer leaders are the catalyst for the State 4-H Shooting Sports Camp at Loon Lake each summer. Many Lake County 4-H leaders are sought to share their skills, management and ideas with other counties and at statewide events.

4-H members Kiara Sherman, left, and Brooklyn Kenelty learn from long-time sewing leader Michai Ann Stedje.
Teen Leaders Engage Other Members

Just as volunteer leadership is important, developing youth leadership is an integral part of Lake County’s 4-H program. More than 15 4-H members actively participate as Lake County 4-H Ambassadors. Led by adult volunteers Judy Smith and Amy Vaughan, these members are an essential ingredient in the planning and implementation of many 4-H activities, including Winter Project Day and the annual Achievement Program. These youth leaders attend Lake County 4-H Council meetings, share their ideas and thoughts while participating in decisions and policy review. Fundraisers allow them to create a county retreat and attend state leadership activities each year where they learn more about becoming leaders.

Impacts:

- 10 teens attended 4-H Fall Ambassador Training.
- 9 Ambassadors participated in Winter Teen camp.
- Rec Lab attracted 11 Lake County teen leaders.

During Lake County Fair, the Ambassadors created daily Cloverbud activities and implemented the Small Fry Livestock Show. Teens served as show clerks, assistants, runners and general ambassadors of 4-H goodwill.

Lake County 4-H Ambassadors stepped up to serve and help others within Montana 4-H. In the past year, Anya Smith served as District 1 Secretary and Hannah Vaughan served as District 1 Vice-Chair. Collaborating with other western Montana teens, they hosted the first regional 4-H dance and supported each other at regional and state events.

Two Lake County 4-H Ambassadors learned more about leadership at the state level by applying for State Ambassador positions. Landar Fangsrud, Saddle Mountain 4-H Club, and Sierra Hutchin, Mission Valley Ranch Hands, participated in the process. Though not selected, both came away from the process with more knowledge about themselves.

Travel Widens 4-Hers’ Worldview

Eight 4-H members and four adult chaperones traveled from Van Wert County, Ohio, for a 4-H Exchange this past summer. Lake County 4-H members shared 4-H projects and activities with the Ohio 4-Hers. All were amazed by the diversity of the agricultural products grown and raised in Lake County.

In June of 2017, Lake County 4-Hers will travel to Ohio to learn about 4-H and agriculture in that area. This winter the Lake County 4-H members will raise funds to support members travel to and from Ohio.
Lake County 4-H Travel and Awards

Ryan Harrop, Pistols and Ponytails 4-H Club, took the initiative for an exchange with Norway, after watching a presentation by Keergan Fangsrud, Lake County 4-H member who was a 4-H international exchange delegate to Japan in 2015. Ryan stayed with host families in Norway for six weeks during the summer. As a result of her travels, Ryan hopes to participate in a six-month 4-H exchange and to travel more frequently.

“Even though my host families would chat in their native language, I felt completely at home,” Ryan said. “This has been the most extraordinary summer of my life. Being in Norway reminded me that there’s a whole world out there besides the small town I grew up in. I had the privilege of meeting so many amazing people along the way, and I’d do it all again in a heartbeat. None of this would have been possible without the 4-H program, so thank you for giving me the adventure of a lifetime.”

Lake County Sends 10 to State Congress

Ten 4-H members and three adult chaperones participated in the State 4-H Congress in July — a record number of attendees for Lake County! Youth representing Lake County in state contests during Congress did an outstanding job.

Philipp Vaughan participated in the first ever Montana 4-H video contest and earned first place. Alyssa Liddle modeled in the State Fashion Revue and received Reserve Champion. The livestock judging team, Josey Motichka, Devi Knutson, Courtnee Clairmont and Ty Smith — placed third overall and will be traveling to Denver to represent Montana at the National Western Stock Show in January 2017. Public speaking contestant Anya Smith placed fourth.

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Leaders & Members Honored

Karen McLeod, 4-H Dog Project leader, received the Montana Tribute to Volunteer Excellence Award this year. This award recognizes individuals in Montana who have served as a 4-H volunteer for 10 years or more. Karen, as dog project leader, teaches dog obedience, showmanship, and agility. Under her leadership and guidance, 4-H members have improved their obedience and showmanship skills and have placed in classes at national level American Kennel Club shows. Karen is passionate about sharing her love of dogs and showing with youth.

Three 2016 Lake County graduating seniors received a total of $4,000 in 4-H State Foundation scholarships.
Tai Chi Brings Balance

Lake County residents 60 years of age and older have enthusiastically embraced the eastern tradition of Tai Chi. Members of this program are reporting improved balance and more fluidity in their daily movements due to increased muscle movement.

This age group frequently reports joint pain and stiffness, leading to chronic disability and a diminished quality of life. Utilizing a basic program involving eight traditional Tai Chi movements, these exercises help participants engage in non-impact and mindfully-controlled motions. Participants regulate their breathing and focus on smooth, slow and orchestrated movements.

Members Study Livestock Handling

Quality Assurance is one method used to enhance youth livestock production knowledge, since market livestock is one of the largest 4-H projects in Lake County. In order to train our youth in best livestock production practices, Quality Assurance training is provided pertinent to animal husbandry practices and livestock handling.

Successes:

- 22 youth, first-year members and those in their first year as a senior, were certified by completing the clinic.
- Seven adults and four youth volunteers structured trainings in six different Quality Assurance topics.

Impacts:

- Over and under weight limit livestock were eliminated because all entries met the weight limit regulation
- Injection site damage of carcasses was reduced by 90 percent
- Carcass evaluation showed 25 percent quality increases for all species.

4-H Learning

Interview Judging Polishes Life Skills

Interview judging is a venue to learn life skills that can prepare 4-H members for future situations. Members engage in dialog with an adult to explain, evaluate and positively critique the hard work and enthusiasm they have put into their 4-H projects throughout the year. Skills developed through this type of judging include self-esteem, communication, self-evaluation, and thought process management — all experiences that prepare young people for the future. Many parents say it is the best experience their kids receive from 4-H.

Lake County Family and Consumer Sciences

Tai Chi classmates “work the shuttles” during a class with MSU Extension.
Living a healthy life helps people, young and old, at all income and educational level get the most out of every day and their life span. MSU Extension in Lake County approaches healthy living with a variety of programs. Participants range in age from 5 to 85, with diverse cultural backgrounds.

Class Empowers Caregivers

The “Powerful Tools for Caregivers” program is offered to individuals in Lake County who are caregivers, either as family or a professional. This class promotes self-care through communication skills, assertiveness awareness, and relaxation techniques while caring for special needs children and chronically ill family members. Comments from participants include, “This class has validated what I have been doing and has given me options for what I can do better,” and “This class has taught me better communication skills by using the tools taught.”

Participants report increased confidence when communicating with families and health care professionals. Balancing the needs of their own family members with the individual needing care is primary when considering long-term care outside the home. They also felt an improved ability to manage guilt and emotions which surfaced when caring for others. All the caregivers realized they needed to schedule time to take care of their own needs and health and noted an improved ability to make decisions related to caregiving.

MSU Extension volunteer Debbie Barnhill from Polson helps teach these programs with Nori Pearce, MSU Extension Lake County agent.

Food Preservation Gains in Popularity

Nori Pearce is leading the development of a statewide Master Food Preserver program. This program will train volunteers and staff in proper USDA food preservation methodology to assist MSU Extension Agents with numerous questions and concerns associated with canning, freezing, drying and fermenting foods. Curriculum from Washington State University, the University of Alaska, and Colorado State University is being used in the development of this program.

Impacts:

- For Lake and surrounding counties, more than 10 individuals participated in the Master Food Preserver training.
- More than 500 questions concerning food preservation and/or testing gauges for pressure answered by Lake County MSU Extension in the past year.

Intergenerational Culinary Classes

Programs encouraging learning between generations were held for food preparation programs this year. Volunteers from the Retired Seniors Volunteer Program (RSVP) shared their knowledge with adults and youth through food preparation classes, including a bread making day.
More than 125 cattlemen were able to take advantage of a seminar series highlighting financial management, inheritance taxes, and the veterinary feed directive. This series of topics is chosen by the Western Montana Stockmen’s Association board of directors who advise Lake County MSU Extension Cattlemen’s College.

**Results:**

- 30 ranches developed a marketing plan that coincided with the information presented at the financial management class. These plans will give the individuals calculated decision power as commodity markets fluctuate.
- 45 percent of the inheritance class attendees have begun developing plans for passing the ranch business on to the next generation or preparing to downsize business and transfer the holdings to family members.
- 128 cattlemen received current information on the regulations associated with the Veterinary Feed Directive, allowing them to be proactive with management methods that comply with new regulations.

**Tool Chest for Weed Control**

Noxious weeds are a serious threat in Lake County. Lake County MSU Extension administers an integrated control program to assist landowners in their efforts to solve a variety of weed problems. This integration involves tools applicable to the landowner’s resources with a broad approach to environmental protection and re-establishing a desirable plant community. Each landowner is given a consultation on best approaches to their specific property goals and resources using weed control tools:

- Identification
- Mapping

- Herbicide solutions and strategies
- Physical and mechanical control
- Grazing methods
- Replanting selections and methods
- Long-term management

A biological weed control also helps distribute control agents to sensitive areas and is monitored in conjunction with the Lake County Weed Control Office.

**Impacts**

Fifteen landowners wrote and incorporated a five-year weed control plan. More than 900 acres were placed in an intensely managed weed control program starting in summer 2016.
Gardeners Study Horticulture
Montana State University Extension Master Gardeners are volunteers working in partnership with MSU Extension in Lake County to encourage and promote environmentally sound horticulture practices. The Master Gardener program is one way Lake County MSU Extension teaches citizens how to beautify their communities, learn the art and science of horticulture and participate in a volunteer network. Master Gardeners help Lake County MSU Extension solve gardening problems and teach sound practices by:

- Working at information booths at community events and the fair.
- Maintaining information gardens.
- Participating in fairgrounds beautification.
- Teaching horticulture to youth.
- Starting plants in a greenhouse to benefit community gardens.

Impacts and Outputs:
Since 2007, 2,400 hours of education have been extended to Master Gardeners through Lake County MSU Extension
Total of 170 graduates: Fifteen in 2016
Total volunteer hours: 2,630 since 2007. Volunteer hours valued at an average wage of $15 an hour equals $39,450 in volunteer time donated to the community.
Food donated to the local food bank in 2016 — 550 pounds x $2 per pound = $1,100.

Urban Tree Care and Maintenance
To improve the survivability and structure of trees in Lake County, especially urban areas, an initiative was established to train residents to care for and maintain their shade and fruit trees, saving the cities substantial cost for trimming and/or removing problem trees.

Successes:
- Three pruning clinics were attended by a total of 38 people.
- Five orchards were given individual attention for pruning.
- Ronan Tree Board community workshop brought over 40 participants to the city park for tree planting instruction.

Impacts:
- Seventeen people saved or maintained trees on their property, valued at $500—$1,000 per tree.
- Home growers and backyard orchardists substantially improved fruit size and quality as a direct result of fruit tree pruning and maintenance.
- At an Arbor Day celebration after the Ronan Tree board workshop, two 10-year-old trees (valued at $2,400) were planted in Ronan City Park.

Ronan Plans Community Improvement
Multiple groups came together to develop a community improvement plan using information gathered by listening sessions conducted by Montana Department of Commerce and the Montana Economic Developers Association (MEDA) www.medamembers.org. Information was gathered from community members during five listening sessions and a town hall meeting to construct an action plan that will advance the economic and community goals for Ronan.

Impacts and Output
- 100 individuals interested in Ronan’s future attended listening sessions and made comments.
- Assessment report from all listening sessions and those submitted by email or in writing were compiled by the MEDA team.
Contact Us

Montana State University Extension is an ADA/EO/AA Veteran’s Preference Employer and provider of educational outreach.

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