Welcome to Glacier County

Glacier County is home to Glacier National Park, the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, 75 miles of an international border, and thousands of acres of small grains and pulse crops and rangelands that support beef production. The nearly 13,500 county residents are largely involved in agriculture, oil and gas, and tourism industries. This past year, MSU Extension in Glacier county has reached constituents through agriculture/natural resources, youth development, horticulture, urban integrated pest management, and community development programming and one-on-one teaching.

2017 brought the addition of two new employees to the Extension office, Jodi Duncan and Mandi Henderson. Duncan is a familiar face to many, having previously served as an Administrative Assistant in the office and been a 4-H leader for nearly 20 years. Duncan is now the SNAP-Ed instructor for the Blackfeet Reservation, Glacier and Toole counties, based out of Cut Bank. Henderson is the administrative assistant, bringing great customer service experience and creativity from her time at the Blackfeet Community College library and with the National Park Service. There has also been some office cleaning and painting done these past few months which has brought a fresh update to the department.

MSU Extension in Glacier County continues to focus on meeting the needs of the community. Programming highlights this past year included the annual Cropping Seminar, Beef Cow Profitability Seminar for farmers and ranchers, and cooperating on hosting Montana’s Next Generation Conference and a pulse workshop. MSU Extension continues to monitor Orange Wheat Blossom Midge throughout the county in wheat fields. Staff completed 40-plus nitrate quick tests for producers, representing 8,000 acres of hay production, and provided numerous pest and disease identifications and recommendations. Programming extended beyond agriculture to include a Mental Health First Aid class, Tree and Lawn Care seminar, and both a Level 1 and Level 2 Master Gardener series. Approximately 40 percent of office visits, phone calls, and consultations were agriculture-related, 40 percent were about 4-H, and the remainder were related to Urban Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and horticulture.

Each day, MSU Extension in Glacier County strives to identify local needs and provide the needed resources to serve its citizens.

Photo by Kari Lewis
4-H Leadership Lunches develop teens’ leadership and communication skills

In many small towns, students hustle from school to sports to homework, which often makes fitting in 4-H a challenge. Because of this, the 4-H Leadership Lunch was developed, where middle school and high school 4-H’ers meet during their school lunch hour to enjoy a lunch courtesy of the 4-H Council and to participate in leadership development activities.

In its first year, Leadership Lunches have helped members develop skills in parliamentary procedure, communication, responsibility, accountability, and more. Members have spent time learning about their personal leadership style and how they can develop that for use within their club and community. The Leadership Lunches have provided a platform for members to develop specific skills and increase their confidence in them. For example, members learned fundamentals of public speaking and practiced impromptu speaking at the Leadership Lunch which then tripled participation in the county Communications Contest from the previous year.

Over 90 percent of 4-H members who attend school in Cut Bank have attended a Leadership Lunch. All members who have attended Leadership Lunches agree that it has helped them improve their leadership skills, communication skills, and develop confidence in their abilities as a leader, and nearly 70 percent of members strongly agree that it has helped them better understand how other 4-H’ers look up to them.

Participating members agree that the Leadership Lunches have helped them feel more a part of 4-H and develop stronger relationships with other 4-H’ers. One middle school 4-H’er commented

ABOVE: As part of a recent Leadership Lunch, JR Seewald and Canon Bradley designed a dance workshop for 4-H Project Day that will reach members of all learning styles.

ABOVE: Coalter Littrell and JR Seewald have been regular participants in the Leadership Lunch series and utilized their leadership skills as 4-H camp counselors this past summer.

LEFT: The March lunch helped members hone their public speaking in preparation for the county contest, including Matt Meiwald who was the Impromptu Speech winner.

Photos by Kari Lewis
that because of the lunches they have a sense of camaraderie with their fellow 4-H classmates and a unique bond that they may not have otherwise.

One high school 4-H’er remarked they would recommend the Leadership Lunches for anyone who is in 4-H to help them with leadership skills. “The Leadership Lunches have helped me a lot with my communication and my leadership skills. You learn to not be the person that never does anything. Instead it has made me want to be a part of many different things involving 4-H and school activities. It has given me the confidence to speak publicly.”

The 4-H Leadership Lunches demonstrate the value of adapting to busy schedules and providing a means to connect Extension staff and 4-H members on a regular basis. “It is a fun and great time, and you learn a lot and make more friends with the same interests,” said one middle school 4-H attendee.

Busy year for Glacier County 4-H

Glacier county’s 70-plus 4-H members were busy this past year with numerous projects, community service, and leadership-related activities throughout the year.

4-H members contributed in a variety of projects and activities to give back to their club, community, and world. Locally, 4-Her’s raised nearly $500 for the Senior Center through their Soup and Bread luncheon, to raise money for meals for homebound senior citizens. 4-H clubs particularly reached out to the Glacier Care Center throughout the year with members shopping for and distributing gifts at Christmas, creating Valentines cards, and decorating St. Patrick’s Day cookies together. Other local service projects included raising nearly $250 through a bake sale for the Cut Bank Animal Shelter, delivering decorated Easter cookies to local businesses, and baking nine dozen homemade rolls for the Community Thanksgiving dinner.
On a statewide and national level, 4-H provided support to those affected by wildfires both in Eastern Montana and Kansas. ‘Coalter’s Calf Bucket Challenge’ was a fundraising effort spearheaded by junior leader Coalter Littrell to provide funds to a Kansas 4-H club to raise calves orphaned by horrific wildfires this spring. The project collected funds of $1,150 that were sent to purchase feed, milk replacer, and supplies.

Throughout the year, members participated in an animal nutrition and fitting clinic, small animal showmanship clinic, overnight youth horse camp, Cloverbud camp, multi-county 4-H camp, and had the opportunity to tour the CHS feed plant in Great Falls to see the feed manufacturing process.

Members honed their leadership and communications skills through club involvement and leadership trainings. Twelve members competed in the county Communications Contest and each member competing at the Marias Fair completed an individual project interview with a subject matter expert in their project. Nearly 20 members competed in the Roundtable awards interviews where they interviewed with fellow members before a judge, explaining their goals, project work, and learning experiences.

Glacier County members were very successful on a statewide level this year. Sarah Thies and Addisyn Bengtson’s 2016 Marias Fair hogs ranked fifth and sixth in the state heavyweight category for carcass quality. Myla Cundall was named the state fashion revue winner at the Montana 4-H Congress in Bozeman and Sarah Thies was a state 4-H Foundation scholarship winner. Coalter Littrell, a Glacier County beef breeding member, was named a NILE Merit Heifer winner and will receive a heifer calf from Connelly Angus of Valier.

RIGHT: Destini Anderson completed her first year in the swine project and has added shooting sports, sewing, and scrapbooking projects this year.

LEFT: Coalter Littrell spearheaded ‘Coalter’s Calf Bucket Challenge’ which raised $1,150 to provide funds to a Kansas 4-H club to raise calves orphaned by horrific wildfires this spring.

Photos by Kari Lewis.
Beef Cow Profitability Seminar and Tour

The summer Beef Cow Profitability Seminar and Tour focused on tools for increasing ranch profitability and revisiting proven technologies that are often overlooked by producers.

Karla Jenkins, University of Nebraska – Lincoln Cow-Calf and Range Management specialist, covered underutilized tools to improve ranch profitability, specifically calf implants, vaccinations and pre-conditioning for the nursing calf, and cull cow marketing options. A common misconception regarding implants is that implanted calves are discounted at sale time, however a recent four-year study analyzing Superior Livestock Auction prices illustrated no difference in price between implanted and non-implanted calves. In addition, implants can add 15 to 30 pounds at weaning, which translates to an extra $10 to $20 per calf. Assuming an average herd size of 250 cows/producer for Glacier County and $15/head additional profit, implants could add $3,750 to the average producer’s profit.

Jenkins also shared the impact that pre-conditioning calves on the ranch has on their success in the feedlot, and how that ties back to the price that ranchers in Montana receive for their calves. In addition, Jenkins covered strategies to increase cull cow revenue. Cull cows typically make up 15 to 30 percent of a herd’s revenue, and their impact on herd profitability should not be overlooked.

The tour included a visit to Guy and Heather Meiwald’s ranch west of Cut Bank. The Meiwald’s have implemented Management Intensive Grazing (MIG) on their irrigated pastures in recent years. Through the MIG process, they have been able to increase production and take in pasture cattle, without spending money on fertilizing their pastures. On their own cows, they moved to a May/June calving period and use terminal bulls, which has allowed them to reach production goals while decreasing their inputs. The Meiwald’s shared how MIG has affected their livestock production, fertilizer costs, and ranch profitability. Guy has developed numerous time-saving techniques to implement MIG and use electric fencing, and he shared those with participants. One rancher commented, “I really liked seeing all the cool, innovative practices Guy was using.”

As a result of the seminar and tour, one producer planned to increase their number of pasture rotations to increase the rest period between grazing events, another planned to implement the use of calf hood implants, and another rancher said he would market cull cows earlier in the fall to capitalize on traditionally higher cull cow prices.
Spotlight on SNAP-Ed with Jodi Duncan

There are many facets to MSU Extension, including the Nutrition SNAP-ED program. This is the Montana State University Extension Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Education, which supports low-income Montanans in making the healthy choice the easy choice when it comes to nutrition and physical activity. We know that 77 percent of Montana adults do not participate in enough physical activity to meet guidelines, that 74 percent of Montana adults eat less than five servings of fruits and vegetables each day, and 29 percent of Montana children ages 10 to 17 are overweight or obese. To combat these challenges, SNAP-ED teaches low-income youth and adults how to eat, live, learn, work, play, and shop within their communities to make healthier choices.

Locally, Jodi Duncan is the SNAP-Ed instructor based out of our Glacier County office, with primary responsibilities of serving the Blackfeet Reservation, in addition to the Cut Bank and Shelby communities as time permits. She started this position in September, and certainly hit the ground running. In October alone, Duncan taught a total of 30 different classes, which reached 460 individuals. In November, she reached 681 individuals in 40 classes. Over the fall season, Duncan taught first, third, and fifth graders at the Babb Elementary School, Vina Chattin Elementary School in Browning and elementary schools in Cut Bank and Shelby.

Each lesson that Duncan teaches focuses on both nutrition and physical activity. Students are given the opportunity to sample a healthy food during each class, which has exposed many students to fruits and vegetables that they may not normally try. Some examples of the sampling’s that students tried included whole grain trail mix, vegetable soup, yogurt parfait, and a peanut butter yogurt dip with apples.

Statewide, the MSU Extension Nutrition Education team reached 8,152 Montanans with direct education efforts in this last grant year. There were 920 adults who participated in the Eating Smart, Being Active series and 7,103 youth who participated in the Youth Understanding MyPlate series in first, third, and fifth grades across Montana.

It’s exciting to hear the stories of first graders who want a second helping of vegetable soup, or the kids that see Duncan in the grocery store or tell her that they had their parents pick up a fruit they tried in class. The SNAP-ED program is just one more way that MSU Extension is making a positive and healthy impact in Montana communities.
MSU Extension provides tools to increase healthy food production

Availability of low-cost fresh fruits and vegetables in rural communities is often limited, and Glacier County communities are no different. To provide clients with the knowledge to produce fresh fruits and vegetables, extensive horticulture programming was offered.

For the first time, a Level 2 Master Gardener class was offered in Glacier County. The class focused on Integrated Pest Management for the six participants. In addition, a Level 1 Master Gardener class hosted 13 participants who gained introductory knowledge on fruit and vegetable production, soil sampling, lawns, gardens, and trees. The Level 1 and Level 2 classes drew participants from Cut Bank, Browning, East Glacier, and Toole county to Cut Bank for 16 weeks of classes.

At the request of the USDA Extension office on the Blackfeet Reservation, a gardening class was offered through the Blackfeet Community College (BCC) with the objective of helping people produce fruits and vegetables for the farmer’s market. This would help increase access to healthy food on the Reservation, and also provide student interns knowledge for managing the greenhouse, which grows 2,500 plants annually. The class was taught by MSU Extension staff and a Master Gardener volunteer, and focused on planning and preparing for a garden, managing a garden throughout the growing season, and harvesting. As a result of the course, all participants planned to grow vegetables—ranging from spinach and tomatoes to squash, peppers, pumpkins, beets and broccoli.

Participants cited the most valuable knowledge gained as learning to harden their plants before transplanting, timing of planting, to rotate plant locations within a garden to lessen disease and insect issues, and that they could utilize the MSU Extension office as a resource for weed and insect identification and disease diagnosis.

A final highlight for Glacier county gardening enthusiasts was a tree and lawn workshop with Toby Day, MSU Extension horticulture specialist. Fifteen homeowners learned proper tree planting, care, and watering techniques and mowing, irrigation, and fertilizer management for lawns. An in-field pruning demonstration helped participants learn which branches to prune.

In addition to the horticulture programming offered, there were 80-plus horticulture and Urban IPM consultations completed via phone, e-mail, office visits, and site visits. MSU Extension and the Master Gardeners assisted with the coordination and distribution of 1,150 pounds of Montana certified seed potatoes, which helps ensure diseases are not introduced to the Montana potato industry from out of state.
Photo by Kari Lewis

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