

## Welcome to Cascade County

Cascade County, located in Central Montana, is one of the population centers in the state and is known as the “Electric City” due to its historical significance in regard to the hydro-electric generation plants and smelter activity. The Extension office is located in the county seat, Great Falls, which is on the Missouri River and is one of the pioneer cities in the state. The terrain is primarily gently rolling plains that are dissected by the Missouri River and its numerous coulees and tributaries. The Little Belt Mountains are found in the southeastern portion of the county.

Population of the county is approximately 82,300, which includes the rural area, the incorporated city of Great Falls and the towns of Belt, Cascade, Centerville, Fort Shaw, Monarch, Neihart, Sand Coulee, Simms, Sun River, Ulm, and Vaughn, many of which have complete K-12 school systems.

Cascade County’s economic base includes agriculture, military, education, small manufacturing, food processing, and many service industries. The majority of agricultural income is derived from crop production. According to 2014 Montana Agricultural Statistics, the county ranks



Photo by Rose Malisani

seventeenth in crop production with over \$56 million in cash receipts. Livestock production, primarily beef cattle, is also very important; generating over \$78 million in cash receipts and ranking ninth in the state.

Great Falls is home to the Benefis Health Care System (one of the premier hospital and health care organizations in Montana), Malmstrom Air Force Base, and many cultural attractions including the Charles M. Russell Museum and Gallery, Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, Paris Gibson Center, and the First People’s Buffalo Jump. Great Falls is a primary destination point for tourism. Outdoor recreational opportunities include fishing, hunting, boating, golfing, hiking, and historical exploration.

***Cascade County Master Gardeners volunteered 14,976 hours***  
*at community gardens, farmer’s markets, greenhouses, and the Cascade County MSU Extension office.*

# Montana State 4-H Working Ranch Horse Finals

The first annual Montana State 4-H Working Ranch Horse Finals was held in Great Falls with 47 4-H members and youth competing. The first day of the finals was for 4-H members enrolled in the 4-H Working Ranch Horse project, levels 1-4. 4-H members competed in roping, sorting, horsemanship patterns, and a knowledge test. On the second day, both 4-H members and youth not enrolled in 4-H competed in trail, pleasure, reining, and working cow horse in three age divisions and with their colts.

The planning committee gathered close to \$10,000 in sponsorships in six weeks. They gathered donations from other sponsors for class prizes. 4-H members and youth were rewarded more than a ribbon or buckle; they earned rope cans, ropes, breast collars, bell boots, HorsLic buckets, buckles, cinches, headstalls, chinks, horse boots, and gift cards.

Competitions such as the Montana State 4-H Working Ranch Horse Finals do not just happen. 4-H Horse Leaders, Erlonna Erickson, Tater Erickson, Lisa Jassen, Lindsay Garpestad, Lisa Assels, and Charla Merja, along with Cascade County MSU Extension agriculture agent Rose Malisani, provided the horsepower to plan, organize, and implement the event. The committee arranged for two clinics each morning to teach youth about working cow horse and roping, organized volunteers to help with running gates, brought cattle in for sorting, hired judges, ordered prizes, visited sponsors, and promoted the finals.

The Montana State 4-H Working Ranch Horse Finals is an educational opportunity for youth and families to gather and compete while carrying on ranching traditions. Youth are taught how to properly work cattle, rope, horsemanship, stewardship, and commadore in the 4-H working ranch horse project. The project is the first step in teaching youth to provide other families with a safe food source and be stewards of the land while carrying on family ranching traditions.



Photos by Lindsay Garpestad



## Cascade County Horticulture, Agriculture, and Natural Resources Programs

Cascade County Master Gardener classes reached students from Cascade, Teton, and Chouteau Counties. Students learned about vegetables, trees, soils, and more. Three Cascade County residents attended level three classes at MSU. Cascade County gardeners volunteered 14,976 hours at community gardens, farmer's markets, greenhouses, and the MSU Cascade County Extension office.

Vegetables grown in community and personal gardens were primarily donated to those in need.

Educational programs included Fort Keogh on the Road, Private Applicator training, Forest Stewardship workshop, Pulse

101 workshop, and Cropping Seminar. Eighteen cattle producers attended 'Fort Keogh on the Road' that covered topics on water, minerals, cow-calf production, Veterinary Feed Directive, and fire. The Pesticide Education Private Applicator training reached 40 attendees from Cascade, Pondera, Toole, Teton, Judith Basin, Glacier, Richland, Lewis and Clark, Gallatin, and Park counties. Attendees learned about licenses, laws, pests, safety, labels, calibration, and environment. The program is instrumental in teaching correct pesticide application education and safety.



Photo by Rose Malisani

The Forest Stewardship program was brought to Cascade County in May. Fifteen Montana residents attended the training to learn about forest ecology, fire management, insects, wildlife habitat, trees, understory, range management, forest health, and maintenance. The Pulse 101 workshop was organized and facilitated by the Golden Triangle Agriculture Extension Agents due to decreasing cereal grain contracts and markets. Two workshops hosted a total of 270 producers. Producers learned about pulse production, insurance, diseases, and contracts.

The annual Cropping Seminar covering the Golden Triangle was held in January 2017. The program featured MSU Extension specialists Mary Burrows, Peggy Lamb, Pat Carr, George Haynes, and John Miller,

as well as Stephen Vantassel from the Montana Department of Agriculture. Twenty-five adults attended the Cascade County cropping seminar, where they earned applicator credits and learned about crops, economics, and pests.

Rose Malisani, Cascade County MSU Extension Agriculture Agent, assisted in over 2,000 calls of service in 2017. She conducted 54 nitrate quick tests, 21 shelterbelt consults (10,699 trees and shrubs planted), 1,684 phone calls, 88 office walk-ins, 102 one-on-one consults, inspected 148 Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage acres, mailed 36 samples to laboratories, and attended trade shows and conventions to provide outreach about MSU Extension.

# Family and Consumer Programming in Cascade County

## GrandCares: Caring for Grandfamilies

There are more than 1,600 grandparents raising grandchildren in Cascade County. The Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project has been a successful program over the years as the need for education and resources continues to grow. Another program called the GrandCares program was an additional resource offered to this population. The GrandCares program is a research-based educational program that uses strength-based workshops that provide knowledge and tools for grandparents raising grandchildren with special needs.

The GrandCares program started in Cascade County in the fall of 2017. Eighteen grandparents and two great-grandparents, with grandchildren ranging in age from 3 to 18, participated in the six-week educational series.

The program focuses on reducing the stresses, emotions, and challenges of raising grandchildren with special needs while incorporating the importance of self-care through action plans. With a variety of situations, many

grandparents found that they were not alone in their struggles and feelings of loneliness or being stretched too thin. Some of the tools the participants use to help reduce challenges included assertive communication, positive self-talk, and action plans. Participants set a goal to take a small amount of time from their busy schedules to participate in something they enjoy like reading a book, going for a walk, or simply taking a nap each week of the program. One participant said, "It has been over 10 years since I have taken the time to sit down and read a book, I forgot how much I enjoyed reading!" Overall participants rated the program a 9.3 on

a 10-point scale and because of this program, 11 of 18 participants reported taking time for themselves was the most important tool because it helps them to have a more positive attitude.

Raising a grandchild comes with challenging times, difficult conversations and frequent obstacles. The GrandCares program empowers participants to practice self-care to continue doing what they can with the utmost of love.

## Freezer Meal Frenzy

The average cost of feeding a family of four is around \$859 per month according to the USDA. This can be a large financial burden on families. Along with the financial burden, today's society is fast-paced and often leaves very little time to develop a healthy, well-rounded meal plan. By utilizing freezer meals, a family can decrease their food budget, improve nutrition, save money, and put a healthy meal on the table in a short amount of time. The benefits of meal preparation can allow parents to spend more time with their children and less time in the kitchen.

Twelve individuals in Cascade County participated in "Freezer Meal Frenzy" in the fall of 2017. Each participant made four meals to serve a family of four. Forty-eight freezer meals were made in three short hours. Each meal cost an average of \$4.89, making each serving cost just over \$1. Each meal was carefully planned to meet the MyPlate standards and include a protein, grain, vegetable, fruit, and dairy. One participant stated, "This (freezer meals) requires some thought ahead of time but I am excited to spend more time with my kids, not the kitchen." Another participant said, "I am excited to have ideas for meals and know that we don't have an excuse for a fast food dinner." Several participants left with plans to get together with other family members to make meals ahead for the busy holiday season because of this program.

As the cost of groceries increases and busy schedules arise, the knowledge and methods of food preservation through freezing can help any



household, small or large. When you have tools to make a week's worth of dinners for less than \$50, there is less wondering how one can feed his or her family on a tight food budget.

### **Service-Learning Has Big Impact for Cascade County and Beyond**

4-H has three mission mandates promoted through 4-H youth development programs. They are science, healthy living, and citizenship. The 4-H mission mandate of citizenship includes service to communities through service-learning and volunteerism. Michigan State University Extension defines service-learning as a community service or volunteering that includes a structured educational component that helps youth to develop critical thinking and planning skills as they identify an issue they are interested in working on, then plan and conduct a service activity needed within their communities. According to Dr. Richard Lerner and his research team at Tufts University, youth that participate in 4-H are four times more likely to give back to their communities.

Cascade County 4-Hers are an ideal example of youth who give back to their community. The Cascade County 4-H Ambassador Team took charge of one of the service-learning projects and engaged 4-H club members to make 5,000 hats for Teeny Tears. Teeny Tears is a service organization that provides donated comfort items to families grieving the loss of stillborn infants. Cascade County 4-H chose to make hats that were made and sent to Salt Lake City to be dispersed. Each family grieving the loss of a child were given two hats; one for the child to be laid to rest in and the other to be kept as a memento of their child. Hats were made by 4-H members during their club meetings and



Photo by Katrin Finch



Photo by Jerrica Seilstad

collected during the Montana 4-H Week of Service.

The Baby Blanket Project is another long-standing service-learning project in Cascade County. The project started in 1992 by Cascade County 4-H to provide receiving blankets to the Cascade County Women, Infant, and Children's (WIC) program. To date, \$20,000 has been raised to make over 5,000 receiving blankets for the program. In 2017, 185 blankets were made by over 60 Cascade County 4-H members.

These service-learning projects directly influenced 185 local Cascade County families

and 2,500 families nationwide. Research shows that participation in service learning projects are associated with positive outcomes in five areas: attitudes toward self, attitudes toward learning, civic engagement, social skills, and academic achievement (e.g., Billig, 2009; Conway et al., 2009; White, 2001). The 365 Cascade County 4-Her's that participated in these and other 4-H service learning projects in the last year have been positively impacted as individuals serving their communities.

## contact us:



### EXTENSION

#### Cascade County

3300 3rd Street N.E. #9  
Great Falls, MT 59405  
(406) 454-6980  
[www.msueextension.org/cascade](http://www.msueextension.org/cascade)



**Rose Malisani**  
Agriculture Extension Agent  
[rose.malisani@montana.edu](mailto:rose.malisani@montana.edu)



**Katrin Finch**  
Family and Consumer Science  
Extension Agent  
[katrin.finch@montana.edu](mailto:katrin.finch@montana.edu)



**Jerrica Seilstad**  
4-H Extension Agent  
[jerrica.seilstad@montana.edu](mailto:jerrica.seilstad@montana.edu)



**April McLean**  
Administrative Assistant  
[cascade@montana.edu](mailto:cascade@montana.edu)