

## Welcome to Fergus County

**S**ome major changes happened in the Fergus County MSU Extension office in 2017.

After 33 years serving as the office manager, Bertie Brown retired. We welcomed Mary Miller into her place in August. With a little over 10 years serving as the Fergus County MSU Extension agriculture agent, Darren Crawford moved on to another career in May, and in November, we welcomed Emily Standley to the office. These two joined Denise Seilstad (Family and Consumer Sciences Agent) and Jennifer Saunders (4-H Program Leader).

The Fergus County MSU Extension office serves a population of 11,586 within the Fergus County boundaries. The MSU Extension office also has a working agreement with Petroleum County (population 491) to provide Extension education and 4-H services to the county's clientele.

Fergus County is located in central Montana and covers 4,250 square miles. In addition to Lewistown, the county seat with a population of approximately 5,901, other communities include Denton, Grass Range, Moore, Roy and Winifred. Each community has its own school system. Agricultural production and business form the basis of the economy. Light manufacturing, timber and natural resources, health care, education and government services contribute heavily to the non-agricultural employment opportunities. The area is well known for tourism, outdoor recreation, hunting and fishing opportunities. Geographic features include mountains, spring creeks and mountain streams, foothills, large rivers, rough river breaks and rolling prairie. A big part of Fergus County MSU Extension is the 4-H program, consisting of 231 members and 59 volunteer leaders in 14 organized clubs.



Left to right: Emily Standley, Agriculture Extension Agent; Denise Seilstad, Family and Consumer Science Extension Agent; Jennifer Saunders, 4-H Coordinator; Mary Miller, Office Manager. Photo by Katie Hatlelid.

# Community & Family Health and Wellness Education

## Family and Consumer Sciences Education

Denise Seilstad, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent has been serving the residents of Fergus County for the past 18 years. Many residents use the MSU Extension office for one-on-one consultations and questions ranging from food preservation and safety to financial planning.

ServSafe Food Safety education was provided to 372 people throughout the year. The full manager training certification was completed by 108 people, while 55 had the four-hour training, and 199 received the two-hour employee/concession training. More than a dozen pressure gauges were checked for safety throughout the year, helping keep food preservers and their families safe.

Three human services programs are provided to Fergus and Petroleum County residents. The Diabetes Empowerment Education Program (DEEP) served 28 people in Fergus County, providing six weeks of self-management education. Powerful Tools for Caregivers, an educational program for friends and relatives acting as caregivers for an adult with a chronic medical condition, served 12 caregivers. Living Life Well, a program for people with Chronic Disease, provided nine people with skills needed

in day-to-day management of chronic health conditions such as arthritis, asthma, diabetes, and heart and lung disease to maintain and/or improve their ability to carry out activities of daily living.

Fergus County MSU Extension participated in a Healthy Hearts for Rural Women (Strong Hearts) research project with Cornell University. Thirteen women, over 40 years of age, physically inactive and overweight, were part of the study facilitated by FCS agent Denise Seilstad. Cornell University is currently compiling the data.

Strong People, Strong Bones is in its ninth year in Fergus/Petroleum County. This is an MSU Extension program which helps men and women slow down or prevent osteoporosis and arthritis by doing strength exercises. Two sessions meet twice weekly throughout the year, serving 35 to 40 people.

Community Education classes had 62 attendees over the past year, who learned about healthy, quick and economic meal planning and preparation, encouraging families to cook healthier, save money, and eat together.

The Safe Sitter Babysitting Workshop was given to 25 youth, ages 10 to 13, where MSU Extension teams up with Central Montana Hospital to teach youth the needed skills and medical education to be responsible, dependable babysitters.

Denise Seilstad teaching a cooking class.



## Montana's Longest Table

Pictured at right: Celebrating the relationship of Central Montana agriculture and the Lewistown business community at “Montana’s Longest Table.” The mission of the event:

- Foster relationships between the two entities
- Educate the public about the ties between agriculture and the businesses of Central Montana
- Have a fun and festive event

Jennifer Saunders and Denise Seilstad served on the newly formed “Ag Committee,” which is part of the Lewistown Downtown Association, and played key roles in bringing the new event “Montana’s Longest Table,” to Lewistown in June 2017. Ten Central Montana restaurants accepted the invitation to attend and serve a sample of one of their menu items. The committee organized sponsors to reimburse them for food expenses. The education committee invited local agriculture organizations to set up educational displays; they created table tents with “Ag Facts,” and they organized a “Kiddy Corral” petting zoo and activities.

Two hundred seats were available at the table, stretching down one block in downtown Lewistown, and the event sold out. People lined up and piled their plates (flat cardboard boxes) high with delicious food. Agricultural producers

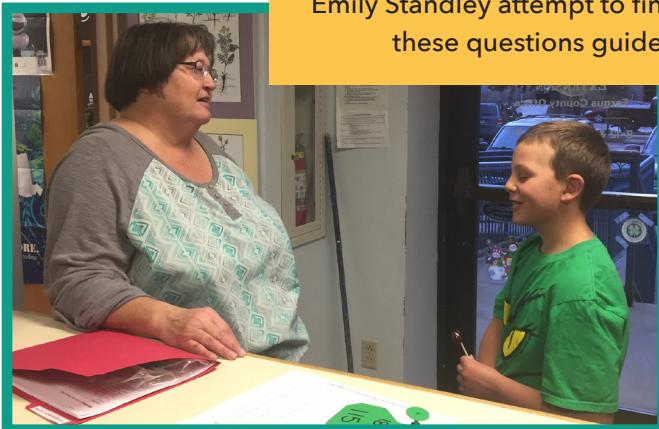


Photo by Jennifer Saunders

visited with the guests about the production of ingredients in the dishes. Children held chickens and petted calves, rode the bouncy horses, learned to swing a rope and had a great time. Music was provided by a local band. The committee felt they achieved the mission, creating a community event that fostered education and relationship-building, and plans are under way for the second annual Montana’s Longest Table in June 2018.

### ONE-ON-ONE CONTACTS

Many residents of Fergus County use the MSU Extension office for one-on-one consultation. Questions range from food preservation and safety to financial planning, and from insect and weed identification to crop diseases. Agents Denise Seilstad and Emily Standley attempt to find answers or locate resources as much as possible. Often these questions guide local program planning, news releases, and more.



Jennifer Saunders and independent 4-H youth, Nathan Long.

## 4-H Senior Camp

Communication skills were the focus of the 2017 Fergus/Petroleum/Judith Basin County Camp for teen 4-H members. Demonstrations, illustrated talks, prepared speech, video, promotional packages, resume writing and job interviews were the topics of workshops provided by the MSU Extension staff.

Working in small groups, the teens prepared and presented demonstrations, illustrated talks and impromptu speeches. They brainstormed catchy introductions for various topics. They recorded video and learned how to use an editing program. The importance of positive first impressions were taught in the job interview and resume workshop. Promotional packages is a new competitive event being offered at State 4-H Congress, and the teens prepared by creating brochures, radio spots and TV commercials.

All of the teens left camp feeling more confident with their communication and technical skills, and more knowledgeable about the different 4-H communication competitive events available.



4-H Senior Camp members giving a presentation.  
Photo by Jennifer Saunders

### contact us:



#### Fergus County

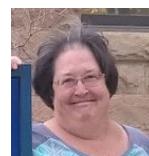
712 West Main Street  
Lewistown, MT 59457  
(406) 535-3919  
[fergus@montana.edu](mailto:fergus@montana.edu)  
[www.msuetension.org/fergus](http://www.msuetension.org/fergus)



**Denise Seilstad**  
Extension Agent



**Emily Standley**  
Extension Agent



**Jennifer Saunders**  
4-H Program Assistant



**Mary Miller**  
Administrative Support