



Welcome to Liberty County

Covering 1,458 square miles through the heart of the Hi-Line region of north-central Montana, Liberty County's heartbeat is strong. Liberty County MSU Extension works with many different entities in the county to ensure that needs in agriculture, family and consumer science, 4-H and community development are met. Collaborative efforts with the Liberty County Commissioners, Chester-Joplin-Inverness Public Schools, the local conservation district, and other public entities have resulted in successful, far-reaching programs

that, conducted solely by one entity, would not have been as impactful. Working together has aided in helping Liberty County MSU Extension reach a goal of being a resource to all those that reside within the county borders. From teaching about mental health awareness in school and personal hygiene in Hutterite schools, to making sure the agricultural community is kept abreast of current issues, to working on community development strategies, the name of the game in Liberty County is all about being a team.



Liberty County residents lean on each other for support. Photo courtesy of Janice Hendrickson.

Working with county government and citizen advisory groups, MSU Extension in
LIBERTY COUNTY provides services at the local level.

MSU Extension serves the youth of Liberty County

Promoting Proper Handwashing

During the months of January and February, Liberty County MSU Extension and the Liberty County Superintendent of Schools visited five Hutterite colonies. Hutterite children in kindergarten through eighth grade were taught about proper hand washing techniques in a way that introduced them to how easy it is to spread germs if they didn't wash their hands properly. Part of the exercise focused on how easily germs spread by having the Extension agent use glow lotion on his hands and then touching common items such as light switches, door knobs and desks to illustrate how many people come in contact with those items and then how easily germs spread when hands aren't washed properly. Students were then given a small dab of glow lotion and asked to rub it onto their hands. Students were then asked to wash their hands well and come back to examine their newly washed hands under the black light. The black light showed the children where they didn't properly wash, such as under their fingernails, on the backs of their hands and on their wrists. Through the exercise approximately 60 youth and 10 adults from five Hutterite colonies between Toole, Liberty, and

Hill counties were taught how to wash their hands correctly using a 20-second rule and came away with cleaner hands than those that washed according to everyday habits. As Hutterite colonies are structured communally, it is hoped that absenteeism due to sickness will drop in the elementary schools as well as the spread of germs from household to household.

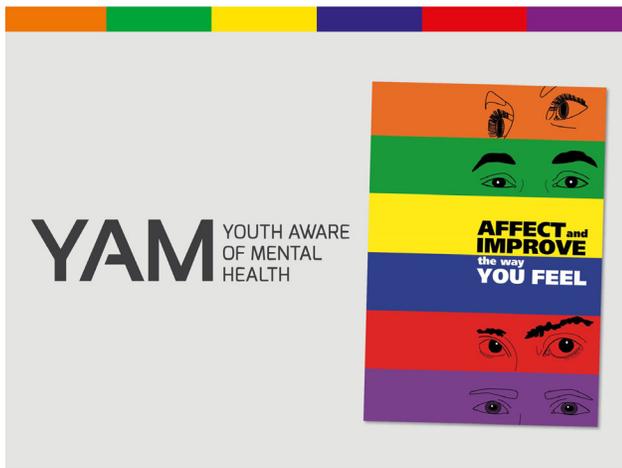
Youth Aware of Mental Health

The mental health of communities and specifically junior high and high school age youth has seen a rising awareness in recent years. While Liberty County has fortunately not seen any youth suicides in many years, there have been instances around the county of adult suicide and depression. With this in mind, the Liberty County MSU Extension agent attended a week-long training about mental health awareness in order to learn how to better help the constituents of Liberty County. To promote a better understanding of how to maintain positive mental health and how to help those around them, Liberty County Extension partnered with Chester-Joplin-Inverness High School and Liberty County Commissioner Maureen Wicks to



Hutterite children learn about the importance of proper handwashing with MSU Extension agent Jesse Fulbright.





The Youth Aware of Mental Health program kicked off in Liberty County in the fall of 2017.

offer the 5-hour long curriculum to high school freshmen and sophomores. The curriculum, titled Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM) showcased an interactive program for youth promoting increased discussion and knowledge about mental health and the development of problem-solving skills and emotional intelligence.

Over the three-week course, 22 youth gained an awareness of mental health and suicidal thoughts and developed problem-solving skills in relation to those issues. An emphasis of the course was learning how to distinguish between those and other problems as well as how to help their friends through these situations. Youth also gained confidence in themselves relating to how they can make a difference in the lives of those around them.

Liberty County Ambassadors Emma Wickum and Ellyssa Tempel enjoy a day on Capitol Hill with House Representative Jim O'Hara.



Climbing the Hill of Teen Leadership

Learning to lead is a key component in Liberty County 4-H. Through three organized clubs and approximately 55 youth members, youth have many opportunities to lead through example and deed. 4-H teen leaders, identified as 4-H ambassadors or prospective ambassadors, met monthly with the Liberty County MSU Extension agent to learn how to be better leaders. This was done through open discussion, project book work and real-life situations, such as participating in emceeing at 4-H events. With 2017 being a legislative year, the two Liberty County Ambassadors had the opportunity to visit the state capitol in Helena to learn more about the legislative process. While there, they were able to: meet with their state legislative representative; be instructed about the process that a bill undergoes to become a law; and also, have the opportunity to attend a legislative session to better understand parliamentary procedure and the ability to solve conflict respectfully and efficiently.

Through this and other leadership opportunities, youth learned about their own strengths and weaknesses. It is hoped that youth now better understand how they and those in their community can actively participate in being leaders in their respective spheres of influence.

Liberty County agriculture

Plotting to Make Liberty County Agriculture Grow

Liberty County sits in the heart of the Golden Triangle, one of the main agriculture producing centers of Montana. According to Montana Agricultural Statistics, Liberty County is ranked seventh and fifteenth in durum and spring wheat production in Montana. Research trials in those two crops were started in Liberty County several years ago. However, local producers did not have the opportunity to see the trials in a field setting. Liberty County MSU Extension and the Northern Agricultural Research Center collaborated on a spring wheat and durum variety plot tour in July to bring in Peggy Lamb, Research Scientist in Agronomy at NARC to share research-

based information on spring wheat and durum wheat varieties for the Liberty County area. Dr. Maryse Bourgault, the new Cropping Systems and Agronomy researcher at NARC, spoke about her research focus and plans she has for developing agriculture by working with local producers.

The 12 producers that attended developed a better understanding and awareness of current and upcoming spring wheat and durum varieties that could prove to be economically important to them. As producers look towards varieties that improve yield and other important production factors, Liberty County will continue to be a leader in agricultural commodities around the state of Montana.

Participants learned from the Northern Agricultural Research Center about cereal and pulse crops in Liberty County.





Participants in the shelterbelt workshop listen attentively as Peter Kolb, MSU Extension Forestry specialist, answers questions



Peter Kolb, MSU Extension Forestry specialist, explains where to make proper pruning cuts in an existing shelterbelt.

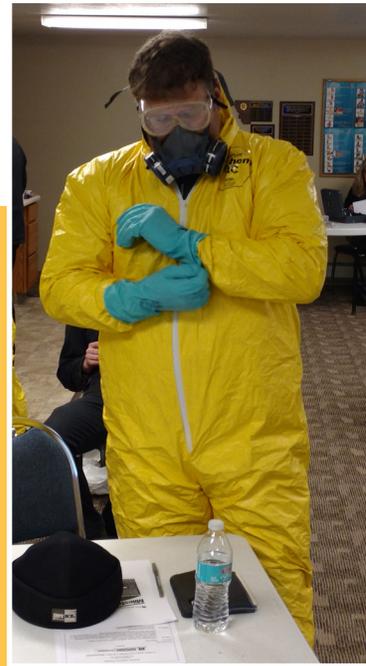
Making Shelterbelts New Again

Shelterbelts in Liberty County, in many instances, were planted 50 years ago. While shelterbelts have served landowners well and continue to fill an important purpose from a moisture retention perspective, many existing rows are in various degrees of decline. Dr. Peter Kolb, MSU Extension Forestry specialist, came to Liberty County in October to present a shelterbelt renovation workshop in two segments. Hour one explored how to care for trees. This one-hour session provided basic tree physiology information as well as practical information on selecting and planting trees. Understanding the basics of how a tree functions and what it needs with regard to light, water and nutrients to grow and stay healthy helped anyone who has ever had trees to take care of.

The second hour was outdoors south of Chester, where the group addressed the basics of pruning trees to keep them healthy, designing a shelterbelt and techniques to renovate older ones. Determining optimal spacing for different species and assessing whether pruning or replanting was needed was the first step in the discussion, which then led into varieties of trees that are good options for shelterbelts.

Eleven participants in the workshop learned basic tree care and handling techniques. This was followed up by actual experience looking at existing shelterbelts to analyze how they could be renovated and improved.

Participants in an initial private pesticide applicator training get used to putting on the necessary personal protective equipment needed for spraying restricted use pesticides.



Making Sure Pesticide Safety Doesn't Drift

As farming operations continue to turn over to the next generation, there is a continuing need to educate and certify new private pesticide applicators in Liberty County. A cooperative effort between several county Extension offices and the MSU Pesticide program resulted in a private pesticide applicator training in February which drew 20 participants from five counties to learn about pesticide safety and application. Components of pesticide education were broken into one-hour segments. Topics covered included understanding the private applicator license, reading the label, pesticide safety and handling, pesticides in the environment, pertinent pesticide laws, calibration of different sprayer systems, nozzles and integrated pest management.

As a result of the eight-hour course, 15 individuals obtained their private applicator license and five applicators received six education credits towards their existing license. Having obtained a license for the first time, or having received enough credits to recertify, will keep applicators legal in their application of restricted use pesticides.



EXTENSION

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