

Welcome to Richland County

So named in an attempt to attract settlers, Richland County is one of 56 counties in Montana. Richland County is Montana's twenty-first most populous county, with an estimated 10,810 residents as of the 2012 Census. Sidney, the county seat, is the state's seventeenth largest city, with a population estimated at 5,934 in 2012. Other towns in Richland County include Crane, Fairview, Lambert, and Savage.

Agriculture and oil production are widely recognized as two of the staples of Richland County's economy. Much of Richland County is located in the Bakken Oil Zone, and oil pumping and exploration takes place throughout the area. Recently, however, oil exploration and production has slowed, forcing the county to rely more heavily on agriculture to support the economy. The confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers lies close to Richland County, creating a 75-mile-long irrigated valley in which grains, sugar beets, corn, beans, and hay are produced. The town of Fairview is known as the "Sugar Beet Capital," of both Montana and North Dakota.

The Richland County MSU Extension office is very appreciative of the financial support that is provided to ensure that non-biased, educational programs are available to citizens of the county. The Richland County Commissioners: Loren Young, Shane Gorder, and Duane Mitchell, along with the State of Montana and the U.S. Department of Agriculture provide funding necessary to accomplish this mission.



The Richland County MSU Extension office

QPR: Ask a Question to Save Lives

According to data from 2014, there are 117 suicides per day in the U.S., which is equivalent to one suicide every 12 minutes. Montana has ranked in the top five states for highest suicide rate for decades, with an average of 220 deaths per year from suicide.

To address this issue locally, Josie Evenson, Richland County MSU Extension agent, was certified to teach QPR through the QPR Institute. QPR stands for Question, Persuade, and Refer, and is a method of suicide prevention. QPR walks a person through three steps; asking the question, persuading a person who is suicidal not to harm themselves and referring them to professional help, which will aid in saving a life from suicide. Similar to CPR, QPR is a mental health intervention



designed to give all people skills to help in a suicide crisis. The hour-long training given by a certified instructor like Evenson gives people tools to help members of their own community. As stated in the 2016 Montana Suicide Mortality Review Team Report, "suicide prevention is everybody's business." QPR follows this mantra, training community members to help when there is a need.

Since March, 39 adults across the state have been trained in QPR. Of the participants, 87% reported increased knowledge in the warning signs of suicide and where to find local resources to help in a crisis, with 100% of the participants reporting that they would recommend this training to others. Through this training, Montana community members are learning skills to help save lives.

Youth education and drought solutions

Richland County MSU Extension partners with MonDak Stockgrowers Association & Local FFA Chapters to teach the importance of agriculture

On Thursday, April 27, approximately 400 elementary students from across Richland County attended the annual Ag in the Classroom education day. The Richland County MSU Extension office hosted this event with the help of the MonDak Area Stockgrowers Association, the Sidney High School FFA, and representatives from Sidney Sugars.

As the American population continues to distance itself from the farm and ranch, and agriculture production in general, it is important to provide education to youth about how food is produced and how to be responsible and safe when on a farm or ranch. With these objectives in mind, the Ag in the Classroom event is set up to feature various learning stations. Students visit each station and learn about how bread is made, how vegetables are grown, the processes to get sugar from sugar beets, the cuts of meat that come from cattle, and how to properly and safely operate an ATV.

As a means of bringing the educational portion full circle, students were treated to a meal consisting of apple slices, milk, and locally-sourced hamburgers and buns. At the conclusion of the Ag in the Classroom event, a poll was sent to all the teachers

who attended and more than 80% of teachers surveyed felt that their students had a valuable experience and enjoyed attending this hands-on learning experience.

Farmers & ranchers turn to MSU Extension for help and advice in dealing with devastating drought

In 2017, Richland County farmers and ranchers were forced to deal with severe drought situations. Crops that were seeded did not grow well and grass available for grazing was limited. Many ranchers were forced to make difficult management decisions, some of which included turning out cattle onto pastures typically used for summer grazing earlier than normal, early weaning of calves to reduce the stress to the land and the cows, and purchasing supplemental feed sources. A few even had to deal with wildfires in localized areas within the county.

Many ranchers turned to alternative forages or sought out farmers who had grain crops that were not going to produce a viable, harvestable crop and purchased these crops to be cut and baled for hay. While these crops do provide a viable alternative to grazing, there are some concerns with utilizing them as a feed source.

The primary concern is nitrate poisoning and this is where Richland County MSU Extension offered the greatest impact to drought-related concerns. Approximately 30 ranchers and farmers across the county brought forage samples to the Extension office to be tested for nitrates. Nitrates in feed are harmful to livestock if consumed and if levels are too high, can be fatal. The nitrate quick test gives a quick, qualitative analysis to producers to let them know whether or not there are nitrates present in a submitted sample.



Extension Agent Tim Fine discusses alternative forage options with participants at the Eastern Agricultural Research Center Field Day.

Richland County Ag in the Classroom-Montana Happy Meal

Thursday, April 27th 8:00 AM-3:00 PM
At the Richland County Fairgrounds Event Center

Richland County FFA students and community volunteers will teach 2nd and 3rd grade students

- Where their hamburger comes from
- How Wheat makes it from seed to bread
- Where milk comes from
- How vegetables are grown
- ATV safety



Farm & Ranch ATV SAFETY

Cooperating Agencies:
MonDak Ag Days and Trade Show Committee
MonDak Stockgrowers
Sidney, Fairview, Lambert, and Richey FFA Chapters

The poster for Ag in the Classroom education day.

Through the utilization of the quick test, ranchers were able to feel more confident that small grain forages they were cutting were safe for cattle to consume and farmers were able to cut and bale small grain forages that were not going to produce a grain crop, and market them as livestock feed with little to no nitrate present.

This quick test provided some safety and security for both farmers and ranchers in Richland County.

Boys and Girls Club Summer Camp Education

The local Boys and Girls Club is one entity that provides youth in Richland County a safe environment to learn and grow. Administrators of the local club partnered with MSU Extension to aid in providing educational activities that paired well with their summer camps. The areas of education included horticulture, STEM, nutrition, textiles, health and fitness, animal science and art.

Through Richland County MSU Extension's community garden, the Boys and Girls Club was able to rent eight, four-by-eight-foot beds and use the fresh produce that they grew to supplement snacks and meals in their summer program. The fresh produce provided an opportunity for youth to have nutritious snacks and meals, as well as to experience a variety of foods in their diet. Members of the club's summer program were educated on a variety of topics on their twice-a-week visits to the gardens. Youth learned about the different soils that plants need to grow, how bugs have an impact on gardens, photosynthesis, the nutritional value of fruits and vegetables, as well as what textile fibers come from plants.



Photosynthesis experiment in the works, from the Boys and Girls club member's weekly visits to Richland County MSU Extension's community garden. Photo by Carrie Krug.

During the summer camps, Extension agents went to the club weekly to teach workshops that aligned with each camp theme. The clubs summer camps had up to 25 youth in attendance. During nature camp, youth learned about prey and predators. This activity was from 4-H curriculum and taught students about wildlife. During creative camp, members made playdough and created different sculptures. They learned different dances and how to express themselves creatively through music by creating their own dance routines. During STEM camp, youth created their own toothbrush robots, teaching them about science and engineering. This workshop was part of the National 4-H Science Day Experiments.

This summer camp partnership has proven beneficial to the youth in Richland County. Youth have been provided a safe place to learn and grow, while learning about horticulture, family and consumer sciences and youth development.



Richland County 4-H Members at the Fair. Photo by Josie Evenson

Richland County Youth Participate in Experiential Learning

Two hundred twenty-eight youth, approximately 11% of the school-aged population, in Richland County, Montana, are engaged in learning through the 4-H program. Youth enroll in learn-by-doing projects that aid them in the experiential learning process.

In Richland County, the top projects are beef, visual arts, foods and nutrition, swine, woodworking, photography and sewing and textiles. The 4-H members also participate in club meetings,

service learning projects and a variety of activities and events that aid in their growth and development. One of these events is the annual communications contest. This contest gives youth the ability to learn and practice valuable public speaking and communication skills. This year, 38 youth participated in the contest, a participation increase of 50% over the previous year.

The 4-H members partner with 143 adult volunteers to acquire decision-making skills, develop a positive self-concept, learn lifelong skills and understand the value of citizenship. This year 18 senior 4-H members were given a chance to practice responsible citizenship by planning and implementing a dinner, auction and dance, where all proceeds were donated to a local family to help with medical costs associated with an accident. The event raised \$4,306 to help the family.

In 2017, a new event was added to the county, specifically for our Cloverbuds. Cloverbud Day was held in January and 21 Cloverbuds, half of the Cloverbuds in the county, participated. The day provided an opportunity for youth to learn the 4-H pledge, complete a community service project and have fun. The 4-H program teaches beneficial skill for life to the youth in Richland County.

"I very much enjoy the fact that every year I learn something new."

- Richland County 4-H Member

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