Welcome to Stillwater County

As MSU Extension agents, our job is to provide information and education to the people of Stillwater County. Often this takes the form of a phone call or office visit. The service provided can be as simple as looking up a safe internal meat cooking temperature, or as complex as balancing a least-cost ration for multiple classes of cattle. These calls range from horticulture to holiday cooking and from food preservation to farm financial management.

These contacts often lead to a more in-depth home or ranch visit and are the basis for in-depth training, linking Stillwater County to subject matter specialists on the Montana State University-Bozeman campus as well as to resources in the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In Stillwater County, MSU Extension has been an integral part of local education since 1914 when the first agriculture agent arrived in the county, followed in 1917 by the first family and consumer sciences agent.

Stillwater County Extension is proud to be able to serve the people of Stillwater County. MSU Extension is a partnership of Stillwater County, Montana State University and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The three-way partnership provides funding for educational resources dedicated to improving the quality of people’s lives by providing research-based knowledge to strengthen the social, economic and environmental well-being of families, communities and agricultural enterprises.

The Stillwater County Family and Consumer Science agent uses expertise in food and nutrition, housing, health, family issues, personal finances, and environmental health to provide innovative and targeted programs based on the needs of Montana families, individuals, businesses and communities.

The Agriculture Agent works with farmers, ranchers, small landowners and researchers through field demonstrations, workshops, and individual visits to help producers and landowners remain profitable.

Stillwater County 4-H strives to provide ample opportunities to the 158 enrolled 4-H members. Market animal and Cloverbuds continue to have the highest enrollments.
Stillwater County healthy living programs: Diabetes education a top priority in 2017

According to the Stillwater County Health Profile, the leading cause of death in Stillwater County is heart disease. Health and nutrition education help in developing the healthy lifestyle changes that are needed in order to reduce the rate of heart-related deaths. The Stillwater County Healthy Living Program’s aim is to meet the need of reducing heart-related and other health-related deaths in the county. The primary objectives of this MSU Extension Family and Consumer Science program is to manage diabetes in patients already diagnosed, increase muscle mass and strength, reduce risk for osteoporosis and related fractures, reduce risk for developing diabetes, reduce heart disease, arthritis, depression and obesity and improve self-confidence, sleep and vitality.

There are currently several sites within Stillwater County where participants can go for health-related information and classes. A StrongWomen strength training program is held four times weekly at the fourth floor of the Stillwater County Courthouse; Stillwater Strong Hearts and DEEP Diabetes class result for 2017 showed significant decreases in hemoglobin A1C levels. Lisa Terry, Stillwater County FCS Agent, teaching DEEP Diabetes Class.

Extension Programs Benefit the Public in a Variety of Ways

Walk With Ease class is held twice weekly at the Stillwater County West Annex; an arthritis class is held in Fishtail at the Community Center and Diabetes Classes are held at least twice per year.

In 2017, MSU Extension agents and community partners representing 32 counties and reservations facilitated the DEEP Diabetes Education Program which was initiated by Extension agent Lisa Terry of Stillwater County. It is believed that the more locations we have in the state, the more likely we are to reach a broader and more diverse audience within Montana with diabetes and other health-related education. Also, having several locations increases the likelihood that people will participate in underserved regions of the state. This includes participation from residents living on reservations. With the number one complication of diabetes being heart disease, it is believed that we can reduce the number of heart-related deaths in Stillwater County through educational programs targeted at encouraging positive behavioral changes in diet and exercise.

Stillwater County Healthy Living classes reached men and women age 40 and older with nutrition education and exercise regimes. Participants lost an average of 10 pounds, lowered their blood pressure by 10 points, lowered their hemoglobin A1C, a test which shows their average glucose level over time, lowered their LDL (Low-Density Lipoproteins) by twelve points, increased their fruit and vegetable intake by 50%, and developed a weekly exercise routine.
Stillwater 4-H expansion warrants new position

Whether it be number of members enrolled or total number of projects taken, 4-H is continually growing in Stillwater County. Due to the ongoing effort in recruitment the past few years, we have been outgrowing portions of our fairgrounds and pushed to find temporary solutions for fair week. This is a great problem to have and one that we welcome. The number of fair entries increased by 148 more than the 2016 fair year. The recruitment efforts will continue. They started two years ago as an idea from the administrative assistant, Ashley House, to get enrollment numbers up. Her goal was to get the word out about all that 4-H has to offer. She is now working on recruitment of volunteers for specific project areas. There is so much knowledge and creativity in our community that she would love to bring those ideas and expertise into the 4-H program. This year we continued to recruit at farmer’s markets but also tried something new as well; the county 4-H Council donated 20 water bottles to each of the five sports teams within our county for giveaways during the games. Recruitment tags with front to back information including contact information, member and volunteer information, and 4-H statistics were attached to each water bottle and delivered to the schools.

We are excited to continue growing our 4-H program. We would love to see the numbers grow, but are just as excited to know the knowledge and the life skills that our younger generation is obtaining from our leaders are just as much, if not more important, than increasing enrollment numbers.

With increased recruitment and enrollment, the need for an extra position became apparent. Starting at the beginning of 2018, we will have a new position in our office. We are excited to have a part-time administrative assistant join our team. This will allow Ashley House’s position to transition into a more administrative role within 4-H, enabling us to better meet the needs of our 4-H leaders and members in our county.

Extension helps lead vision for new Stillwater Center

This project began over seven years ago with the Library Board of Trustees and their Building Committee to explore the options of a new county library. What came from their meetings was the need to harness synergies with other resources the county already has, and look to have a combined facility with a library and county center to best serve resident’s current and future needs.

The steering committee has been hard at work since 2014 answering the guidelines set forth by the commissioners.

“I got involved with the steering committee because I care about the future of our county and I believe our communities, our children, and our business community need this kind of place,” said Ty Hamilton. The steering committee secured a grant to complete a conceptual design and feasibility study for the proposed new public facility.

The new Stillwater Center is proposed to have a library, county shared office space with MSU Extension and the county economic development offices, as well as a versatile multi-use facility including small meeting rooms, a commercial kitchen with demonstration kitchen,
an interchangeable junior high recreational court, a performance theater, and a formal banquet hall.

“This library isn't your grandfather's library,” said steering committee member Corky Kem. “A library with stacks of books and a card catalog isn't that anymore. Today it's a community hub, a place where people come to learn, get information they need to succeed in school and in business. It's a place everyone can use to connect to others throughout the state, nation, even other countries both to learn from and to help spur new business.”

“I find the Library County Center Steering Committee’s conceptual design to be very well thought out and it shows the hard work they put into their charge. The county deserves the chance to view the design and get a chance to move forward with taking a concept to a reality,” said Commissioner Crago.

“It's not a final plan at all. It would be a mistake to look at it that way because that's not what we intend,” pointed out steering committee member and MSU Extension agent Lee Schmelzer. “We are looking forward to hearing from people from all over the county about what they think we need, and whether or not these early ideas fit their idea. We want to make sure we are on the right track.”