



Welcome to Toole County

Toole County is made up of 1,915.65 square miles and has a population base of 2.8 persons per square mile. The incorporated city of Shelby, population 3,376, serves as the county seat. Other cities and towns in Toole County include Ethridge, Galata, Kevin, Oilmont, Sunburst, and Sweetgrass. Situated in northern Montana, Canada is Toole County's northern boundary, with the Marias River flowing along a major portion of its southern boundary.

Mining, agriculture, utilities, and transportation and warehousing are competitively positioned for growth and new business opportunities. These capitalize on the county's geographic location (major rail service, east/west & north/south highways, on the Canadian border, access to raw materials).

Toole County's 4-H program is unique in the state because of the four-county Marias Fair, held at the Marias Fairgrounds outside of Shelby. Our 65 4-H members join together with Pondera, Glacier, and Liberty County to exhibit projects and sell their livestock at the Marias Fair.



Photo by Kim Woodring



Toole County 4-H Teen Ambassadors

Toole County Ambassadors

From the two large towns of Shelby and Sunburst, there are four young adults who applied to be 4-H Ambassadors for the 2017-2018 4-H year. This is the second year Toole County has had an ambassador program since the revival of the program. 4-Her's have become excellent leaders in county program. If an ambassador is unable to cover an event, the others step up and make sure the role is filled. The Extension agents and 4-H club leaders count on these 4-Her's to be present and assist in various duties such as being camp counselors, and attending 4-H Congress and Ambassador Fall Training. The teens exhibited their leadership skills this year at 4-H Camp.

Every year, youth leaders serve as camp counselors at the 4-H Camp in the Bears Paw Mountains that includes Toole, Glacier, Pondera, Liberty, Hill, Blaine, Chouteau, and Phillips Counties. The youth leaders chaperone a cabin of younger 4-H members and decorate their cabin depending on the theme they collectively chose. The ambassadors become role models for over 100 young 4-Her's during the week of camp and they get the opportunity to network and communicate with teen leaders from the other counties.

This summer, three of our young leaders attended 4-H Congress in Bozeman. One ambassador competed in the speech contest; although he did not place in the competition, he learned the valuable lesson to prepare and practice a speech beforehand. Two ambassadors attended the Ambassador Fall Training in Billings. During this conference, these young leaders continue to work on leadership skills and find inspiration to work hard in their 4-H clubs and other organizations.

Toole County MSU Extension is excited to have the ambassador program again at the county level to provide an opportunity for young adults to continue working on leadership and communication skills.

Marias Fair 4-H Bathrooms Improved

The Marias 4-H Fair is a community of families, leaders and staff that work together to provide valuable educational experiences and a positive environment for our youth. The 4-H Bathrooms are an example of this community working together. MSU Extension Agent Alice Burchak facilitated this project with volunteers and the Marias Fair Board.

Five years ago, Rebecca Ratzburg and Jordon Stoltz got to know each other while working at the 4-H Food Booth. The young ladies both felt there were some issues with the condition of the 4-H Bathroom located near the exhibit building. They began to brainstorm how to improve the bathroom. Four years later, their collaborations resulted in a brand new 4-H bathroom.

The first year, they focused on sprucing up the bathroom, but decided that wasn't enough. For the next few years, they fundraised to build a new bathroom. They organized event fundraisers, accumulated donations from local organizations and businesses, and convinced fellow 4-H members to donate a portion of market animal checks.

After four years of fundraising, they reached their goal of \$65,000 to build new bathrooms. They researched building material costs and worked with John McFarland to draw up a plan. In this effort, Ratzburg and Stoltz demonstrated their excellent leadership and community building abilities.

The construction of the bathrooms demonstrated the power of 4-H volunteerism. Conrad Building Supply provided plans for the building and cost estimates for materials. John McFarland volunteered to provide materials at a reduced cost, and donated \$3000 dollars to the project. This spring, volunteers with professional building skills stepped up to build the bathroom. Cody Waldusky coordinated construction, and he recruited fellow 4-H parents Steve Clark and Lloyd Omdahl to provide services in building the bathroom. Northwest Farm Credit Services made a major donation for the building and also spent a day at the fairgrounds to paint inside of the bathrooms. More than 500 hours of professional services were donated to the construction, valued at approximately \$15,000 dollars.

This project involved all four counties in the Marias 4-H Fair and demonstrated the leadership, community and volunteerism that is an integral part of 4-H.



From left to right: Lloyd Omdahl, Steve Clark, Cody Waldusky, Rebecca Ratzburg, and Jordon Stoltz. Photo courtesy Cut Bank Pioneer Press.

YAM Comes to Shelby High School

MSU Extension in Toole County provided the Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM) program to ninth and tenth grade students in the high school in September and October. The YAM program consisted of five weekly sessions that were taught in Shelby physical education classes as part of the curriculum. YAM is a mental health resiliency program that, when tested in Europe, provided the best evidence for preventing suicide attempts and suicidal thoughts in adolescents. The program, taught by Alice Burchak and Kim Suta, provides youth with basic mental health information, coping skills and emotional intelligence training, problem-solving and positive peer relations.

Besides actively engaging youth in problem-solving and coping skills, YAM has been shown to reduce suicide attempts and suicidal thoughts in youth. In fact, in the largest study to date, when compared to other leading programs, YAM was shown to be the most effective suicide prevention program. Even if your child is not at risk for suicide, the program helps youth learn to help friends and peers who may be struggling with suicidal thoughts and depression.

During the YAM program, students learned problem solving skills through discussion and role playing. This provided students an opportunity to think through a difficult situation beforehand, so they could clearly consider consequences of their choices versus having to make a decision immediately in a difficult situation. Students also learn about the symptom and signs



of depression and how to talk to and get help for someone that may be suicidal. One SHS student stated “No one ever talks to us about the things we discuss in YAM.”

As part of the YAM experience, students were offered the opportunity to participate in an evaluation of the feasibility and acceptability of YAM for Montana students. This evaluation consisted of two surveys, one before and one three months after the YAM program. Results from surveys will be available later in 2018.

The YAM program in Montana is supported through a collaboration of MSU Extension and the MSU Center for Mental Health Research and Recovery (CMHRR).

Master Gardeners in Toole County

Toole County was home to nine very enthusiastic Level 1 Master Gardeners this year. The program started in February and lasted eight weeks.

The Level 1 Master Gardener class is an eight-week course designed for beginning to intermediate gardeners that covers subjects including soils, fertility, plant growth and development, growing flowers and food in the garden, lawn care, irrigation, pest management, composting, and proper tree, shrub, and vine planting and care.

To earn certificates, the Master Gardeners had to complete 20 hours of volunteer work for the community. This included include a variety of activities and is determined by the participant. Past Master Gardeners have assisted at Shelby’s community garden, represented MSU Extension at fair or the farmer’s markets, or installed and maintained public gardens in coordination with area communities.

One of our Master Gardeners used her community service hours to go above and beyond to start a Garden Club in Shelby. They meet monthly and they have gone on tours with other garden clubs around the state. They took an international tour



Toole County Master Gardeners 2017

to Canada to see the gardens in Lethbridge. Although it is a club of few members, they have been very active in the community with a float in the Christmas parade and booths at various trade shows in the community.

Toole County’s Master Gardeners look forward to Master Gardener Level 2 coming up later this winter.

Social Media Promotion in Toole County MSU Extension

In an age where newspaper articles, snail mail, and radio reports are less dependable for advertisements, social media advertising is finding more success. Toole County MSU Extension has started using social media for advertising our programs. Social media has been helpful in promoting workshops and speakers for upcoming conferences.

Toole County has a Facebook page to help distribute workshop information. Events on our Facebook page provide an easy way to invite people to a workshop, and if others are interested, they can RSVP right on the event page. Visit the Facebook page to find information and photos of MSU Extension events. This new outreach has helped our office promote Extension agent Alice Burchak’s canning workshops.

One of the duties of Kim Woodring, the Toole County Agriculture Agent, is to help the planning committee for Montana’s Next Generation Conference held annually in Shelby. Last year, she assisted in promoting speakers for the conference on Facebook with a description and link to the online registration form. Daily posts and reminders reached more attendees than through only using traditional newspaper advertising.

This year, Woodring was appointed to the Young Agriculture Leadership Conference board as the 4-H Foundation representative. As a new member without an official job, she took on the social media campaign because of her experience with Montana’s Next Generation Conference. Every day, she shared social media photos and information on upcoming speakers.

Facebook and other social media channels have become a valuable tool to share information about programs and highlights of past workshops.



**YOUNG AG LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE
HELENA, MT
OCTOBER 13-15, 2017**



Toole County Poultry Club

This year the Toole County MSU Extension office organized a Poultry Club. This new program provided town kids with the opportunity to raise an animal and show it at the Marias Fair. Both traditional 4-H and non-4-H members participated in the project. The group raised 30 chicks while learning how to care for birds and gain skills in showing them at Fair.

The club meets once a week for four months. Experiential Learning Model lessons helped members practice inquiry, collaboration and communication skills in the program. Lessons focused on identifying breeds of chickens, understanding chicken anatomy, and learning about the life cycle of poultry. Two teen leaders, Landan Omdahl and Shane Samsal, helped with the club by providing clinics on showmanship and other duties. These teen leaders gained organization and leadership skills by helping lead this program.

The project started with 14 youth in late March when day-old chicks arrived at the Marias Fairgrounds. Members set up the brooding coop for chicks and learned how to take care of newly-hatched birds. That included monitoring coop temperatures, watching for signs of illness, and feeding and watering. As

birds grew, members transitioned them into a larger indoor pen and then an outdoor pen until fair time in July. Families each took a weekday to water and feed chickens. After fair, the chickens were placed in permanent homes.

In June, members started learning how to show their chickens at fair. By July, members had learned how to bathe chickens, show different parts of the bird to the judge, and answer questions about the breed of their chicken. A mom of one member said, "My son would have never had the opportunity to raise a farm animal without this project. We do not have the facility for chickens in town. He learned so much from this project."

Many partners contributed to program success: leaders Barb Larsen and Sarah Brown provided education and support; the Department of Agriculture gave a \$200 grant for wire for the outdoor coop; CHS provided chicken feed; and the project received a \$200 grant to purchase an incubator to hatch chickens locally next year.

The project provided opportunities for youth in the community to have a learning experience that may not have been possible without the program.

LEFT TO RIGHT: Poultry Club members practicing showing chickens; dying eggs; holding a baby chick.



contact us:



EXTENSION

Toole County

226 1st St. South
Shelby, MT 59474
(406) 424-8350

toole@montana.edu

www.msuextension.org/toole



Kimberly Woodring
Agriculture
Extension Agent

Alice Burchak
Family and Consumer Science
Extension Agent