



Welcome to Cascade County

Cascade County, located in central Montana, is one of the population centers in the state and is known as the “Electric City” due to its historical significance in regard to the hydro-electric generation plants and smelter activity. The MSU Extension office is located in the county seat, Great Falls, which is on the Missouri River and is one of the pioneer cities in the state. The terrain is primarily gently rolling plains that are dissected by the Missouri River and its numerous coulees and tributaries. The Little Belt Mountains are found in the southeastern portion of the county.

Population of the county is approximately 82,300, which includes the rural area, the incorporated city of Great Falls and the towns of Belt, Cascade, Centerville, Fort Shaw, Monarch, Neihart, Sand Coulee, Simms, Sun River, Ulm, and Vaughn, many of which have complete K-12 school systems.

Cascade County’s economic base includes agriculture, the military, education, small manufacturing, food processing and many service industries. The majority of agricultural income is derived from crop production. According to 2014 Montana Agricultural Statistics, the county ranks seventeenth in crop production with over \$56 million in cash receipts. Livestock production, primarily beef cattle, is also very important—generating over \$78 million in cash receipts and ranking ninth in the state.

Great Falls is home to the Benefis Health Care System (one of the premier hospital and health care organizations in Montana), Malmstrom Air Force Base,

and many cultural attractions including the Charles M. Russell Museum/Gallery, the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, the Paris Gibson Center and the First People’s Buffalo Jump. Great Falls is a primary destination point for tourism. Outdoor recreational opportunities include fishing, hunting, boating, golfing, hiking, and historical exploration.

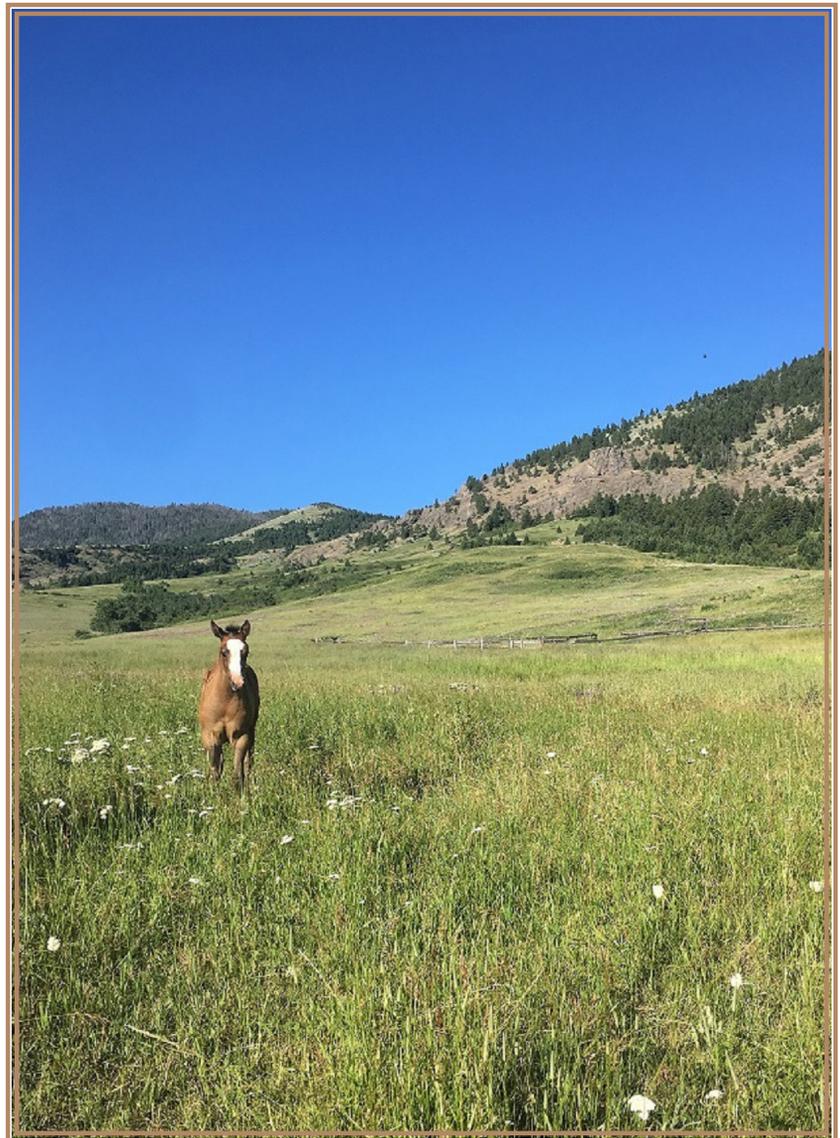


Photo by Rose Malisani

Extension Programs Benefit the Public in a Variety of Ways

Project Days for 4-H Members

4-H learning experiences are based on the principles and practices of positive youth development. Youth-driven 4-H experiences provide youth access to safe learning environments; challenging experiences that build skills, competencies, and resiliency to address life's challenges and to actively contribute to society; and partnerships with caring adults to help meet youths' basic needs. As part of the Cascade County 4-H program, county-wide opportunities for learning, connecting, and serving are offered through monthly Project Day events that complement regular 4-H project learning and club activities.

In the 2017-2018 4-H year, Cascade County 4-H hosted seven Project Day events, each providing multiple workshops and project areas for 4-H members. Each Project Day averaged 9-12 workshops with attendance of 76 4-H members.

4-H members may attend any project workshops provided regardless of the personal projects they take in 4-H. This exposes them to different projects that they may not have considered, as well as introduces them to other members outside of their club and specific project interests. 4-H members

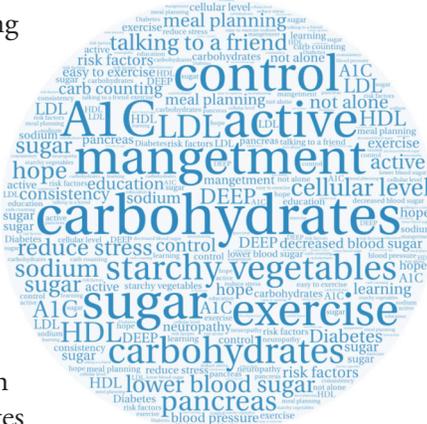
gained life experience in computer programming, sewing, cooking, raising livestock for consumption, woodworking, setting goals, record keeping, and more! As a direct result, members were given the chance to participate in project workshops, had a higher project completion rate at the end of the year, and broader project interests as reflected in their project selection for the new 4-H year.

DEEP: Consistency Is Key

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are more than 4,000 individuals diagnosed with diabetes or pre-diabetes in Cascade County. Diabetes can have a variety of effects on the health of individuals within

our county, including an increased risk of heart disease.

The Diabetes Education Empowerment Program (DEEP), a research-based education program, aims to help individuals gain confidence in diabetes management strategies.



Photos by Jerrica Seilstad

This program covers information on understanding the process of diabetes, risk factors, the importance of physical activity, complications, nutrition, mental health and local resources for individuals with diabetes.

During the 2018 year, three sessions of the six-week DEEP series were offered by MSU Extension, with 26 total participants ranging in age from 40-85. Participants attend classes once per week in a class session lasting approximately an hour. During the time spent in class, participants share their experiences and diabetes management, during the nutrition session one participant stated, “I have learned that consistency is key when making a lifestyle change.” In follow-up phone calls, 80% of participants reported they had made small changes to their diet and physical activity, and have seen their A1C (blood glucose) levels decrease by at least 0.25%, which has encouraged them to continue with healthier lifestyle choices. One participant reported, “the more I exercise, the better I feel, and I am able to control my blood sugar levels.” As a result of this class, the participants have requested to create a support group to continue the educational component and the friendship and support for diabetes management.

Cascade County Horticulture, Agriculture, and Natural Resources Programs

Level 2 Master Gardener classes were offered in Great Falls for students who completed Level 1. Students learned about binomial nomenclature, fertility, plant growth, trees, entomology, and more. Cascade County gardeners volunteered 15,961 hours at community gardens, farmers markets, greenhouses, and the Cascade County MSU Extension office. Vegetables grown by Master Gardeners in community and personal gardens were primarily donated to those in need.

Educational programs offered by Rose Malisani included Livestock Quality Assurance, Gardening 101, Pesky Pests, Cropping Seminar, Private Applicator Training, Pesticide Effectiveness, Forage Seminar, and Barley Seminar. These programs help participants make informed decisions to better save money and care for their acreage and the environment.

- Livestock Quality Assurance trainings were for 4-H members and the Great Falls Public School students.
- Malisani taught 4-H and other youth about caring for livestock and what is produced from livestock.



Gardening 101 participants. Photo by Rose Malisani

- Malisani joined with Bundi Gardens to teach a Gardening 101 class, where 12 novice gardeners learned about how to start plants, transplant, grow, and care for a garden.
- Pesky Pests was offered in Cascade and Teton Counties and covered how to control pests ranging from grubs to deer in gardens and yards; 29 people participated in both classes.
- The annual Cropping Seminar covering the Golden Triangle was held in early January. The program featured MSU Extension specialists Clain Jones, Cecil Tharp, Kate Fuller, and Darrin Boss.
- The Private Applicator training reached 56 attendees from Cascade, Chouteau, Fergus, Gallatin, Hill, Lewis and Clark, Liberty, Meagher, Pondera, Teton, and Toole counties. Attendees learned about licenses, laws, pests, safety, labels, calibration, and environment. The program is important to keep pesticide applicators aware of the most current and correct information and safety practices.
- Malisani presented to the Montana Agricultural Business Association on Pesticide Effectiveness in January. Attendees learned about how unplanned and natural factors can lower pesticide effectiveness and how producers can help increase pesticide effectiveness.
- The Forage Seminar is a popular educational program where producers learned about forage production, testing, evaluation, hay storage, fertilizer use, and weed control.
- The Barley Seminar took place in Fort Benton where producers and industry representatives learned about rotations, marketing, sustainability, and management strategies; more than 75 people traveled icy roads to attend.

Rose Malisani, Cascade County MSU Extension Agriculture agent, assisted in over 2,250 calls of service in 2018. She conducted 47 nitrate quick tests, 20 shelterbelt consults, 1,714 phone calls, 95 office walk-ins, 105 one-on-one consults, inspected 311 Noxious Weed Seed Free forage acres, mailed 29 samples to laboratories, and attended numerous trade shows and conventions to promote MSU Extension.

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