



Welcome to Deer Lodge County

Welcome to Deer Lodge County, one of the first of nine counties originally created February 2, 1865, in the territory known as Montana. This county is surrounded by the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness, Beaverhead National Forest, and Deer Lodge National Forest. It encompasses 737 square miles of land and 4.7 square miles of water. Its population is approximately 9,108, with an increasing number of citizens 65 years or older. Its landscape contains mountains, hills, valleys, and the iconic remnants of copper mining. Industry is centered around tourism, recreation, and small acreage operations of agriculture and horticulture.

Family Cooking Nights

Deer Lodge County has a 20.8% poverty level and most children qualify for free and reduced lunches. Food, much less healthy and nutritious food, is a commodity that can be unaffordable for most families. Realizing the complicated nature of food procurement within the county and lack of food resources and education, MSU Extension began researching solutions. In collaboration with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-ED) educators and Food Corps representatives, MSU Extension began hosting Family Cooking Nights. The program was created to provide education about nutritious food, assist with food safety practices, encourage family participation in meal decisions and preparation, and let families enjoy a free meal together. Participants include traditional and non-traditional families. Extra efforts are made to ensure low-income households are invited and attend. Initial program success was

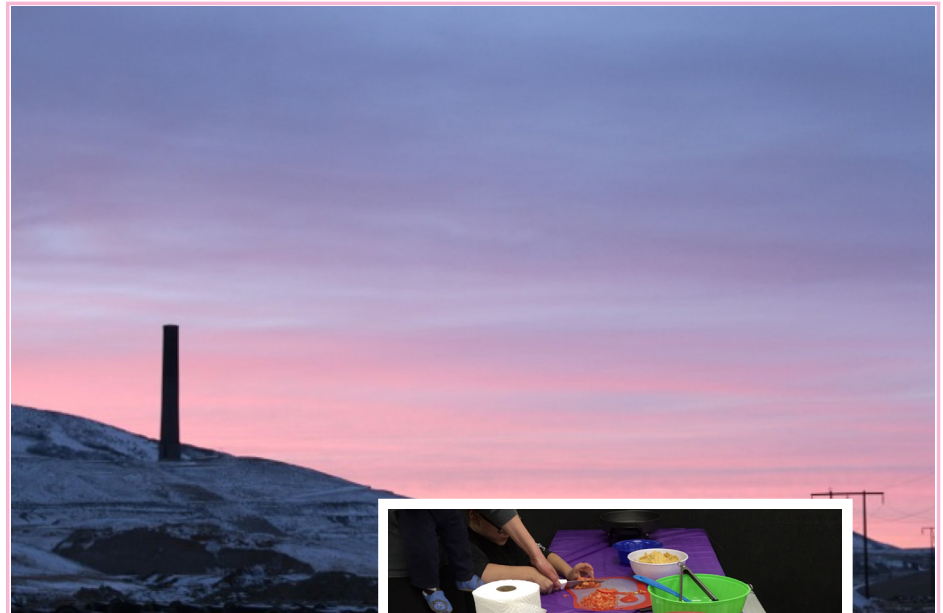


Photo by Anaconda Realty.



Family Cooking Night.
Photo by Kimberly Richardson.

determined when the principal of Fred Moodry School, Tammy Hurley, requested a Family Cooking Night for every grade level at her elementary school. Healthy food consumption and application for Deer Lodge County citizens is in its infancy and with programs like Family Cooking Nights, MSU Extension is supporting the way to healthy living through better nutrition for all citizens of Deer Lodge County.

4-H leadership increases with a new Deer Lodge County Ambassador

Deer Lodge County is thrilled to have its first 4-H ambassador in at least five years. Cody Ehman was elected to become a state 4-H Ambassador. He is a freshman at Anaconda High School, and an active



Cody Ehman, Deer Lodge County 4-H Ambassador. Photo by Kimberly Richardson.

member in the Montana Clovers 4-H club, where he is currently serving as the club's reporter and historian. Ehman enjoyed his first fall training and learned a lot about leadership and the responsibilities of being a good leader. He provided the Deer Lodge County 4-H council with a detailed report of his experience at fall training and expressed his gratitude to council members for the opportunity to serve as the county's ambassador. 4-H ambassadors are integral for assisting the county 4-H program in recruiting new members, engaging existing members, and volunteering where needed. Ehman is passionate about photography

and is looking forward to the responsibilities of being Deer Lodge County's 4-H Ambassador and helping to "Make the Best, Better."

Next of Kin support group now available

Deer Lodge County has numerous households where relatives are raising their relative children. These living arrangements can be difficult for every individual involved. In cooperation with MSU Extension's established Grandparents Raising Grandchildren program, MSU Extension in Deer Lodge County created a support group named Next of Kin (NOK). NOK's founding was based on the county's need for an organized support group for relatives raising their relative children. The group ensures caregivers have a safe and inclusive place to meet, discuss, and receive research-based guidance to help them survive and thrive in their new family dynamic. NOK provides information, mental health training, and supportive peer relationships for individuals who have felt hopeless and alone in their decisions to help raise their relative children. In rural Montana where mental health funding is often not a priority, the citizens of Deer Lodge County in the Next of Kin program and raising relative children can be welcomed, heard and understood.

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EXTENSION

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