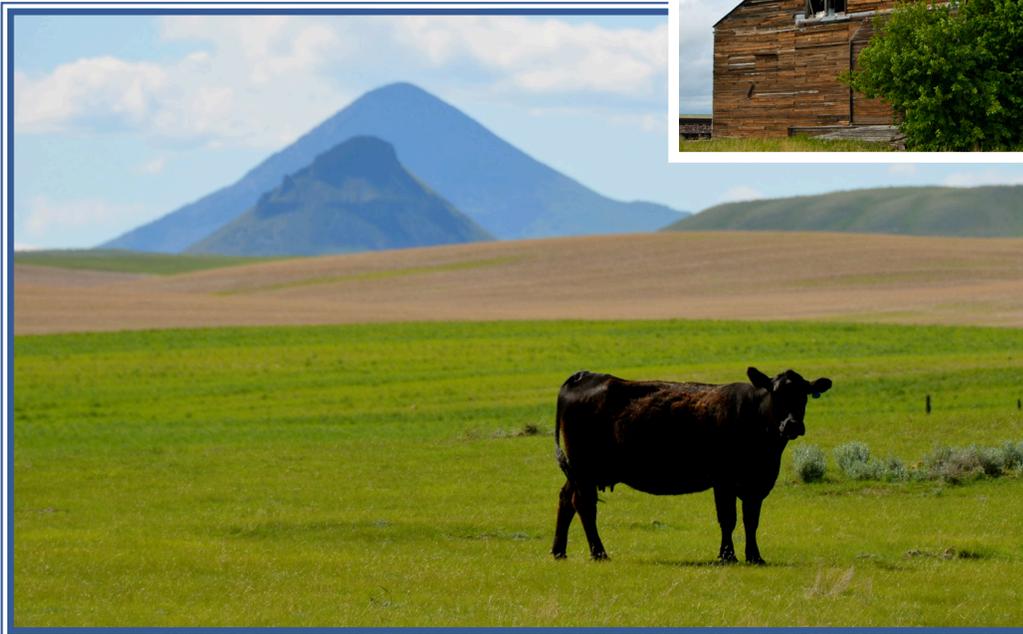




## Welcome to Liberty County

**L**iberty County covers 1,458 square miles through the heart of the Hi-Line region of north-central Montana. Liberty County MSU Extension works with the Liberty County Commissioners, Chester-Joplin-Inverness Public Schools, the local conservation district, and others to ensure that needs in agriculture, family and consumer science, 4-H and community development are met. From teaching about mental health awareness in school, to making sure the community is kept abreast of current agricultural issues and home gardening techniques, to working on community development strategies, the name of the game in Liberty County is all about being a team.

Agriculture is a way of life for many Liberty County residents. Photos courtesy of Janice Hendrickson.



*Working with county government and citizen advisory groups, MSU Extension in*

***LIBERTY COUNTY provides services at the local level.***

## Golden Prairie Community Foundation Reaches Fundraising Goal

The Golden Prairie Community Foundation was founded in 2014 with a USDA Rural Development grant, in part funded by Montana State University Extension. With a local advisory board and an affiliate agreement signed with Montana Community Foundation in late 2014, the Golden Prairie Community Foundation began fundraising and strategic planning efforts in 2015.

Fundraising appeal brochures and direct appeal letters have been sent out each year to approximately 1,500 mailboxes in nine different communities with ties to Liberty County. Each year, \$3000-5000 was raised through these efforts, with monies going into an endowment account held with Montana Community Foundation. The Golden Prairie Community Foundation reached their goal of \$25,000 to permanently endow the account in the fall of 2018.

To date, the Golden Prairie Community Foundation, with an advisory board of nine members, has given out \$3,000 in grants to six local non-profit organizations. These funds have been used around the area for projects such as campground renovations, bathroom renovations at a local park, the purchase of “jump kit” equipment for emergency first responders, computer equipment for ambulance crew reporting, museum expansions, and community events. Many of these projects would continue unfunded or vastly underfunded if not for the community foundation. With the establishment of

**Members of the Hi-Line Emergency Medical Services team showcase jump kits purchased with a grant from the Golden Prairie Community Foundation.**



a permanent endowment, continued grant-making possibilities are expected, providing a continuing support to local non-profit organizations and benefits for local communities for years to come.

## Plotting a Course for Agriculture

Liberty County sits in the heart of the Triangle, one of the main agriculture producing centers of Montana. According to Montana Agricultural Statistics, Liberty County is ranked seventh and fifteenth in durum and spring wheat production in Montana counties. Liberty County MSU Extension and the Northern Agricultural Research Center collaborated on a spring wheat and durum variety plot tour in June to bring in Peggy Lamb, Research Scientist in Agronomy at NARC, to share research-based information on spring wheat and durum wheat varieties for the Liberty County area. Luther Talbert, PhD, MSU agronomist and spring wheat breeder, joined Lamb and shared current research on spring wheat varieties.

The 18 producers who attended developed a better understanding and awareness of current and upcoming spring wheat and durum varieties that could prove to be economically important to them. Producers also utilized the opportunity to network with each other and ask questions regarding farming practices for nearby pulse crops, including learning to recognize specific pulse diseases such as Ascochyta blight. As producers look towards varieties and crops that improve yield and other important production factors, Liberty County will continue to be a leader in agricultural commodities in Montana.



**MSU Northern Ag Research Center partnered with the Montana Wheat and Barley Committee and MSU Liberty County Extension to host variety trials locally.**

## Master Gardener Level 1 Class

Master Gardener classes were collaboratively co-taught in 2018 by Liberty and Hill County MSU Extension in Rudyard. Rudyard, 17 miles east of Chester, while in Hill County, is geographically closer to Liberty County services and has had a consistent complement of Extension resources brought to them in the past. Nine participants met once a week for eight weeks to learn research-based principles of gardening. Students of the class were taught about a variety of topics including soils and nutrients, plant growth and development, annuals and perennials, pruning, lawn maintenance, small fruits, and integrated pest management. In addition to the local Extension agent instructors, Toby Day, MSU Extension Horticulture specialist, also presented to the class.

Class participants gained basic gardening knowledge and became resources of research-based information to their communities. Additionally, participants were encouraged to complete 20 hours of community service to certify as Master Gardener Level 1 gardeners. This further builds the Master Gardener program through serving communities and also develops civic engagement and pride.

## Discovering How to Be Smart with Finances

If you think legacy planning is a boring topic, then you haven't been to one of Dr. Marsha Goetting's estate planning presentations. Goetting partnered with Liberty County MSU Extension and taught local residents in the fall of 2018 about estate planning tools through a program titled,



Master Gardener participants gathered for eight weeks to learn how to improve their gardening skills.

“Wildflower Reflections: Families and Legacies: Challenging Decisions.”

Participants learned who would receive their property if they passed away without a written will. They also discovered when a will or a trust has control over their property and when neither one does. Through class participation with response clickers, attendees further discovered how to avoid probate with the Montana estate planning tools of payable on designations (PODs), transfer on designations (TODs), and beneficiary deeds. End of life planning was explored as well as changes in Montana Medical Care Savings Accounts.

Twenty-four participants stated their intentions to review their current estate plans, updating beneficiary deeds and wills as necessary. Participants also expressed desires to create lists of tangible property to attach to their wills.

While in Chester, Goetting also met with the Personal Finances class at Chester-Joplin-Inverness High School. The class included an introduction to a credit card debt slide calculator and how to calculate credit card debt interest. Youth participants learned to work a credit card slide calculator to calculate interest accrued on credit card debt and also developed a better understanding of how important it is to pay off debt as it occurs and the cost savings with prompt debt repayment.

Youth and adults alike discovered how to be smart with finances when Marsha Goetting visited Chester.

**DISCOVER**  
CREDIT CARD SMARTS™  
Cost of Delay® Calculator

— SIDE 1 —

**Paying Just 2%  
On Your Credit Card Debt?  
Check the REAL Cost.**

**Cost of Delay® Calculator**

Find the amount of your debt: ▶ **\$5,000**

If you pay just **2% minimum** monthly payments:

You would pay a total of **\$12,674** for your debt, including **\$12,674** in interest charges, and you would have to make payments for **38** years!\*

## Promoting Youth Awareness of Mental Health

Mental health awareness has received an abundance of attention in 2018 across Montana communities and specifically in the school systems. While Liberty County has fortunately not seen any youth suicides in many years, there have been instances around the county of adult suicide and depression. To promote a better understanding of how to maintain positive mental health and how to help those around them, Liberty County MSU Extension partnered with Chester-Joplin-Inverness High School and Liberty County Commissioner Maureen Wicks to offer a

five-hour long curriculum to high school freshmen. The curriculum, Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM), showcased an interactive program for youth promoting increased discussion and knowledge about mental health and the development of problem-solving skills and emotional intelligence.

Over the five-session course, 15 youth gained an awareness of mental health and suicidal thoughts and developed problem-solving skills in relation to those issues. Youth stated the following observations from the class: "I understand how to recognize the signs of if my friends are depressed" and "I know the difference between good and bad mental health." Students also recognized the need to think problems through and that mental health is serious business and not a joking matter. They also recognized and stated an awareness that anyone can have mental health issues and that everyone has problems of some kind, thus becoming more focused on helping others while still addressing their own problems. Students have also begun to have conversations with their parents about decision-making and the choices they make.



Youth worked together as a class and in small groups to recognize how to work through mental health challenges.

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