



Welcome to Toole County

Toole County is made up of 1,915 square miles and has a population rate of 2.8 persons per square mile. The incorporated city of Shelby, population 3,376, serves as the county seat. Other Toole County cities and towns include Ethridge, Galata, Kevin, Oilmont, Sunburst, and Sweetgrass. Situated in northern Montana, Canadian provides the northern boundary, with the Marias River flowing along a major portion of the 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 MSU Extension's 4-H program is unique in Montana 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.



Harvesting on the Hi-Line

Extension Partnerships Benefit Afterschool Programs

Afterschool Partnership

MSU Extension Toole County and the Shelby School District after school program have partnered to provide enriching experiences to youth in the community for over a decade. MSU provides curriculum, staff time and volunteers to provide the programming. Materials are funded through the afterschool program.

The theme for the 2017-2018 school year was entomology. Students spent time discovering the world of creepy crawlies. Topics included insect anatomy, environmental adaptations, and the sounds insects make. Students discovered that insects develop different mouth parts suited to their specialized ways of eating. They created handmade viewers to experience what the world looks through the compound eyes of insects. Students had an opportunity to experience how insects move while competing in the Insect Olympics.

Lesson plans included live observation of insects in the classroom. As the critters moved about in their enclosures, students could observe anatomy, behavior and habitat. In the cricket unit, youth were introduced to how insects make sounds using body parts. In the butterfly unit, students explored the life cycles of insects.

Twenty-eight students participated in the entomology unit. Eight members of the Blazing Saddles 4-H club provided guidance and instruction to the students for the insect units.

In 2018-2019, after school students will be gaining life skills while learning how to craft handmade items. Lessons will include

leatherworking, sewing, and making foods and other crafts. The Blazing Saddles 4-H Club will be again be assisting with the program, providing science and life skill learning for after school students and leadership learning for 4-H members.

4-H and Afterschool Youth Use Squishy Circuits to Learn About Electrical Circuits

The 4-H program has always emphasized the value of first-hand learning known as experiential learning. In the tradition of experiential learning, Toole County MSU Extension agent Alice Burchak introduced Squishy Circuits to Toole County youth this year. Squishy circuits are a great example of how hands-on interactive learning can enhance youth understanding of concepts. Squishy circuits are a fun way to learn and explore the basics of electricity and electrical circuits.

Burchak assembled a Squishy Circuits kit that contains all the materials needed for students to learn about and create their own electronic circuits. Youth use the familiar mediums of play-doh and modeling clay to explore how an electric current works using insulating and conducting materials. Youth gains skills in creating open and closed circuits. Using this hands-on learning method allows youth to gain a greater understanding of how electricity works and how it is an integral part of their daily life.

Squishy Circuit workshops have been facilitated locally at afterschool programs and at local 4-H clubs, as well as statewide 4-H events. The Squishy Circuits kit is available for other leaders or organizations to borrow from Toole County MSU Extension.



Shelby Elementary after school students with MSU Extension staff and volunteers.



Squishy Circuit critter created by a local afterschool student.



Eliane Mitchel and daughter Jenny Flesch

BELOW: Gloria Zell is a vendor at Shelby Market & Music.



Meals in Minutes

2018 seemed to be the year of the electric pressure cooker. The electric pressure cooker, which uses heat and pressure to cook faster than traditional oven cooking, has been all the rage and seemed to be one of the top gifts of the 2017 holiday season. However, many recipients were unsure how to use it and were fearful of using their new electric pressure cooker. After all, we are talking about hot pressure here! Many folks remembered the days of their mothers and grandmothers pressure canning and the thought of using the appliance was rather daunting.

MSU Extension agents in Toole, Hill and Chouteau County teamed up to provide an interactive workshop for electric pressure cookers to alleviate fears of using the appliance. A Meals in Minutes workshop gave participants an opportunity to operate a pressure cooker in the classroom setting with support from agents and fellow attendees. Participants also explored recipes that helped them provide a healthy meal to their families in half the time it would take to cook a dish normally. Participants learned the basics of pressure cooking, how to care for their new appliance, as well as safety suggestions. Participants were surprised to learn they could even make desserts like cheesecake in their new multi-purpose appliance.

Agents Alice Burchak, Janell Barber, and Jasmine Carbajal trained people how to use their pressure cookers in class and answered questions in their offices throughout the year. They are offering a new workshop in spring of 2019, focusing on cooking freezer meals in the electric pressure cooker.

Shelby Market and Music

Toole County MSU Extension has partnered with the City of Shelby to bring Shelby residents the Shelby Market and Music on Thursday afternoons from July to September. The partnership has introduced music to the established local farmer's market with a Summer Concert Series.

The market hosts a few local vendors with various foods items and unique crafts. Three regular vendors are from nearby Hutterite Colonies and after every market, they donate unsold items to our local food pantry. Residents of Shelby enjoy the market every summer, but many of the visitors to the Shelby Market are tourists who are passing through Shelby on Highway 2 on their way to visit Glacier National Park for the weekend. The market provides a way keep some food production and food dollars very local, which provides a health and financial benefit for Toole County residents.

Finding musical acts for the concert series has not been difficult because Shelby has an abundance of local musical talent. Local bands from Shelby usually bring in over 100 people to the City Park on Thursday nights. The Summer Concert Series is a great place for Shelby residents to bring children, and even residents of the nearby Senior Center come down to the park to enjoy a night out and listen to music. The Shelby Market and Music is proving to be a fun and beneficial partnership for the community. The Shelby Market and Music committee is always on the lookout for new and exciting ideas to get residents to come to the park and enjoy an evening outside.

Toole County Master Gardener

In 2018, six Master Gardener students completed the springtime eight-week Level 2 Master Gardener training course, sponsored and taught by Toole County MSU Extension. Crazy winter weather set back the schedule with three classes getting cancelled and rescheduled, but the students are tough gardeners and were up for anything!

The Level 2 Master Gardener class is designed for intermediate gardeners who have already taken Master Gardener Level 1. Montana State University's Horticulture Specialist, Toby Day, teaches Level 2 Master Gardener and he covers subjects including

soils, fertility, plant growth and development, growing flowers and food in the garden, lawn care, irrigation, pest management, composting, insect names and diseases, and proper tree, shrub, and vine planting and care.

Two Toole County gardeners attended the Master Gardener Level 3 training in Bozeman in fall, 2018. Lisa Hurley and Sue Smith from Shelby have attended the program through two Extension agents, and both show a great passion for gardening. Hurley, who is Treasurer of the Shelby Community Garden, helped in starting the Community Garden in Shelby. Smith is such a dedicated Master Gardener that she took Level 2 a second time for a refresher, and she has been watering and caring for the flowers on Shelby's Main Street for volunteer hours in the Master Gardener program.

Master Gardeners give back to the community through volunteer hours given caring for public space gardens or teaching others at farmer's markets or informally, and growing food that is donated to local food banks. Toole County MSU Extension is planning to offer a Level 1 class again in 2019.

Master Gardener Level 2 Celebration



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