

Daniels County

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Daniels County Courthouse and Flower Bin, by Inga Hawbaker

Daniels County MSU Extension is a non-formal educational program designed to help people use research-based knowledge to improve their lives. Since 1922 MSU Extension has successfully provided a service to the citizens of Daniels County through the availability of resources and by facilitating programming in the areas of agriculture, natural resources, family consumer science, community health and development, and youth development through 4-H.

The current population in Daniels County is estimated to be 1,737; there is one K-12 school serving the county. With agriculture being the main industry, Daniels County was considered the most rural county in the continental United States as measured by the Index of Relative Rurality in 2000. It is south of the Canada–U.S. border with Saskatchewan.

Established in 1920, Daniels County boasts a variety of small-town community events including Lutefisk dinners, snowmobile races, ranch rodeos, and a county fair. Daniels County is also home to its annual Pioneer Days, a weekend-long celebration in June; at the center of the celebration is the historic “Dirty Shame Show,” a variety show composed of local talent. Pioneer Days takes place at Pioneer Town, a 20-acre plot just west of Scobey, which houses 35 buildings that have been restored to depict turn-of-the-century homes and businesses.

County Residents Contact MSU Extension for Horticulture and Agricultural Needs

Spring brought numerous questions regarding tree and shrub health, weed identification and management to the MSU Extension office, a trend that would continue throughout the summer. With the county still showing effects from the 2017 drought, MSU Extension agent Inga Hawbaker completed many site visits-in town and rural-to look at diseased and pest-afflicted trees, shrubs, garden plants, and lawns. The conditions of spring produced an abundance of *Rhizosphaera* needle-cast diseased spruce trees in neighborhoods throughout town and infected farm windbreaks throughout the county. Hawbaker worked in conjunction with the MSU Schutter Diagnostic Lab to provide management options to property owners.

In addition to site visits and seeing walk-in clients, Daniels County MSU Extension offers services such as nitrate testing, water test kits, and forage testing. The Nitrate QuikTest provides a quick, qualitative analysis regarding the nitrate levels present in forage samples. Approximately 28 Nitrate QuikTests were conducted for producers in summer and fall to determine a safe cutting window for small grain forages. Forages with high

nitrites can be toxic and even fatal to livestock if consumed. An estimated 50% of fields were standing when the last week of September brought a varied 5-6 inches of precipitation in the form of snow and rain throughout Daniels County. This early onslaught of cool temperatures and late season moisture led to producers requesting testing services for mold counts, mycotoxins and forage quality.

Pesticide and Weed Education in Daniels County

Daniels County MSU Extension works closely with the Daniels County Weed District to provide education within the community regarding weed control. Weeds considered a priority in the county include Canada thistle, field bindweed, narrowleaf hawksbeard, and baby's breath. MSU Extension partners with the Weed District on grants through the Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA), which in turn helps alleviate costs associated with annual weed control and provides cost-sharing for producers in designated grant areas. This past year, a partnership was created with Valley County on a MDA grant focusing on baby's breath control.

MSU Extension and the County Weed District also partner with Daniels County Solid Waste to provide the Pesticide Container Recycling Program through the MDA. The county has four recycling bin sites located in Peerless, Four Buttes, Scobey, and Flaxville. Started in 2009, the focus of the program is to keep HDPE #2 pesticide plastic out of Montana landfills. In 2019, approximately 9,000 pounds of container plastic was collected by the MDA in Daniels County.

Hawbaker provided a public update on pounds of plastic collected and rejected at the sites in MSU Extension's weekly column in the local newspaper to generate more awareness and commitment to the project. The update included a reminder to individuals utilizing the sites to triple rinse containers, and remove all lids, foil liners, and pesticide booklets. The products created from the recycled plastic were highlighted in the column to illustrate the resourceful nature of the project.

4-H Members Contribute to American Hero Quilts

During spring of 2019, Daniels County 4-H leaders and members took on a sewing project that was initially facilitated by Daniels County Commissioner Mikel Lund; the project proved to not only be an incredible learning opportunity, but also an inspiring cause.

With the help of seven adult leaders, six members of the Poplar Valley 4-H Club met and sewed three quilt tops, utilizing patterns and materials provided by American Hero Quilts. American Hero Quilts, which distributes quilts to hospitalized servicemen and women, was born out of the love





Top row: (left) 4-H members displaying quilts during Fashion Review at fair; **(center)** A wheat field after late-season moisture and temperature drop, by Inga Hawbaker; **(right)** 4-H members displaying quilts during Fashion Review at fair; **Middle row: (left)** Local community member Jim Buer, pulling the kids wagon train at Pioneer Days; **(center)** Baby's breath (*Gypsophila paniculata*) infestation in hay field; **(right)** Birdhouse painting activity during Screen Free Week, by Inga Hawbaker; **Bottom row: (left)** Scobey student planting flower seeds, by Inga Hawbaker; **(center)** Colorado Blue Spruce (*Picea pungens fastigiata*) exhibiting Rhizosphaera needle-cast disease, by Inga Hawbaker; **(right)** Pesticide container recycling bin site in Four Buttes

and compassion of one determined Washington State woman in 2004; the organization has since grown across the United States due to the number of injured service members returning home from active service.

MSU Extension Agent Inga Hawbaker transported the finished quilt tops to Forsyth, MT, where an affiliated group of volunteers called “Piece Makers” finished the quilting process. Daniels County 4-H received the finished quilts in time to display at the Daniels County Fair and the 4-H Fashion Review. After the fair, the quilts were sent to the organization’s headquarters in Vashon, Washington, where they were to be distributed at Madigan Hospital in Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, other Warrior Transition Centers in the U.S., and directly to bases in Afghanistan and Qatar.

One 4-H leader stated, “When you think about the number of hands that have touched each quilt-from start to finish- that’s what makes this project so special! And while it may seem small in the grand scheme of things, it’s truly a heartfelt way of honoring our servicemen and women.”

As of 2018, American Hero Quilts has distributed approximately 27,800 quilts, all created by volunteers across the U.S.

Screen Free Week at Scobey School

Daniels County MSU Extension participated in an educational program during Screen Free Week at Scobey

School in April. Screen Free Week is a nationwide event where children, families, schools and communities are encouraged to turn off screens and instead, read books, explore nature, and spend quality time with family and friends. MSU Extension provided an educational workshop on native bird species in the area and information on birdhouses; each student was provided an unfinished wood birdhouse to paint and take home at the end of the day. The purpose of the workshop was to encourage students to develop outdoor interests, hopefully resulting in less daily screen time. Children in Kindergarten through sixth grade participated in the one-hour workshop, held multiple times throughout the week, resulting in a total of 165 student participants.

During the final day of the program, Daniels County MSU Extension provided a 15 minute flower seed planting workshop for student groups. Students were provided a styrofoam cup to fill with potting soil, in the process learning about the importance of quality soil and nutrients. Students chose from a variety of flower seeds, and learned how to place and cover the seeds with soil. They then secured plastic wrap over their cups, in the process learning about how the plastic traps in heat and moisture, which prompts more successful germination of seeds. A total of 165 students participated in the workshop and took home a cup of planted flower seeds.

Daniels County Staff



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