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.

Health Rocks Youth Camp 2020

Toole County MSU Extension and Alliance for Youth collaborated to implement a youth camp for sixth to eighth graders from at-risk and income-challenged families to provide an overnight camping experience for youth that includes an educational component focusing on helping youth build skills around healthy choices.

This year the first Health Rocks camp was held in early August at the Daryl Fenner 4-H Camp in Ferndale. Eighteen youth from Toole County attended, including youth from the communities of Sunburst, Kevin and Shelby. For most attendees, this was their first opportunity to attend a multi-day, overnight camp away from home. The youth experienced sleeping in cabins, campfires, hiking, swimming, boating and field trips during camp.

The goals of Health Rocks Camp were to:
- Help youth build life skills that lead to healthy lifestyle choices with special emphasis on substance use prevention
- Help youth understand influences and health consequences of tobacco, drug, and alcohol use
- Build positive, enduring relationships with other youth and caring adults in a camp setting
According to pre- and post-evaluation results:
- Before the program, four participants strongly agreed that they can avoid trouble by making good decisions, and after, this number rose to 12
- Before the program, six out of 17 participants said they did not know how to say no to peer pressure and after the program, 16 out of 17 participants said they knew how to say no to peer pressure

Youth developed caring relationships with each other and the adult chaperones who can have direct influence in their lives. Developing a relationship with a deputy sheriff and high school teacher will help guide these youth through their high school careers. Another benefit of the camp was that youth made friendships with others outside of their town and economic circles.

Dining with Diabetes

In spring, 2019, Toole County MSU Extension presented a healthy living series for diabetes education. Dining with Diabetes is a researched health and wellness program, a series of four classes that include cooking demonstrations to help participants learn healthy techniques to use in their own kitchens, physical activities, and discussions on the topics of self care and diabetes. The program’s focus is to help individuals learn strategies to lessen the health risks of diabetes.

Goals of Dining with Diabetes are:
- Increase participants knowledge about healthy foods that help stabilize blood sugars
- Present healthy versions of familiar foods and taste test recipes
- Demonstrate new cooking techniques
- Provide basic information regarding diabetes and nutrition
- Provide opportunities for sharing and learning from one another

The spring session of Dining with Diabetes had eight participants. These individuals worked on lowering their A1C and other health markers to improve their diabetes. One participant commented that this class helped them understand how to cook healthy meals that will keep their blood sugars stable.

Flower Arrangement Workshop

Toole County MSU Extension partnered with Shelby Floral and Gift, a local flower shop in Shelby, to provide a flower arrangement workshop. There were 12 attendees from three local towns, Shelby, Sunburst, and Cut Bank, with attendees having many different levels of experience.
Top row: (left) Field trip to the Flathead Biological Station; (right) Windmills in Toole County.

Middle row: (left) Oven-fried chicken, with sweet potato and zucchini stir fry, prepared by Dining with Diabetes class participants; (center) Jim Woodring creates a flower arrangement at an MSU Extension workshop; (right) Campers learning about how substances can tie them down.
Local florist Nicolle Anderson led the workshop. She instructed the group on how to create beautiful hanging arrangements similar to those seen in Glacier Park. Participants learned how to prepare and care for the baskets and how to place flowers. At the end of the workshop each participant was able to take their hanging basket home.

This workshop was a great way to incorporate a partnership between a local business and MSU Extension, and it created an opportunity for community members to meet, learn, and network while doing a fun, hands-on activity.

**Shelby Market & Music 2019**

Toole County MSU Extension has partnered with the City of Shelby to bring the Shelby Market and Music on Thursday afternoons from July to September. The partnership established the local farmer’s market with a Summer Concert Series. The market hosts 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 the local food pantry. Residents of Shelby enjoy the market every summer, but many of the visitors to the Shelby Market are also tourists who are passing through Shelby on Highway 2 on their way to visit Glacier National Park. 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.

The market vendor participation to an average of seven vendors per market with the use of a marketing campaign of ads on the local newspaper, radio, and Facebook, and with new signs provided by the local print shop, Big Sky Creative Works. The market had both an increase in vendors and attendance in 2019.