Big Horn County encompasses over three million acres and over 13,000 residents creating a land of diversity. Rural and urban, rangeland and industry, past and present, creates a rich tapestry that makes Big Horn County unique. About 65% of Big Horn County is within the Crow Indian Reservation and about 5% is within the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation.

Agriculture and coal mining are the two primary industries within Big Horn County. Agriculture production in the county includes 76,000 cattle and over 270,000 acres of dryland and irrigated farming. Common crops grown in the area include alfalfa, sugarbeets, and small grains.

**Different program delivery can lead to positive and better outcomes**

2020 was a year of differences.

The Dining with Diabetes program focused on helping individuals manage diabetes through diet, medication and exercise. Participants from the original class enjoyed the benefits of learning about and managing diabetes so much they created a Diabetes Support Group. The group met quarterly, shared a meal and ended with presentations about about heart disease, foot and dental care. The Diabetes Support Group had a positive personal and social health impact on participants managing their diabetes.

StrongPeople Strength Training started 2020 strong with the conclusion of the first ever Nationwide Random Control Trial on strength training. Physically, participants showed increased strength, balance, stamina, and the ability to move freely and easily. Participants increased community ties and reported decreases in stress and anxiety, with a significant increase in sleep. As a testament to the program benefits, many participants continued to exercise at home during the shelter-in-place restrictions for older adults.

While activities were different this year, they allowed for time to focus on community development and the development of educational materials for local and national audiences. A MontGuide publication, ‘Home Canning Using an Atmospheric Steam Canner,’ was authored by Family and Consumer Sciences agent Holly Miner, and made available through MSU Extension publications. Increased engagement with Helping Hands In Hardin Food Pantry resulted in the development and distribution of a monthly newsletter to approximately 300 households. A marketing plan for recruiting additional volunteers was also developed. High school students were
surveyed to formulate a volunteer recruitment plan which focuses on increasing youth community service to develop future leaders through their service.

**Agriculture Education**

While many closures happened this spring due to the COVID-19 pandemic, MSU Extension in Big Horn County never stopped. Class formats were adjusted or changed to meet local and state requirements while still serving the people of Big Horn County.

One excellent example of flexible program delivery was the Gardening 100 series. This in-person series about basic gardening information got changed into a weekly short video posting on the Big Horn County MSU Extension Facebook page. The first video included topics on how to choose the correct seed for a growing area, days to maturity for planning around frost free days, when to start seed indoors, and how to read seed packets. Other videos included how to start seed at home with information about soil media, watering, and other tips for success; nutrient information for seedlings; when and how to transplant seeds into larger pots; and how to prepare a garden site before planting. The garden site preparation included information about proper pesticide use, as well as using a dark tarp to help decrease the weed seed bank prior to gardening season.

There was an excellent response to the video format, with over 400 people reached on the Big Horn County MSU Extension Facebook page. Timing was important as ever with these videos, as many people across Big Horn County, and the nation, were trying gardens and growing their own food while coping with the pandemic.

**SNAP Education**

Big Horn County SNAP-Ed Instructor Andrea Berry was able to teach over 175 nutrition education, cooking, and physical activity classes to youth and adults in schools and in various community settings in the first half of the grant year in Big Horn County and on the Crow and Northern Cheyenne Reservations. When the Coronavirus pandemic began, SNAP-Ed shifted to indirect education and has provided recipes and activities to more than 1,000 youth and their families since March to encourage healthy eating, enjoyable exercise and COVID-19 safety practices.

The SNAP-Ed program also works on Policy, Systems and Environment (PSE) projects to address underlying issues that make it difficult for low income people to have access to healthy, affordable foods. The Big Horn County SNAP-Ed program worked on PSE projects with many local, partner organizations to enhance and expand community gardens and gardening efforts in communities on the Crow Reservation.
Previous Page: (top) One of the nutritious meal options made during Diabetes Support Group Meetings, by Holly Miner; (center) Flats of plant seedlings, including tomatoes, peppers, and marigolds, by Molly Masters; (bottom) Seed Library created through a SNAP-Ed PSE project for anyone who needs seed for starting a garden, by Andrea Berry; This Page: Can Clean Up for Trash, a 4-H fundraising activity in Big Horn County, by Holly Miner
and in Hardin; to improve food bank facilities; support healthy, family-centered activities; and start a seed library project to make free, open-pollinated, heirloom seeds available to gardeners throughout the area so they can save their own seeds for future gardens. Permaculture plantings were begun with native food plants as part of local food sovereignty efforts, while more than 200 pounds of fresh produce was grown and donated to food banks in the area as a result of local gardening efforts, and in addition to the food the gardens produced for the gardeners and their families. It was a great growing year!

4-H Program Update

The Big Horn County 4-H program had a great year again! MSU Extension appreciates all the hard-working volunteers and leaders who make this program possible and a huge success. We had another year of increased membership with 110 youth members and 45 adult leaders.

The major highlight of the 4-H year is the Big Horn County Youth and Open Fair, which is the culmination of the year for many youth. There were over 600 project entries. Thanks to our generous community, the animal project sale generated $238,641 (about a 22% increase over last year’s sale) in funds that youth use to invest in their future.

Throughout the year, there are several other opportunities for youth to participate. One of these highlight events was ‘Can Clean Up for Cash.’ 4-H members spent time collecting aluminum cans to recycle, and more than 20 youth and adults bagged cans for two hours, collecting over 800 pounds of aluminum. The local recycling center donated their profit back to the 4-H program. The money will go towards a 4-H exchange trip with another state, which will further expand learning experiences for the youth.

Another highlight in the Big Horn County 4-H program this year was receiving a National Rifle Association Foundation Grant worth $8,500. This award came in the form of equipment and supplies for the Big Horn County 4-H Shooting Sports Program, which consists of Archery, Shotgun, Pistol and Air Rifle disciplines and focuses on consistent safety procedures when using shooting sports equipment. Many youth who wouldn’t have been able to participate because of financial burden were able to excel in this project.