

# Cascade County



3300 3rd St NE #9, Great Falls, MT 59404 | (406) 454-6980 | [katrin.finch@montana.edu](mailto:katrin.finch@montana.edu) | [cascade.msuextension.org](http://cascade.msuextension.org)



*Belt Creek in Sluice Boxes State Park, by Katrin Finch.*

**C**ascade County, located in central Montana, is one of the population centers in the state and is known as the “Electric City” due to its historical significance in regard to the hydroelectric generation plants and smelter activity. The MSU Extension office is located in the county seat, Great Falls, which is on the Missouri River and is one of the pioneer cities in the state. The terrain is primarily gently rolling plains that are dissected by the Missouri River and its numerous coulees and tributaries. The Little Belt Mountains are found in the southeastern portion of the county. Population of the county is approximately 82,300, which includes the rural area, the incorporated city of Great Falls and the towns of Belt, Cascade, Centerville, Fort Shaw, Monarch, Neihart, and Coulee, Simms, Sun River, Ulm, and Vaughn, many of which have complete K-12 school systems.

Cascade County’s economic base includes agriculture, the military, education, small manufacturing, food processing and many service industries. The majority of agricultural income is derived from crop production. According to 2014 Montana Agricultural Statistics, the county ranks seventeenth in crop production with over \$56 million in cash receipts. Livestock production, primarily beef cattle, is also very important—generating over \$78 million in cash receipts and ranking ninth in the state.

Great Falls is home to the Benefis Health Care System (one of the premier hospital and health care organizations in Montana), Malmstrom Air Force Base, and many cultural attractions including the Charles M. Russell Museum/Gallery, the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, the Paris Gibson Center and the First People’s Buffalo Jump. Great Falls is a primary destination point for tourism. Outdoor recreational opportunities include fishing, hunting, boating, golfing, hiking, and historical exploration.

## The 4-H Livestock Show Must Go On

Year after year, many 4-H events are planned and facilitated to look the same without much change. 4-H members enroll, select projects, work with their animal, and show at the county livestock show... but a pandemic can change an event such as the livestock show in one swoop. The Cascade County 4-H Livestock Leaders and Extension Agent, Rose Malisani, discovered the Cascade County 4-H Livestock Show and Sale can go on during a pandemic with changes to allow 4-H members to still showcase their hard work and sell their market animal.

The group met every week from March-June to rearrange the agenda to allow only one species on the grounds at a time and develop an online sale. The Livestock Show was the only

event held at the fairgrounds in Great Falls in the summer of 2020 because the group worked with Cascade City-County Health Department to develop a sanitation plan.

The group changed the agenda to accommodate 50 or less people in the barn at one time. Traditionally, all the 4-H members weigh animals and market the same evening, then show in market classes and sell their animals the next day, with showmanship classes and round robin the last day. The adjustments had animals weighed a week before the show with a drive through design. The first day of the Livestock Show showcased sheep and goats in the morning and beef in the afternoon. Swine market projects began the next morning, followed by poultry and rabbit projects, and swine showmanship classes in the afternoon.

The normally-live sale with 350 buyers and others shifted to an online format. 4-H members submitted photos, videos, and descriptions of livestock projects for a catalog that was mailed to past buyers. One buyer said, "I really enjoyed the catalog. The 4-H members descriptions of their projects and picture was so neat; those kids have some awesome creativity." The online sale was hosted by Montana Cattle Connexions, where buyers bid on lots from 5-9 p.m. Eighty-three market animals were sold in 2020 compared to 100 market animals sold in 2019.

Seventy-eight 4-H members showed their projects at the 2020 Livestock Show, 27 less than in 2019. Many families decided to sell animals through private treaty which follows the guidelines of the projects. One 4-H member said, "I missed seeing everyone at the Livestock Show but I appreciate the hard work from the adult leaders to allow me to show my steer."

#### 4-H: Growing One Interview at a Time

Static Exhibit Interview Judging is something that Cascade County 4-H'ers look forward to every year. This judging usually takes place at the Montana Sate Fair, but the fair was cancelled due to COVID-19. This event gives youth the chance to show what they have learned in non-animal 4-H projects while working on communication, public speaking, and interview skills.

Once it was safe to hold modified in-person programming, a Static Exhibit Interview Judging event was planned by Cascade County MSU Extension 4-H & Youth Development Agent Allyssa Zoern and 4-H Volunteer Leaders Keri Leggett and Ashley Adkins. The response from the Cascade County 4-H community was extremely positive. Youth missed many traditional summer 4-H activities and were excited to participate in the modified in-person event.

It was over 90 degrees the day of the event, so it really felt like a typical day at the fair. Three tables were set up and decorated outdoors at the MSU Extension office. The number of participants was much lower than a typical year, but it gave judges more time to talk with youth about projects and explore what they learned.





**Previous Page: (top)** Pinecone on tree in Sluice Boxes State Park, by Katrin Finch; **(bottom)** 4-H Volunteer Leader Keri Leggett judges a youth crochet project at the 4-H Static Exhibit Interview Judging, by Allyssa Zoern ; **This Page: (top)** 2020 Cascade County 4-H Livestock Show, by Rose Malisani; **(bottom)** A rice bowl and other vegetables are pictured, similar to meals that are shared in SNAP-Education classes, from pexels.com/EllaOlson

## Caregiving During Challenging Times

In challenging times, we often find ourselves giving to others while dismissing our own need for self-care and support. Powerful Tools for Caregivers is a nationally-known program that empowers and encourages caregivers caring for loved ones to add self-care tools to their daily lives. In 2020, Katrin Finch, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent partnered with Jona McNamee former MSU Extension agent to offer a total of four Powerful Tools for Caregivers classes to 22 participants. This program was a success because despite being socially isolated and efforts to follow precautions of COVID-19, it offered caregivers the opportunity to connect with other caregivers, learn and develop a support system within their community.

The six-week series provides tools to improve confidence, handle emotions, communicate through difficult situations, and most importantly, improve self-care. One caregiver reported “I was able to give myself permission to take care of me for once.” Over 80% of caregivers shared that they learned a new skill and will continue to practice self-care through a physical activity such as walking. Along with learning to care for themselves, caregivers also reported they felt more connected knowing they were not alone in caregiving feelings, challenges, and obstacles. Caregivers often find the physical resources they need to help during the caregiving experience like medical care, but it is the social aspects and isolation that is often more challenging. All participants reported an increased self-esteem knowing they were not alone. Caregiving is a tireless job, and learning resources for self-care through the Powerful Tools for Caregivers program allows caregivers to continue to do their job with the utmost of love for their loved ones.

## SNAP-Education

The Montana State University Extension Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) supports low-income Montanans in making the healthy choice the easy choice. SNAP-Ed teaches low-income youth and adults

how to live, eat, and shop within their communities to make healthier choices.

SNAP-Ed offers free nutrition classes to first, third and fifth grade students who attend eligible elementary schools. In Cascade County, Nina Polk, SNAP-Ed instructor, taught the YUM (Youth Understanding MyPlate) series of nutrition classes at three qualifying elementary schools in Great Falls Public School, Chief Joseph Elementary, Longfellow Elementary and Lewis & Clark Elementary. School closures in March due to COVID-19 led to third grade students adapting to an online format to complete their series.

### Behavior change from the YUM series included the following:

- 84% of youth improved their diet quality via their ability to choose foods according to Federal Dietary Recommendations or gained knowledge.
- 32% of youth improved their physical activity practices or gained knowledge.
- 55% of youth use safe food handling practices more often or gained knowledge.

For SNAP-eligible adults in Cascade County, SNAP-Ed provides CREATES, a one-time, one-hour class which is an introduction to the Eating Smart, Being Active series of classes. SNAP-Ed also provides Eating Smart, Being Active (ESBA), a series of nine one-hour classes over nine weeks covering easy meal planning according to MyPlate, ideas for stretching food dollars, tips for increasing physical activity and tasty ways to eat healthy. The online ESBA class series has three components – lecture video, physical activity video, and a discussion call with with SNAP educator via WebEx.

During the 2020 grant year, 78 adult and youth classes were taught, reaching 232 youth and adults through 13 series and three CREATE classes.

## Cascade County Staff



Montana State University Extension is an ADA/EO/AA Veteran's Preference Employer and provider of educational outreach.

**Katrin Finch**  
Family and Consumer Sciences Agent

**Nina Polk**  
SNAP-Educator

**Rose Malisani**  
Agriculture and 4-H Horse and Livestock Agent

**April Mclean**  
Administrative Assistant

**Allyssa Zoern**  
4-H Youth Development Agent

**Suzi Trebas**  
Administrative Assistant