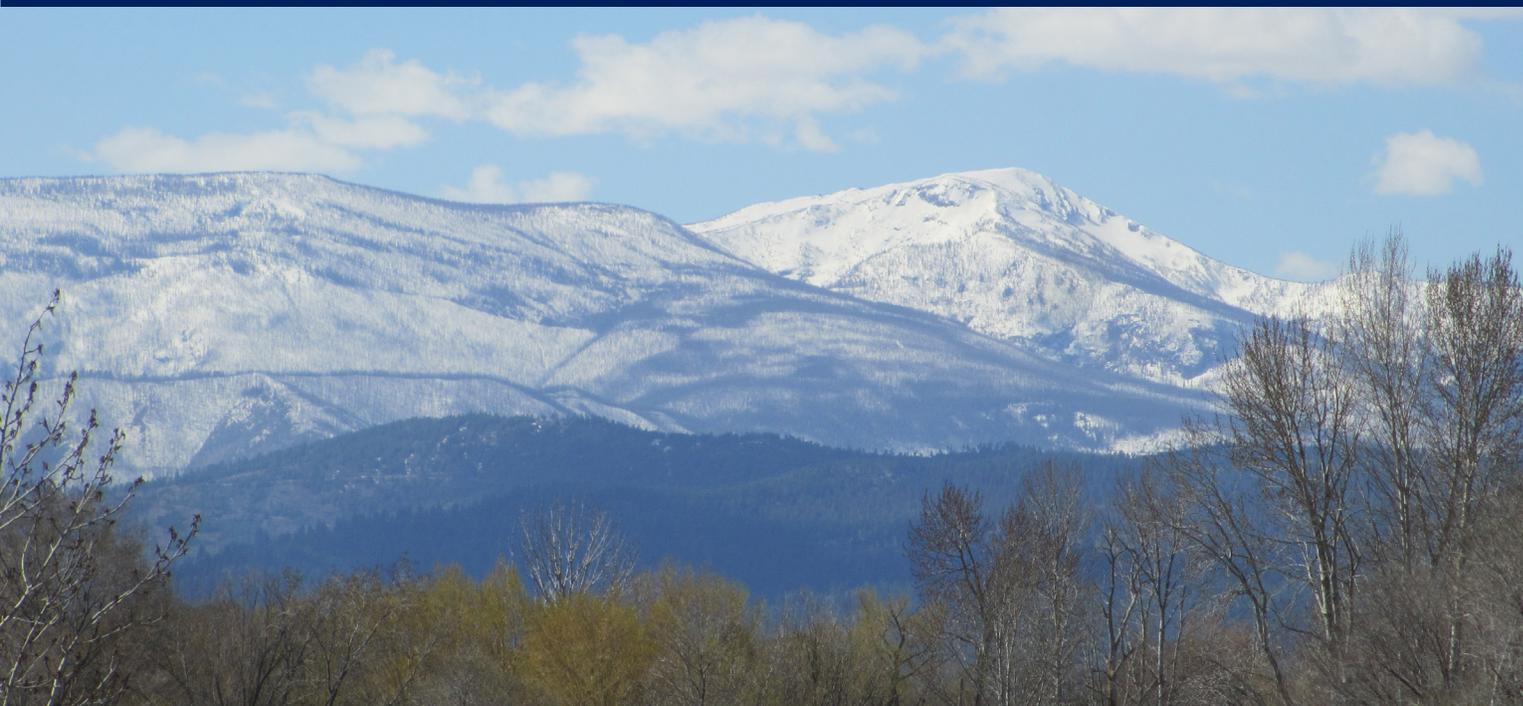


## 2020 MSU EXTENSION HIGHLIGHTS

# Missoula County



2825 Santa Fe Ct, Missoula, MT 59808 | 406-258-4200 | missoula2@montana.edu | <http://missoula.msuxextension.org/>



*Lolo Peak as seen from near the Missoula County Extension office, by Campbell Barrett.*

**M**issoula is known as the Garden City because of its ability to grow local food crops. In the early days, fruits and vegetables were marketed to surrounding mining communities. Today a number of stores and restaurants use locally grown food crops, and producers can market through seven farmers markets.

Missoula County has a population of 120,647 people. Missoula, the county seat, has a population of 77,058. The major industry for many decades was timber. That has declined significantly since the early 1970s and Missoula has become a regional trade center. Additional categories of economic importance are educational services, health care and social services.

Due to the interest and concerns about invasive species, the Extension office and Weed District are combined into one department. Considerable effort has resulted in new tools and sustainable methods of managing invasive weeds such as the biological weed control program. Through the encouragement of the Governor, the department has provided statewide leadership in organizing a Montana Invasive Species Council.

## New facility moving forward at Fairgrounds

The Rocky Mountain Gardens and Exploration Center is moving forward to become an important part of Missoula County and the Missoula County Fairgrounds. The \$15 million dollar project will be the new home for the Missoula County MSU Extension Service & Weed District, the Missoula Conservation District, and the Missoula Butterfly House and Insectarium. It will be a place to learn about new kinds of fruits and vegetables, how to grow herbs to flavor foods, how to become a master gardener, how to grow native plants that will attract pollinizers, and how to dry, freeze, and can fruits and vegetables.

It is a place of science and education, a place of collaboration for working with local people on community projects to make our world a better place, and a place where having connections with the University of Montana, Montana State University, and many other organizations will make this possible. Construction will start in the spring of 2021.

## Family and Consumer Sciences Highlights

Creating multi-generational programming that creates spaces and activities to connect young and old continues to be a priority in Missoula County. The “All Hands On Deck - Cooking Class For All Generations,” done in collaboration with the Missoula Food Bank and Community Center, was developed to help fulfill that goal. Participants were required to bring someone older or younger to be included in this free series of four classes. Fifteen participants made up of kids, grandparents, parents, and relative caregivers, attended and joined in the discussion about the look, abilities, and similarities of hands of all ages in the first class “Making Hand Cookies.” Interesting conversations took place while participants traced their partner’s hand in homemade sugar cookie dough, monitored the baking time, and decorated with colorful icing. One grandmother in the class talked about measuring ingredients in her hand (learned from her great grandmother), instead of using a measuring cup. Her young grandson asked, “Would my hand measure a cup too?” The February class, “Packing Super-Hero Lunches” had 12 participants who designed Ninja Turtle green rice cakes while talking about the importance of eating healthy, low-cost, kid-friendly lunches. One father reported that the cooking class provided quality time with his daughter away from the pressures of work and stress of shared custody.

While COVID-19 restrictions required the cooking class be placed on hold, it allowed for new opportunities in other programs like Powerful Tools for Caregivers (PTC) and the MTKNP (Montana Kinship Navigator Program). Combining efforts with a valued community partner, Missoula Aging Services, allowed for the virtual offering of both programs. Eight participants recently completed the 6-week PTC class and 99% of participants agreed that as a result, they felt more confident as caregivers, found it easier to ask for help with tasks, and looked for additional community resources to help meet caregiving needs.

The Missoula monthly MTKNP Support Group is now available to kinship families across Montana for sharing insight, experience, resources, and encouragement. The Missoula Public Library now hosts a monthly FCS Extension cooking class that is filmed and available for viewing from their website. Some topics include the basics of canning, the stuff of stuffing, and make-it-yourself hummus and falafel. Having ongoing access to cooking classes may help ease feelings of isolation and anxiety when in-person classes are not available.

### EFNEP Grant Year Recap

In the 2020 grant cycle, \$57,119 in Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) support was provided

to Missoula County which included two staff members, Julia Goar and Johnny Peña, at 40 hours/week for approximately five months, educational supplies including food samples and other educational materials for program participants, facility costs, and travel expenses to get to and from community organizations throughout Missoula County.

This past year, 204 classes were taught in Missoula County, with an average of 4.65 classes per week during the grant year. Educators reached 26 adults and 604 youth.

### Behavior Change from ‘Eating Smart, Being Active’ series in Missoula County (Educators Combined):

- 91% of participants showed improvement in one or more diet quality indicators (i.e., eating fruits, vegetables, red and orange vegetables, dark green vegetables, drinking less regular soda (not diet), drinking less fruit punch, fruit drinks, sweet tea, or sports drinks, and cooking dinner at home).
- 73% of participants showed improvement in one or more physical activity behaviors (i.e., exercising for at least 30 minutes, doing workouts to build and strengthen muscles, or making small changes to be more active).
- 82% of participants showed improvement in one or more food safety practices (i.e., washing hands before preparing food, washing all items and surfaces after cutting raw meat or seafood, not thawing frozen food at room temperature, or using a meat thermometer).
- 73% of participants showed improvement in one or more food security indicators (i.e., not eating less than you wanted so there was more food for your family or having enough money to get food for your family).
- Behavior Change from ‘Youth Understanding MyPlate’ series in Missoula County (Educators Combined):
- 82% of children and youth improved their diet quality via their ability to choose foods according to Federal Dietary Recommendations or gained knowledge.
- 36% of children and youth improved their physical activity practices or gained knowledge. 50% of children and youth use safe food handling practices more often or gained knowledge.

We are thankful for Julia Goar and Johnny Peña’s work in Missoula County in 2020 and we welcome Kayla Martin and Molly Murphy Moran to the team to continue exceptional service to Missoula County this year.

### 4-H Drama – But in a Good Way

For more than 70 years, 4-H Clubs in Missoula County have had the opportunity to participate in plays through the 4-H Drama Festival, which first raised the curtain in 1947. The Drama Festival was the brainchild of County Extension



**Top Row: (left)** Young child eating, by Lori Mayr; **(right)** Multigenerational cooking at the Missoula Food Bank And Community Center's Gallagher Learning Kitchen, by Kelly Moore; **Center:** Architectural rendering of new facility and gardens at the Fairgrounds, by A & E Architects; **Bottom Row: (left)** Members of the Mullan Trail Mustangs 4-H Club look on during their performance, by Campbell Barrett; **(right)** Apple Codling Moth bagging experiment at PEAS Farm in Missoula, by Sandy Perrin

Agent Tony Rollin. Rollin, when asked why he was so interested in the Drama Festival, said he was raised in an orphanage in Minnesota. At the orphanage, they had a program of putting plays together and presenting them, which in Rollin's mind helped him build the confidence he would need later in life.

The first Drama Festival was held at the Orchard Homes Country Life Club in Missoula. The name of the winning play that year was "The Blue Teapot," and was organized by the Orchard Homes 4-H Club. As interest in the Drama Festival increased, more clubs got involved. At its peak, the festival showed up to 16 plays, which involved evening events on consecutive nights, and the top plays competed for coveted county awards. For many years, state Senator Por Deschamps served as the Master of Ceremonies at the finale featuring the top plays.

In March 2020, just before the COVID-19 stay-at-home order, 4-H members from two Missoula clubs competed in the 74th Annual 4-H Drama Festival, and due to a last-minute facility change, the event was again held at the Orchard Homes Country Life Club. In a post-festival survey, 32% of respondents, unprompted, said the festival improved their teamwork skills. Other skills gained included patience, cooperation, speaking skills, overcoming stage fright, and gaining self-confidence. One participant said, "Drama Festival is a good way that I can be myself without people judging."

## Highlights from the Plant Clinic

The COVID-19 stay-at-home order certainly increased homeowner activity in caring for yards and gardens. The Missoula County MSU Extension Plant Clinic provided leadership and educational opportunities to the public on the identification and integrated pest management practices (IPM) of plant diseases, pests and related plant health problems through the coordination and management of the Plant Clinic.

- Performed weekly scouting trips, checking on pest levels that challenge gardeners, landscapers and homeowners in maintaining healthy plant communities and environment.
- Trapped for insects such as the codling moth, cherry fruit fly and spotted wing drosophila to give Missoula County residents timely information on when to spray for those pests to control damage to fruit. This information helps reduce unwarranted pesticide use.
- Provided information to 2,000 calls, walk-in clients and emails this year, including information on soil testing, pruning, plant identification, and pest control. We also provided site visits during office closure to clients to identify problems in their yards.
- Collaborated with the Western Agricultural Research Center to provide Master Gardeners and a small orchard in the Rattlesnake area with a new method to control codling moth by bagging the apples with a nylon mesh to avoid spraying during the season.
- Partnered with the Ravalli County MSU Extension agent to offer a virtual Master Gardener Level 1 training that included three field trips and two additional virtual presentations. Nineteen people from each county took the class.
- Talked virtually with a group of gardeners with Garden City Harvest community garden program about insect pests in the garden.
- Worked with a local flower grower to obtain a specialty crop block grant to enable the development and growth of existing and future Montana (specialty crop) flower farmers. The workshops were moved to 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- Partnered with FCS Agent Kelly Moore in teaching two Lunch and Learn classes: Oodles of Noodles & Herb Swags.

## Missoula County Staff



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

**Jerry Marks**  
Extension Agent

**Campbell Barrett**  
4-H Agent

**Kelly Moore**  
FCS Agent

**Sandy Perrin**  
Assistant Horticulturist

**Kayla Martin**  
EFNEP Program Assistant

**Molly Moran**  
EFNEP Program Assistant

**Deidad Wright**  
Administrative Support