

Richland County



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Richland County MSU Extension office by Tim Fine.

Named to attract settlers, Richland County is the thirty-second largest county in area in the state of Montana with 2,084 square miles. Richland County is Montana's twentieth most populous county, with an estimated 10,803 residents according to the 2019 census data. Sidney, the county seat, is the state's nineteenth-largest city, with a population estimated at 6,173. Other towns in Richland County include Crane, Fairview, Lambert, and Savage. Agriculture and oil production are widely recognized as two of the staples of Richland County's economy. Much of Richland County is located in the Bakken Oil Zone and cattle, wheat, sugar beets, pulse crops, and other small grains are the top agricultural commodities produced.

Gardening in Richland County Goes Virtual

Weekly gardening classes were scheduled to be held in April at the Richland County MSU Extension office. The intent was to hold four workshops, one every Friday in the month from noon to 1 p.m. When initially scheduled, the intent was to allow clientele the opportunity to learn more about gardening and ask questions to the agent in a more relaxed setting over the lunch hour.

When it became apparent that the pandemic would not allow for face-to-face interaction, rather than cancelling the workshops, the format was changed to virtual webinars. Topics for the webinars began with knowing and understanding soils, then focused on raised beds and container gardens, gardening resources, and ended with making a final plan for vegetable and landscape gardens.

Transitioning this series to a web-based meeting platform not only boosted attendance, it also allowed for participants from various regions of Montana to join the meeting and interact with the agent and other attendees. The workshops were also recorded and uploaded to Richland County MSU Extension's Facebook page, which allowed those who were not available at that specific time to go back and watch the presentations.

Presentations and material related to horticulture production and backyard gardening continue to be commonly asked for programs in and around Richland County, especially during the beginning of the pandemic when some were concerned about food security. These programs not only addressed the issue of food security but allowed interaction with Extension staff at a time when the physical location was closed.

Youth Program Grows Despite the Pandemic

Although 2020 was challenging for all, there were also great things that happened. The Richland County 4-H program’s enrollment grew by 16% from the previous year with a total of 253 enrolled 4-H members. 4-H provides opportunities for youth to participate in learn-by-doing projects that guide them in the experiential learning process. The top projects in the county are market beef, market hog, photography, wood working and foods and nutrition.

With an increased enrollment, our project enrollment also increased, some by up to 50%. The Richland County 4-H program had to find alternative avenues that allowed youth to grow and develop. A virtual speech and demonstration day was held with 11 youth participating, as well as a virtual quilt and fashion revue with 12 participants. In addition to virtual events, a 4-H only fair took place where 233 members were able to practice project mastery and independence.

Even though the fair was not open to the public, the community offered incredible support to the youth program. Local businesses came forward to support the 4-H only event, these 11 businesses allowed the youth to partake in an important educational event and provided opportunities for the public to view the fair events virtually. In addition, local businesses stepped forward to support the livestock auction, with sale support up 23% from the previous year. Despite the challenges, Richland County 4-H had a successful year in 2020.

Adaptation and Collaboration is the Name of the Game

The past year has brought many challenges and changes to Richland County FCS programming. However, it also brought new opportunities to adapt and collaborate with others across the state and nation. In response to our state stay-at-home order early in 2020, agents from across Montana spearheaded noon learning webinars. Topics were multidisciplinary, about gardening, exercising, foods, and more. As a part of the webinar series, Richland County MSU Extension Agent Carrie Krug offered “What’s Available In Your Pantry?” reaching 16 individuals (watching live or recording). Also, Krug created an infographic of websites and videos related to food substitution in response to grocery stores’ limited options (to pair with the webinar). The infographic was shared on the Richland County Facebook page, where the post reached 126 individuals and was also shared with others around the state.

Another partnership formed this year was a collaboration between Montana and Minnesota Extension Services to offer a mini-series titled “Let’s Talk About Discipline.” The multi-state



WHAT'S IN YOUR PANTRY?

RESOURCES ON FOOD SUBSTITUTION

BAKING AND COOKING INGREDIENT SUBSTITUTION CHART
 What's Cooking America
<https://whatscookingamerica.net/information/ingredientSubstitution.htm>

CAN'T GET TO THE STORE? TRY EMERGENCY FOOD SUBSTITUTIONS
 Iowa State University Extension and Outreach
<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/news/cant-get-store-try-emergency-food-substitutions>

INGREDIENT SUBSTITUTION
 Colorado State University by: P. Kendall
<https://extension.colostate.edu/docs/pubs/foodnut/08323.pdf>

FOOD STORAGE FOR SAFETY AND QUALITY
 Colorado State University by: P. Kendall & N. Diamond
<https://extension.colostate.edu/docs/pubs/foodnut/09310.pdf>

SOUBDOUGH STARTER VIDEO
 Marcy Gaston, MSU HHD Faculty Member
<https://spark.adobe.com/video/Daj1jm0C6fc>

SOUBDOUGH BREAD VIDEO
 Marcy Gaston, MSU HHD Faculty Member
<https://spark.adobe.com/video/MS4wq5tBw6wX>

HOMEMADE ITALIAN PASTA AND SAUCES
 Utah State University Cooperative Extension
<https://extension.usu.edu/utah/files/au/PastaBooklet.pdf>

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Previous Page: (top) Vegetables, by Rene Cortin, Wikimedia Commons; **(bottom)** 'What's In Your Pantry' infographic, by Carrie Krug; **This Page:** Richland County 4-H member shows their market hog at the 4-H only fair, by Josie Evenson

team was made of two Minnesota Extension members and two Montana Extension members (Carrie Krug and Brianna Routh, MSU Foods and Family Extension Specialist). The three-lesson mini-series (broken down by age ranges) reached a total of 85 participants live, with 198 registered and receiving the recording from Minnesota, New York, Arkansas, Idaho, Kansas, and other locations around the country. Yes, 2020 has been an interesting year, but it has brought forth new opportunities to collaborate with Extension from across the state and country to offer unique programming opportunities.

Richland County Staff



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

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