



Welcome to Chouteau County

Chouteau County, established in 1865, was one of the original nine counties of the Montana Territory. Once the largest county in the Montana Territory and second largest in the United States, Chouteau County is an area of 3,972 square miles and a total population of about 5,765. Fort Benton, Big Sandy, Geraldine and Highwood are the largest communities with smaller communities in Carter, Loma, Floweree, Shonkin and Square Butte. As part of the Golden Triangle, Chouteau County is the top producing county of winter wheat. With these statistics, it is no wonder agriculture production and agriculture-related businesses are the top industry.



WELCOME TO CHOUTEAU COUNTY
"Birthplace of Montana"
National Wild and Scenic Missouri River
Historic Sites of Lewis and Clark Expedition
Top County in Wheat Production in Montana



"Guard, protect and cherish your land, for there is no afterlife for a place that started out as Heaven."
-Charles Marion Russell

Sustainable Agriculture

Agricultural education and outreach for farmers was achieved through the 2018 Golden Triangle Cropping Seminar. A total of 45 producers were educated about integrating beef cattle into cover crops, soil fertility in pulses, transfer planning, pesticide performance, and partial budget analysis. Five producers stated they would make changes to their pulse fertilizer program, add more crops into their rotations and spray better water to increase herbicide efficacy. Through cost savings and increased net income, the economic impact of the Cropping Seminar would be \$40,500.

Additional agricultural education and outreach included:

- 95 participants learned about soil acidity and soil health management. Twenty-eight participants indicated they increased their knowledge, awareness and skills about sustainable agriculture topics, practices, strategies and approaches. Without changes in management, producers would continue to see the problem of soil acidity expanding in their fields. If these 28 producers own 100 acres of winter wheat producing zero bushels per acre, potential lost revenue to soil acidity would total \$630,000.
- Field days near The Knees and Loma educated 46 producers on management of cereal grains and resistant weed management.
- Emily Meccage gave a presentation on sainfoin versus alfalfa forage to 32 producers as a collaborative effort between the Chouteau County Livestock Protective Association and MSU Extension.
- 76 producers learned about prairie dog management and grazing.
- 16 gardeners attended the level 1 Master Gardener program. If all gardeners contribute community service, they will yield 320 volunteer hours to the Chouteau County communities.



Photo by Janell Barber.

Community, Home and Family Connections

Connections with the constituents of Chouteau County were made through a variety of programs which included diabetes, heart health, youth mental health, agricultural operation transfer planning, bicycle helmet safety, recycling and food and nutrition including food safety, making pie crusts, food preservation, pressure cooking, meal planning and candy making. Generational connections, improved health, wellness and safety, cost savings and self-accomplishment were some of the many benefits observed in those who participated in these programs.

Being prepared for disasters continues to be a top priority for Chouteau County. Through our Strengthening Community Agrosecurity Planning (S-CAP) committee, Chouteau County MSU Extension, Chouteau County Health Department and Chouteau County Disaster Emergency Services (DES) offered a tabletop exercise on food safety during a disaster. Representatives from volunteer organizations, medical facilities, senior centers, neighboring county DES and Public Health agencies participated in a foodborne illness scenario addressing response protocols for food menus, food preparation safety during disaster response and shelter operations and foodborne illness outbreaks. Participant comments after attending the tabletop lesson included learning “tons, tons” of information and having “a lot to think about.” The committee prepared and served relevant pressure cooker meals as an example of what and how food could be served safely to prevent foodborne illnesses.



A recycling event in Chouteau County. Photo by Janell Barber.

Cooking Reinvented

The excitement of electric pressure cookers hit Chouteau County this year. MSU Extension hosted and assisted with several well-attended classes in Chouteau, Toole, Hill and Cascade Counties. Participants learned benefits and general principles of pressure cooking, how to safely and properly use an electric pressure cooker, how to adapt recipes for pressure cooking, tips and hints shared by instructors and other participants. They also learned considerations for deciding to purchase and what brand to choose, food safety and quick, healthy meal options. Many of the recipes showcased locally-grown foods from farms, ranches and gardens. After attending these classes, participants indicated they gained new knowledge using a pressure cooker, a new cooking method they would use, were more comfortable using their pressure cooker and enjoyed the time with others. A few participants indicated



Photo by Janell Barber.

the pressure cooker was not for them, which saved them money. Post-class feedback has included increased amount of meals prepared with the pressure cooker, improved quality of meals prepared, new meal options, ease and quickness of foods that typically were off-limits due to time and effort required in advance, and an overall buzz of excitement about cooking. A majority of participants had the pressure cooker in their possession but feared using it, and used theirs for the first time either during class or after taking the class. The warm reception for pressure cooking feels like home-cooked meals have been reinvented.

Youth Development

A total of 362 Chouteau County youth participated in youth development or agricultural or natural resource programs.

- With help from Chouteau County Conservation District and Montana Farmers Union, fourth and fifth graders from Highwood, Big Sandy and Fort Benton learned the importance of agriculture during the Chouteau County Ag Day. Youth learned about sheep, wool, horses (presented by Keely Drummond, Miss Teen Rodeo Montana), field-to-table food by making bread, farm equipment and soils.
- 4-H Archery is one of the county's top projects where 4-H youth improved their archery and leadership skills through the project, competitions and the Archery Council.



ABOVE: Chouteau County Archery Shoot.

RIGHT: 4-H chicken project members at the fair. Photo by Janell Barber.



- 4-H and FFA youth learned about producing a quality product and taking good care of their market animals through animal quality assurance certification.
- Hunter safety students learned about the impact, identification and identification of noxious weeds. They also learned how to improve hunter/producer relations.
- Chouteau County 4-H youth participated in the 4-H Dog Show and attended 4-H camp and Montana 4-H Congress which included 4-H members from other counties. They interacted with new people, engaged in workshops which helped them develop confidence and communication and leadership skills.
- The Chouteau County 4-H Project/Communication Contest Day and Fair provided educational opportunities including hands-on learning of new projects, communication contest judging, interview judging, project exhibits, livestock judging, bred heifer ultrasounds and showmanship, market animal weigh-in, showmanship and confirmation, small animal showmanship, round robin, market livestock sale and carcass judging.

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