



Welcome to Hill County

Hill County is awash with color - Black Angus cattle, green pulse crops, golden wheat, yellow mustard, orange prairie sunsets, and blue mountains contrast against the Montana sky. It's as diverse as it is colorful. Havre, the economic hub, is located 40 miles from the Canadian border. It is home to the Chippewa Cree Tribe at Rocky Boy, MSU Northern University, MSU Northern Ag Research Center, Northern Montana Hospital, a Walmart, the BNSF Railroad, the Border Patrol and a population of 16,596.

With over 6,500 households, 113 4-H members and much socio-economic diversity, MSU Extension Agents Shylea Wingard and Jasmine Carbajal organized many programs during the year to address county and community local needs.

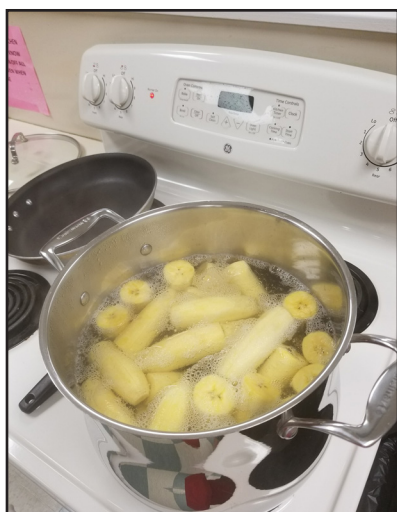
Snow piled up in the Hill County towns of Havre and Gildford. The winter of 2018 won't be forgotten, especially when named the 'worst winter in the U.S.' by the Weather Channel. Photo by Shylea Wingard.



Black Angus cows graze the northern prairie outside of Havre with the Bears Paw Mountains as a backdrop. Photo by Shylea Wingard.

Cooking Across Cultures and other Family and Consumer Science Programs in Hill County

In 2018, Family and Consumer Science (FCS) Extension agent Jasmine Carbajal focused on contributing to a healthier county by offering the ServSafe Food Handler certification course. This national class was offered to food industry employees, community organizations and community members. A total of 148 people received



Plantains for mangú at Cooking Across Cultures - Latin Night. Photo by Jasmine Carbajal.

the training as well as an additional 116 high students through a partnership with the Havre High School FCS department.

A strong collaboration also developed with the Havre Public Schools Adult Education Program and MSU Extension Hill County. Carbajal offered a diverse range of classes that included: food budgeting, label reading and canning for food preservation. Other community classes

offered through MSU Extension were Meals in Minutes (pressure cooker class), Pie Crust class and Cooking Across Cultures.

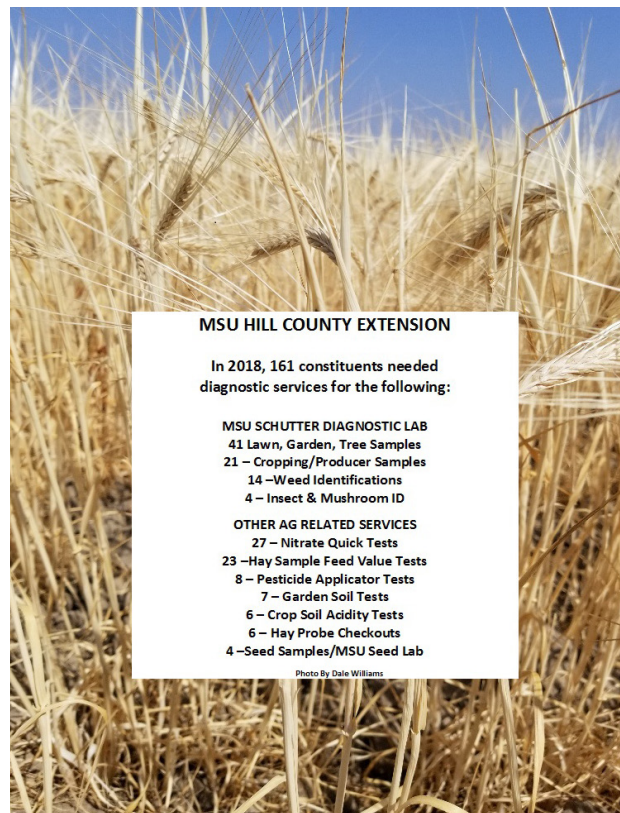
Cooking Across Cultures is a new curriculum developed in collaboration with MSU Extension in Cascade County, with Carbajal and Katrin Finch (Cascade County MSU Extension agent). The series consisted of four classes that covered four distinct cultural cuisines: Irish, Italian, Latin and Asian. MyPlate recommendations were taught in each class and different food groups were discussed. Evaluation results of the class showed impressive outcomes: 100% of participants gained new knowledge, 86% indicated the class provided them with new, diverse recipes to use at home, and it was reported that one of the intended changes of a participant was to “cook more balanced plates” at home.

Carbajal is excited to expand 2019 programs in Hill County to include mental health programming like Mental Health First Aid and Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM).

Every Dollar Counts in Agriculture

Hill County producers barely recovered from the drought and fires of 2017 when winter 2018 hit, bringing record snowfall and cold temperatures. Chinook winds and warm temperatures never came, and snow piled to 2 foot levels. By April, the Weather Channel named Havre “The Worst Winter City in the U.S.” Hay was limited and ranchers used bulldozers to clear feed grounds and calving lots. Despite laborious effort, many had 80% calf crops. It was dubbed “the winter that wouldn’t die.” Farmers couldn’t start planting fields until late April/early May. Flooding washed out roads and tractors got stuck. Some planted spring wheat, concerned it was too late for peas, and others diversified with mustard, lentils or chickpeas. Fusarium root rot, acidic soils, pesticide injury and global trade issues added to the summer challenges. Positively, crop yields exceeded average. One producer summed it well “I used to aim for bushels and protein. Now I have both and it still doesn’t pay.”

Given the economic and global uncertainty, one thing was constant, MSU Extension agent Shylea Wingard, who offered programming and services to address the needs of Hill County constituents. She organized four producer workshops, presented



The chart summarizes Hill County MSU Extension agricultural services to constituents in 2018.

at four grower meetings and gave seven private applicator tests. A Master Gardener class series and a tree care workshop were offered for urban homeowners, as well as four gardening classes presented to the Food Commodity program at Rocky Boy. Program outreach included 480 constituents and feedback indicated that attendees implemented practices learned, including wearing proper protective gear for pesticide application, garden soil testing, watering trees more deeply, checking fields for soil acidity and testing hay for nutritional and nitrate analysis.

One producer brought two hay samples for a nitrate quick test. Wingard disclosed how the discoloration only indicates a “presence” of nitrate and doesn’t identify toxic levels, while an \$11 nitrate test by the lab might be worth doing for the results versus a dead cow. The producer responded with a lecture on “how every dollar counts in this business.” The following week, the producer brought in two hay samples and asked that they be sent to the lab for analysis. The following week, eight samples were brought in to be sent to the lab for feed value and nitrate testing. As the producer ordered four water quality tests for his livestock ponds and wrote the check, he smiled and said “it’s worth every dollar.” The change in opinion (costs versus potential savings) and informed decision making happens after a one-on-one consultation with MSU Extension.

Currently Wingard is delivering Risk Management education workshops from a grant proposal that was funded by USDA-RMA.

Hill County 4-H - Meeting People & Goals

2018 will be remembered as the year the 4-H Chuckwagon was built. Each year, 4-H members are asked to set three goals regarding what they hope to learn or accomplish during the project year. At the end of the year, they summarize their progress, accomplishments, or shortfalls in their 4-H record book. Over seven years ago, Hill County 4-H set a goal to rebuild the old and deteriorating 4-H Chuckwagon building when it had trouble passing a fire marshal inspection. Years of fundraising, bake sales and raffles by 4-H members and the community alike, plus countless hours of donated labor by volunteers and professional contractors, culminated into a 150’ x 40’ steel-sided building complete with commercial kitchen. In July, a ribbon cutting ceremony was held. Clubs branded the wooden boardwalk with their names and the “4-H” brand. Then the doors opened to serve the public for the first time on the first day of the Great Northern Fair. Over 3,000 milkshakes, 80 pies and 1,600 burgers were served and enjoyed by all in air-conditioned comfort.

The 4-H Chuckwagon wasn’t the only highlight. A total of 113 4-H members had opportunities to learn and grow as community leaders. Sydney O’Neil was elected as a State 4-H Ambassador (one of five). Wyatt Johnstone’s hog placed fourth in the statewide Swine of Excellence (SOE) contest out of 1,553 hogs. Thirteen 9-12 year old members attended 4-H camp at Beaver Creek

SNAP EDUCATION - EATING WELL ALONG THE HI-LINE

Our SNAP-Ed (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Education Program) Educator, Rhonda Gregoire, had another busy year in 2018. Gregoire served 449 children and adults in Hill County, including Havre, Rocky Boy, Box Elder and Gildford, in elementary grades first, third and fifth. Positive behavior change was shown in areas of diet quality, physical activity, and food safety in both children and adults. She also worked on policy, systems and environmental work in the county. Gregoire was able to participate in two professional development opportunities and complete training: Systems Approach to Healthy Communities (SAHC) and Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE). Gregoire is happy to work with the people of Hill County and the Rocky Boy Reservation.



Rhonda Gregoire sharing a nutritional story with first graders at North Star Elementary School. Photo by Jasmine Carbajal.

Park and participated in learning activities with 4-H members from seven northern Montana counties. Members also learned and had fun at 4-H Congress, Ambassador Training, and Rec Lab, as well as showing their projects at the county fair and performing community service. One club, the Chirping Meadowlarks, opened a “free library” for the community at the grocery store.

Twelve members of the Hill County 4-H Interstate Exchange group journeyed to Pima County 4-H in

Tucson, Arizona, for eight days in June. There they met up with 14 Arizona 4-H members. The weather was warm and so were the friendships. Activities included touring the Sonoran Desert Museum, the Anaconda Copper Mine in Bisbee, AZ, the University of Arizona, the Pima Air and Space Museum, the Santa Rita Ranch and taking a trip to the Mexican border. Hill County 4-H looks forward to hosting Arizona 4-H members and sharing the best of North Central Montana in 2019.

After seven years of 4-H planning, fundraising, and countless hours of volunteer and community support, the new 4-H Chuckwagon was erected at the Great Northern Fairgrounds. Photo by Shylea Wingard.



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