

Hill County



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4-Her's heading up to the mess hall at Camp Kiwanis, by Kati Purkett.

Located in Northcentral Montana on the Hi-Line, Hill County presents many programs to a population of 16,347. Extension Agents Kati Purkett and Colleen Pegar serve major towns and cities in the county which include: Havre, Gildford, Box Elder, Rudyard, Kremlin and Inverness. The Rocky Boy Reservation is also part of the county and is home to the tribal community of the Chippewa-Cree Tribe. Havre is the county seat and is home to 9,800 people and the MSU Northern Campus. The Northern Agriculture Research Center is housed on historic Fort Assiniboine, southwest of Havre, which provides ample opportunities for collaboration. MSU Extension plays a vital role in meeting local needs in Agriculture, Family Consumer Sciences, 4-H and Youth Development and Nutrition Education.

4-H in Hill County

While the 4-H youth development program runs slightly different from one county to another, the core values are the same.

That became apparent for Agriculture and 4-H Agent Colleen Pegar when she started in Hill County in March. In a new county, a fresh set of eyes can review 4-H ideas and programs, which is what happened when Hill County FCS and 4-H Agent Kati Purkett joined MSU Extension. Pegar and

Purkett split the 4-H duties successfully this year. The agents started with multi-county 4-H camp in June at the Kiwanis Camp in Beaver Creek Park. While at camp, Hill County 4-H members participated in various activities, including outdoor survival and archery. A successful fair followed in July and all the 4-H members exhibited the 4-H motto of Making the Best Better. Purkett and Pegar are excited for the upcoming 4-H year and are encouraged by the new enrollees in Hill County 4-H.

Ag Status in Hill County

For agriculture producers in Hill County, the year started off as any other year, with high hopes and an optimistic outlook. However warm temperatures and a lack of moisture proved to be difficult to recover from. This year the Hill County forage estimate indicated a 25% decrease in forage production due to a lack of moisture. This affected crops, hay supplies and prices. During the past 7 months, Hill County MSU Extension Agent Colleen Pegar tested a variety of cereal crops and hay for the presence of nitrates, hosted a Drought Management Workshop in April and is in the process of organizing programs for the winter and spring. Nitrate tests came back high on a majority of the samples submitted, raising the question of what producers would feed livestock this winter. Hay prices are at an all-time

high and producers are bringing in hay from as far away as Nebraska and Kansas. This presents potential issues with introducing new plants and weeds to the area. The crops did marginally well for as stressed and water deprived as they were. The winter wheat is in the ground and looks to have a solid start for next spring. Hopefully this winter will provide the much-needed moisture to produce bountiful crops and heavy calves next year.

Extension Helps With Community Education

MSU Extension agriculture agent Colleen Pegar has been teaching for the Community Education classes that Have Public Schools administrators. Pegar taught on Identifying Native Plants, What's Wrong with My Tree, and How to Care for and Plant Your Succulents. Each class was attended by 8-12 community members. Identifying Native Plants looked at 31 plants that Lewis and Clark found on their journey across what would become Montana Territory in 1805-1806. What's Wrong with My Tree illustrated some of the common diseases and issues that can arise with trees in Hill County. How to Care for and Plant Your Succulents went over succulent care and participants chose up to three succulents to plant during class. Participants of each class reported they learned something new and interesting.

4-H Chuckwagon

The history of 4-H runs deep in Hill County and the support that Hill County shows for the 4-H program can be seen firsthand in the Chuckwagon building that was completed in 2019. MSU Extension, along with the 4-H Foundation, manage the building to ensure it can be used for multiple events throughout the year. 4-H uses the building for club meetings, workshops, fundraisers and fair concessions. The community can rent the facility for weddings, funerals, meetings, fundraisers, dances and even car shows. With the newest commercial kitchen on the Hi-line, the building attracts a variety of clubs and organizations. While managing a multi-purpose event center may not seem like a normal function of MSU Extension, it serves as a bridge between 4-H and the community. This allows us to have open access to a wonderful facility that houses a variety of outreach programs not only for 4-H but the community.

New Agents in Hill County

Kati Purkett joined MSU Extension in May of 2021:

I am excited to combine my passion for community, Family and Consumer Sciences, and education in my new position as a Hill County MSU Extension Agent. I am an





Previous Page: (top) Indoor Exhibit Success by Kati Purkett; **(bottom)** Succulents by Colleen Pegar; **This Page: (top)** Cow Calf Pair, by Colleen Pegar; **(bottom)** Full swing at the 4-H Chuckwagon during Fair, by Kati Purkett

MSU Northern graduate and Havre native, have worked in various food service management positions and have spent the last 20 years managing my family's business, Northern Home Essentials. During that time, I have also served in a volunteer capacity as president of Havre Chamber of Commerce, director of First Lutheran Preschool Ministry, and am currently president of the First Lutheran Church Council. I am happiest when cooking for my family and friends, and I treasure spending time with my husband and two daughters while they participate in a multitude of activities that include sporting events, drag racing, camping, boating, and 4-H. I look forward to spending more time interacting with the residents of the community and using my accumulated experience and skills to further education in Hill County.

Colleen Pegar:

Although new to Hill County, I am not new to MSU Extension. My name is Colleen Pegar and for the past six years I have been the Agriculture and 4-H Agent in Sheridan County. If you are having trouble determining where that is, think of Plentywood, or as far east and north as you can go and still be in Montana and not North Dakota or Canada. As you probably know, Sheridan county leads the state in durum production and it also grows an exceptional amount of pulse crops and spring wheat, and even a few oil seeds on a continuous cropping system. I have lived in Montana most of my life and can claim that I have lived in all four corners and now the central part of the state. I hold a dual Bachelors degree from the University of Wyoming in Agribusiness and Animal Science with a focus in Livestock Production and I hold a Masters degree from New Mexico State University in Ruminant Nutrition. Needless to say, there was a steep learning curve into crops when I started with MSU Extension in Sheridan County, but if you aren't continually learning new things, how does one grow?

I started in Hill County the end of March and I am settling into the position. I am excited to have the opportunity to work with the people of Hill County. I am looking forward to collaborating with other agents in the area to bring you new, innovative, research-based and informative programming. I have already had questions on trees and soils and I have even guest lectured at MSU Northern on Ruminant Nutrition in the short time here. If you are ever in Havre and would like to introduce yourself, please stop by the office.

Hill County Staff



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

Colleen Pegar
Agriculture/4-H Agent

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