

# Lewis & Clark County

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*Lewis & Clark County MSU Extension Office, by Mat Walter.*

Lewis and Clark county includes the communities of Helena, East Helena, Augusta, Lincoln, Wolf Creek and Craig. The county contains one of the larger urban environments in Montana; Helena, with a population of 32,000, makes up less than half of the total county population of 69,000. Helena is located in the large, sweeping Helena Valley between the Big Belt Mountains and Boulder Mountains. Wolf Creek is located along the Interstate 15 corridor and Augusta rests against the Rocky Mountain front at the Northern edge of the county. Lincoln, Montana, is a forested haven that is nestled amidst the Garnet Range to our West, with Craig to our East along the Missouri River. Lewis and Clark County has a strong agricultural foundation of cattle, sheep and hay producers. We have a strong 4-H membership with 349 youth enrolled and 114 volunteers spread over 21 clubs in the county.

## Lewis and Clark County new SNAP-Ed Instructor

In May 2021, a new Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Education (SNAP-Ed) Instructor joined the Lewis & Clark County MSU Extension, covering Lewis & Clark and Jefferson Counties. SNAP-Ed is a grant-funded program

offered through the Montana State University (MSU) Extension Nutrition Education Program (NEP), Buy Eat Live Better. SNAP-Ed works with low-income individuals and families to improve the likelihood that nutrition and physical activity practices are in alignment with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. This is done through education efforts and through working with partnerships to improve policies, systems, and environments. The SNAP-Ed Instructor works with partners within the counties to familiarize the community with SNAP-Ed and reach eligible audiences. To help build these partnerships, one-time recruitment lessons, known as Creates, have been provided to the clients of various local agencies. Creates lessons include an introduction to Buy Eat Live Better and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. These lessons also include participatory food preparation that allow participants to prepare and taste a skillet, omelet, or vegetable dish. The intent of the Creates lessons is to plant a seed of change in participants and secure opportunities for further education through additional programming.

Growing Together Montana is a partnership that developed this year in Lewis & Clark County. Growing Together Montana is a collaboration between the MSU Extension NEP and the Master Gardener program. This collaboration provided a local

Master Gardener with a grant to grow and donate produce to the local food bank, Helena Food Share. Part of this collaboration also included outreach and nutrition education provided by the SNAP-Ed Instructor through a taste test of produce from the local community gardens and a Creates lesson utilizing produce grown in the donation plots and geared towards the clients of Helena Food Share.

## Podcasts and Gardens

The MT AgCast podcast made a triumphant return to the bandwidth here in Lewis and Clark county and across Montana. In the opening episode, Cody Stone, PhD, Director of MSU Extension, sat with Jackie Rumph, MSU Extension Agent in Yellowstone County, and MSU Community Development Specialist Tara Mastel, to discuss what MSU Extension means to Montana and how we fulfill our mission across many different spectrums. In a special series of episodes featuring part of the Montana Integrated Pest Management team, specialists Cecil Tharpe, Zach Miller and Jane Mangold discussed what IPM does for different agricultural sectors in Montana. They featured discussions on fruit production, traditional cropping and range management. These three Montana State University faculty outlined the importance of looking at all the factors of keeping invasive species from taking hold in our production systems. In the second IPM episode, Zach Miller, PhD, and MSU Extension Specialists Abi Saeed and Laurie Kerzicnik discussed the importance of IPM as it contributes to the health of pollinators in our orchards and gardens.

Intro to Gardening is an adult education course that is facilitated in cooperation with Helena College. At the onset of Covid-19 in 2020, urban areas such as Helena experienced an influx of gardeners interested in self-sufficiency and sustainability. Intro to Gardening offers inexperienced gardeners a foundation for beginning their own garden, and it offers veteran gardeners a refresher course. The four-week course provides students with basics on soil health, plant science, garden planning and pest management. The same trend that filled this class also brought an influx of contacts into the Lewis and Clark office with a 90% increase in comparison to 2020 of clients who had gardening questions. These clients brought in a higher number of soil samples and identification samples than before as they found themselves spending more time in the garden. Soil samples saw a marked increase with many more gardeners looking to supplement their soil health.



**Top:** Chloe Lundquist, by Jake Mohrmann; **Bottom:** Agents Callie Cooley, Allison Kosto and Rose Malisani recording a new podcast, by Mat Walter

## Lewis & Clark County Staff



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

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