

# Sanders County



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*View from Thompson Falls Historic High Bridge, by Juli Thurston.*

**M**SU Extension in Sanders County provides educational programs in the areas of Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, Community Development, and Family and Consumer Sciences.

Sanders County is located in Northwestern Montana. It is bordered on the west by Idaho's Panhandle and is Montana's 15th most populous county with a population of about 12,400. There is a diverse mix of agricultural land, small acreage subdivisions, rural communities and range or forested land. The highest number of jobs are in farming, fishing, forestry, and construction. Sanders County includes the city of Thompson Falls as the county seat, Plains, and the town of Hot Springs. Sanders County is supported by Commissioners Carol Brooker, Anthony Cox, and Glen Magera.

## SNAP-Education Available for Adults and Children

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) offers classes teaching the importance of good nutrition, physical activity, food resource management, and food safety. Classes are free of charge and available to SNAP

eligible adults and elementary students in first, third and fifth grades.

This year 86 SNAP-Ed classes were conducted, reaching 143 adults and children. Classes were taught in partnership with a variety of organizations including Clark Fork Valley Hospital and Hot Springs Senior Center as well as in three school districts. The Extension office reached additional students by holding a summer day camp for children ages 8-12 years old, teaching the students how to make healthy snack and beverage choices and how to add physical activity to their day.

In addition to holding classes, SNAP-Ed works within the community to develop changes that make the healthy choice the easy choice for community members. To this end, SNAP-Ed has partnered with local schools that participate in Montana's Harvest of the Month Program, working to introduce school children to healthy, locally-grown food each month. Children are able to sample nutritious foods, many tasting a particular food for the first time.

## Now Open: Preservation Pantry

With 2021 came an increased interest in preserving home-harvested foods and an increased difficulty in finding or affording food preservation equipment. MSU Extension

in Sanders County launched Preservation Pantry, a food preservation equipment lending service, in order to make equipment available for free to area residents. Except when preservation classes were in session, most of the Extension office's food preservation supplies sat unused during a large portion of the year. After assessing the community's need for and projected response to such a lending service, the Extension office decided allowing community members to use the office's equipment would ease their financial burden and empower them to preserve foods to last beyond the growing season. In addition to the equipment that the Extension office already had, additional supplies were made available through a grant and a local donation. Area residents have made use of the free service and expressed gratitude for the ability to borrow the supplies for free. Equipment available to borrow includes: pressure canner, water bath canner, dehydrator, and various small tools for canning and food preparation. Plans to acquire more equipment in the future are underway. Along with the preservation equipment, residents go home with MontGuides to provide guidance on food preservation practices.

## Sanders County 4-H Outdoor Adventures

The 4-H Outdoor Adventures Project has been very popular the last few years in Sanders County. Project education and activities include snowshoeing, skiing, snowboarding, sledding, ice skating, kayaking, ice fishing, fly fishing, hiking, camping, backpacking, bicycling, trapping, wildlife education, hunting skills, forestry, photography, and backcountry cooking. Volunteers teach and organize educational outings throughout the year. Thirty youth are enrolled in the project and participate regularly. One member stated, "This is the most fun I have had in 4-H yet!" Leaders strive to make the experiences educational as well as FUN! Through advertising this opportunity, 4-H enrollment has grown by 15 new members the past two years.

## Educational Garden and Farm Tours

With the new interest in growing one's own food this past year, educational garden and farm tours were organized. Tours included a blueberry farm and apple orchard, foraging workshop and cow milking demonstration, peach, cherry, and apricot Orchard, local day lilies farm, a vineyard, lavender farm, and garden tour with local master gardener, Charlotte Beaudry. Tours attracted 25-30 people to each session to learn each individual crops' production and marketing practices. Local residents learned what is growing in their neighborhood and how to produce it on their own if they wish. One hundred percent of the participants gained new knowledge and put at least one thing they learned into practice. Participants were very thankful for the educational opportunities offered through these tours.



**Harvest the Month**  
August 2021 – July 2022

**Calendar**

Although we recommend following this calendar, your school or program can change the order of the calendar to suit your needs. None of the materials are printed with the month. The calendar will likely change each year to include new foods!

 August – Cherries	 September – Brassicas	 October – Apples	 Nov. – Winter Squash
 December – Lentils	 January – Carrots	 February – Beets	 March – Grains
 April – Chickpeas	 May – Beef + Bison	 June – Leafy Greens	 July – Dairy

**For More Information**  
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[mtharvestofthemonth.org](http://mtharvestofthemonth.org)

The Montana Harvest of the Month program showcases Montana grown foods in Montana communities. The program is a collaboration between Montana Farm to School, Office of Public Instruction, Montana Teen Nutrition Program, National Center for Appropriate Technology, Montana State University Extension, Gallatin Valley Farm to School, FoodCrops Montana, Montana Organic Association, and Montana Department of Agriculture. More information and resources are available at [mtharvestofthemonth.org](http://mtharvestofthemonth.org).

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**Previous Page: (top)** Preservation Pantry Supplies, by Miriah Kardelis; **(bottom)** Monthly calendar of Harvest of the Month foods, by Montana Farm to School Program; **This Page:** Backpacking trip to St. Paul Lake, by Juli Thurston



## Sanders County Staff



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

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