



Cows load up on hay on a snowy day.

Montana State University partners with Lake County and the United States Department of Agriculture to provide quality continuing education programs and services, bringing MSU to Lake County and providing Lake County residents all the experts, research, and information the university has to offer through a satellite campus in Ronan.

We respond to citizens and stakeholders by developing, implementing, and evaluating educational programs that address local needs and issues. Extension agents continually assess and respond to educational needs identified by community residents, advisory committee members, volunteers, stakeholder groups, and representatives of organizations and agencies throughout the county.

Supported by Montana State University, programs strengthen Lake County MSU Extension goals and objectives that enhance agriculture, natural resource management, community economics, family and consumer sciences, and 4-H youth development.

Winter Project Days

The 4-H motto, 'Learn by doing,' encourages youth to pursue hands-on learning opportunities to develop new skills that last a lifetime. Lake County MSU Extension facilitates various opportunities for youth to achieve this motto, including the annual Winter Projects Day event. This event provides workshop experiences for youth to engage in as they connect with their peers and develop new skill sets. Despite a winter storm warning, 35 4-H youth gathered at the Ronan Community Center in February this past year for this event. The 4-H members engaged in workshops ranging from leathercraft and cake decorating to woodworking and pillow making. This event was made possible by 21 adult and teen leaders who volunteered their time and expertise. Events like this help cultivate the caring community that 4-H is known for and provide a safe and engaging opportunity for our youth to grow.

Multi-County Camp

A youth's 4-H experience is not simply confined to their county. In fact, there are many state and national events available for youth to attend through 4-H. One of the most popular out-of-county experiences is the Multi-County 4-H Camp hosted at the Darrell Fenner 4-H camp at Loon Lake near Bigfork. For years, youth have gathered in this location to sing campfire songs, canoe, swim, show off their dance moves, compete in camp Olympics and make new friends from across the state's western side. This year, 7 of the 22 teen camp counselors were selected from Lake County. In this endeavor, teens attend three full-day training sessions to prepare for camp, decide on a theme, organize, and develop daily schedules for youth programs. Once at camp, counselors welcomed 63 4-H camp youth, 14 attending from Lake County. Many youth learned new things at camp, as only 4 out of 63 youth campers had attended Multi-County 4-H camp in years prior. Camp allows youth to develop a new sense of confidence in an environment that encourages independence, self-growth, teamwork, and responsibility.

Cattlemen Education Series helps cattle producers stay current

Being current on educational material can help cattle producers stay efficient. The 2022 Cattlemen's College highlighted "How to get more grazing from your grass." This four-part series incorporated slide presentations along with a ranch tour. MSU Extension Lake County in cooperation with the Western Montana Stockmen's Association invited guest speakers to explain the adaptation of intensive grazing systems used on range and irrigated pastures.

Fifty producers took advantage of all four lectures and attended the tour. Rancher Paul Guenzler commented, "Even if you adopt one or two new methods into your grazing program you can benefit your operation."

More than 125 cattlemen took advantage of a seminar series highlighting financial management and inheritance taxes. This series of topics was chosen by the Western Montana Stockmen's Association board of directors who advise Lake County MSU Extension.

As a result of the series, 30 ranches developed a marketing plan that coincided with the information presented at the financial management class. These plans will give the individuals calculated decision power as commodity markets fluctuate.

Community Comes Together for Polly Wog Park

For the past 70 years, Polly Wog Park, located behind K. William Harvey Elementary School in Ronan, has been an escape for countless students. However, the passage of time has seen weeds grow, branches break, and pathways become overgrown at the park, and then community support showed up.

Lake County MSU Extension in cooperation with numerous organizations and individuals including the Ronan School District, Flathead Reservation MSU Extension, Salish and Kootenai College Extension, the Tribal Forestry Greenhouse Program, Mission Lawn and Landscape, the Tribal Forestry Department, and community volunteers ranging in age and experience, have come together to renew and further develop this space for future students to enjoy.

Activities centered around environmental stewardship, social-emotional learning, and general exploration and curiosity have been facilitated at the park. And the learning goes beyond structured lessons. Various youth park cleanup days have been coordinated, with 191 students in the after-school program coming this year to help revitalize the park, plant native plants, remove dead or dying debris, and create bug hotels, while high school students worked to reconstruct broken bridges and picnic tables. The space has much history for the community and as Angel Popyk, Ronan After School Programs Coordinator stated, "We're all really enjoying it. It's so fun watching the joy in the kids."

Community Sewing Club

With hundreds of youth currently enrolled in after school programs, Lake County MSU Extension has built relations with local Boys and Girls Club staff to coordinate regular sewing experiences for youth attending the Polson Boys and Girls Club.

With four adult volunteers, leaders have provided more than 240 hours of in-person sewing instructional time for youth ages 5-14. Youth sign up to attend sewing lessons and often want to return week after week. Projects are simple and include personal care bags, pillows, small blankets, scrunchies, hats and other miscellaneous items youth request. However, while seemingly simple, completing these projects generates feelings of accomplishment, pride, and generosity within youth.

A returning youth member requested to sew another hat, after being asked what happened to the previous hat they made. The member stated, "We don't have a lot of stuff at home, so I gave it to my baby sister and now I want to make another for my other sister and maybe my mom and dad too." Another youth stated, "This is so cool, I want to do this every day... why can't you come every day?" Comments such as these validate volunteer efforts to spend time developing skills with youth, skills that will last a lifetime and that they can share with others in their lives.

Fair remains the connection between agriculture and the community

For more than 90 years, 4-H has been a presence in Lake County, educating young people and developing new generations of leaders and professionals in all fields. First geared toward agriculture, today's 4-H program gives kids from all backgrounds countless opportunities and experiences. 4-H



Top Row: (left) Making new friends at Winter Project Days; **(right)** Multi-County 4-H Camp Counselors 2022; **Center Row: (left)** Growing a future at Polly Wog Park; **(right)** Sewing can be fun!; **Bottom Row: (left)** 4-H member Ryan Walchuk answers questions posed by Swine Showmanship Judge Paul Toussaint; **(right)** Lake County 4-H members meet with volunteers to discuss 4-H projects during Interview Judging.

in Lake County continues to change, and the organization's dedication to youth development remains strong.

Nowhere in Lake County is the influence of 4-H more evident than at the county fair. "The skills and knowledge youth gain from participating in 4-H stay with them throughout their lives," said Sjaan Vincent, Lake County Fair Board member and 4-H alumni.

The dominant and ever-present staple of the Lake County Fair is the participation of 4-H youth from all backgrounds and age groups who work year-round to prepare projects for competitions that await them as the last days of summer begin to slip away.

MSU Extension Lake County enjoys a great relationship with the Lake County Fair Board. While the Fair Board leads fair activities, MSU Extension in Lake County is an integral partner due to the organization's leadership of 4-H. Extension's role is to manage the fair's educational component, with staff making sure that each year's 4-H showing is better than the last.

Volunteers Make the Difference

Thirty adult volunteers serve in a leadership role for 4-H projects and clubs throughout Lake County. Volunteers organize and run club meetings, provide project instruction in more than 40 project areas, coordinate and contribute to events, for fundraising activities, and lead workshops, training, and numerous leadership activities.

In the Lake County 4-H program, more than 2,000 volunteer hours were contributed to youth development, an equivalent to more than \$55,000 in value.

Protecting cherries protects the cherry industry

Montana's cherry industry secured its place in world markets by establishing a Pest Management Area (PMA) to help ensure Montana cherries are free of fruit flies. Markets in the United States and worldwide prohibit the importation of fruit-containing pests, particularly the western cherry fruit fly. Lake and Flathead Counties instituted the PMA as a required step in holding to a zero-tolerance policy for all cherry shipments through grants and funds from Flathead Cherry Growers, Inc.

Beginning in 2022, MSU Extension in Lake County was selected to conduct public education associated with the PMA. All lands within two miles of Flathead Lake are identified as comprising the PMA; anyone owning a cherry tree in this area needs to understand the importance of controlling fruit flies. Many methods were used to inform the public in the PMA, including direct mailing to homeowners, site visits for one-on-one discussions, and radio spots.



Flathead cherries, sweet, red, and delicious, need protection from fruit flies.

Lake County Staff

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

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