



Harvest Sunsets by Kim Woodring.

Toole County is made up of 1,915 square miles and has a population rate of 2.8 persons per square mile. The county population is 4,971 and the incorporated city of Shelby serves as the county seat. Other Toole County cities and towns include Ethridge, Galata, Kevin, Oilmont, Sunburst, and Sweetgrass. Situated in northern Montana, Canada provides the northern boundary, with the Marias River flowing along a major portion of the southern boundary.

Mining, agriculture, utilities, and transportation and warehousing are competitively positioned for growth and new business opportunities. These capitalize on the county's geographic location (major rail service, east/west & north/south highways, on the Canadian border, access to raw materials).

Toole County MSU Extension's 4-H program is unique in Montana because of the Four-County Marias Fair, held at the Marias Fairgrounds outside of Shelby. Our 100 4-H members join together with Pondera, Glacier, and Liberty County to exhibit projects and sell their livestock at the Marias Fair.

Montana Agritourism

Toole County MSU Extension Agent Kim Woodring recently finished her master's degree in Agriculture Education. Her degree focus was on Agritourism in Montana. She hosted a four-part webinar series that included an introduction to agritourism, business management, resources available, and business marketing. The speakers were all local Montana experts in agritourism, and many had their own operations. The webinar series invited participants from many organizations and anyone interested. There were 35 to 57 participants during the series. As part of the webinar, each attendee was surveyed to record their awareness of agritourism before and after the workshop. This information helped to determine that the series successfully increased the audience's awareness.

Woodring presented her professional paper at the Association of American Agriculture Educators Western Region Conference in Las Cruces, New Mexico to fellow agriculture Education Graduate Students. She has presented her findings

about agritourism at the Montana Cut Flower Association's inaugural meeting in Helena and the MSU Extension Annual Conference in Bozeman. She has also been a member of the Montana Agritourism Steering Committee since its inception. She works with Shannon Arnold, MSU Ag and Technology Education professor, on the Montana Agritourism Fellowship Program. With the program, a group of fellows will travel to different locations in Montana to learn about various practices. The Montana Agritourism Fellows program aims to create a statewide agritourism association.

Toole County 4-H

In the past year, the Toole County 4-H program has grown from 64 members to 100. The interest in 4-H has grown so much that we are considering reviving a fourth club. Kim Woodring and administrative assistant Jackie Stratton have been attending local trade shows and school events to get information out about 4-H. The most popular projects are robotics, archery, and livestock projects. Everyone knows that 4-H is historically about working with livestock such as pigs, steers, goats, or sheep, but not everyone lives on a farm or has attainable land for housing livestock. We are seeing an increase in the indoor projects of robotics and archery. These are projects that everyone can do and are low cost to the participants.

Our robotics program has really blossomed with the help of a few local grants to obtain more tablets and Lego kits. The youth members build the Lego kits and then program the robots with their tablets. There are so many options of what to build and it is so fun to see what they decide to build and how they program the robots.

The archery program has thirty-eight members compared to thirty last year. They have two different shooting times to accommodate all of the new members. They are adding new leaders as well.

The livestock program is combined with the Four-County Marias Fair and they average around 70 steers, 60 hogs, 20 sheep and 15 goats. The Marias Fair had a record sale year with half a million-dollar sale with only 115 animals.

We started new enrollment this year with an Open House at the Extension Office. Families interested in 4-H were invited to stop by and ask questions about 4-H, get more information, and sign up for 4-H.

At the end of the year, we celebrated our 4-H members and all of their hard work through the year with our annual Achievement Day. This year we decided to host a dinner for the families and the volunteers. This was a great way to celebrate the end of the year and for the 4-H members to get to know each other.



Top: Kim Woodring presenting her agritourism project to the Montana Cut Flower Association, by Patrick Mangan; **Bottom:** Toole County 4-H members at the Marias Fair, by Kimberly Woodring

Toole County Staff



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

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