



MSU Extension Education & Research Improving the Quality of Life

In Cascade County

HANDS OF HARVEST "*HANDS OF HARVEST*" (HOH) is a grass-roots organization whose mission is to empower rural residents to build heritage tourism in rural north central Montana. In May 2004, we published an 80-page tour guidebook featuring the fine arts, crafts, food, lodging, cultural sites, galleries and events of North Central Montana. HOH has identified two target markets: out-of-state visitors seeking to experience and learn about Montana's heritage and urban Montanans looking for affordable and convenient weekend excursions. The Steering committee also organized the *Hands of Harvest Round-Up* to offer participants the opportunity to network with each other, attend classes about pricing strategies, displaying their art and learning about other resources to become successful. HOH received \$13,962 in grants to fund the design and publish the 80-page travel guide. The Agent presented a workshop called "Putting Out the Welcome Mat" and is largely responsible for the communications of the group, book sales, marketing, organizing and recruiting members.

MISSOURI RIVER BREAKS - scheduled during MSU-GF spring break, a large number of short courses are offered to the public for a low fee. Over 400 participants attended in the past and over 100 have indicated they planned to sign up for other courses at MSU-GF. County Agent taught two presentations; Microsoft Word and Buying Digital Cameras. On average, each person attended at least 3 classes - creating 1200+ class contacts. The classes are intended to whet people's appetites to take other classes or enroll at MSU-GF. Some of the classes are inclusive - able to cover an entire topic in 1-2 hours. There is a wide range of courses offered including: art, craft, finance, entrepreneurship, technology, foods, horticulture and other family oriented activities.

WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT - The Cascade County web site is now on-line. This will be an especially helpful tool for our rural 4-H families and all residents served in Cascade County.

LEADER COLLEGE - The 4-H Leader College was developed to increase the knowledge level of 4-H Leaders to ensure a stronger youth development program. To promote the importance of this training, the Montana 4-H Leaders Council allocated \$1000.00 to each district to conduct the 8 hour Level 1 training. With the help of volunteer leaders from Cascade County, the agent organized, facilitated and taught Level 1. The first half was included as the workshop program for the District 3 Leaders Forum and the second half was conducted the last Saturday of October. We now have 18 Cascade, 1 Teton and 2 Judith Basin County leaders who have completed this first level. Our goal is to have the district proceed with the first half of level 2 in the spring.

BABYSITTING - Whenever a parent must leave their child under the supervision of a caregiver, their greatest concern is for safety of the child. In cooperation with Campfire, four Babysitter Training Days for grades 4 and up were conducted. In the four hour course, they learn the developmental characteristics of different age groups and how to plan safe, age appropriate activities, the business side of babysitting, first aid and how to keep the children, as well as themselves, safe while performing the role of caregiver. Members take a pre and post test and receive a certificate of completion at the end of the workshop. Approximately 140 participants complete the course each year.

Cascade County Extension Office is located at the Westgate Mall in Great Falls Phone: 406-454-6980



An educational resource dedicated to improving the quality of people's lives by providing research-based knowledge to strengthen the social, economic and environmental well-being of families, communities and agricultural enterprises.

BEEFABILITY: It is easy in agriculture to form comfortable habits, or ruts, and manage the farm or ranch year after year in the same way, because that is the way "we always do it". The Beefability program is a local effort to encourage cattle producers to examine their cattle and management to see if it was working, or in a rut. Over the four year life of the program, eleven ranches submitted 280 calves to be fed out locally, evaluated on the rail, and finally sold locally as hormone and antibiotic free beef. Some found that their cattle worked very well, others found areas that needed improving. All discovered that there was an economic reward for the extra time and effort it took to feed and market the calves. Producers averaged at least a 25cent/lb premium for their carcasses, which alone boosted their gross returns by \$42,000. Overall, this program increased the returns on these calves by about \$63,000.00. Several of the ranches are now implementing management strategies to increase cowherd efficiencies, weaning weights, calf health and carcass quality.

SMALL ACREAGE - As residents of Great Falls and other communities move "out" to the country on 5, 10 or 20 acre "ranchettes", they often bring with them little or no knowledge of pasture grass management, weed and rodent control or fencing and shelterbelt techniques. Many parcels are neglected or overgrazed, weedy and in need of help when purchased. Each year over 20 of these are visited for a few hours, resulting in a property management plan that includes the yard, building area, roadways, and pastures. The agent discusses how and where to plant suitable trees, how to efficiently care for the lawn area and how to manage the pasture. By encouraging the use of proper seed, fertilizer, weed and insect control, tree varieties, grazing and water management, the homeowners save thousands of misplaced dollars and hours of wasted effort.

LISTEN TO THE CHILDREN: Divorce is a major life change, but also offers an opportunity for self-examination and individual growth. A new component, Mediation Works, was added to the Co-Parenting classes this year. Co-Parenting Class participants and their new and former spouses meet monthly to discuss issues that still affect their relationships, including visitation rights, lawyer fees, financial management and parenting plans. 95% of the 159 participants have indicated to the county agent that the group sessions have provided a support group environment and have helped them cope with the divorce process.

HEALTH FAIR: "*Healthy People: Healthy Communities,*" theme of our annual Health Fair, focused on preventive health and the responsibilities of families to become more knowledgeable with regard to monitoring and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Over 100 community agencies and health providers shared and demonstrated the newest health skills and services available to everyone at the present time totaling 8000 consumers and families. A complete scenario of team nutrition and series of children's activities were located in a complete "*hand-on*" children's interactive area facilitated by over 250 adults. A family room emphasized healthy choices for single parents and traditional family members including tests, screenings, displays, and activities. A partnership of three local hospitals, four health clinics and 75 community agencies form the Health Fair Committee, facilitated by the Extension Service, and result in the countywide event.

ELDER ABUSE: Adult Protective Service caseworkers investigated 183 cases of financial exploitation of seniors in 2003 compared to 20 cases in 1995. Cascade County Agent organized and facilitated an awareness conference for 140 sheriff and police law enforcement officials and a series of 25 workshops on financial exploitation for 130 bank employees and 41 attorneys.