



MSU Extension Education & Research Improving the Quality of Life

In Sanders County

Food and Nutrition

The major goal of the Family and Consumers Science program is to improve the health and well being of our citizens. Limited food dollars, poor buying habits and a lack of nutritional information have resulted in a shortage of healthy meals for many of our families. The FSNEP (Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program) has been implemented in Sanders County. The sessions help participants with budgeting, shopping, meal planning and understanding food labels. In it's first year, 25 families were involved in the program. Participants are commenting the program has "helped them with ideas on what to fix, and how to plan more nutritious meals." Another said, "I baked my first loaf of bread and can't wait to learn more." The workshops teach participants to stretch their food resources, resulting in fewer hungry children at the end of the month; and save money by preventing foodborne illness and other health care costs for families in the future. Bi-monthly family newsletters supplement the workshops and keep consumers updated on the newest information on health, nutrition and other family-related topics. The free newsletter, containing research-based information, is sent to over 100 families in Sanders County.

Community Development

The Sanders County Economic Development Corporation (SCEDC) was revitalized in 2001 through support of the Sanders County Board of County Commissioners and Lake County Community Development. As a result SCCDC is now able to employ a full-time Community Development Director. Sanders County Extension has served on the board of directors since 1989. The Ag/4-H/Community Development agent currently serves as Board Chairman. Current projects include:

- Leveraging \$84,762 additional dollars through targeted grants programs (fitted to needs assessment)

- USDA Grant for the towns of Thompson Falls and Hot Springs for water and wastewater community upgrades.

- SCCDC assisted Board of County Commissioners in development and administration of a county-wide citizen input/survey

- SCCDC Community Tourism Assessment project, a structured series of meetings in conjunction with MT Dept. of Commerce and MSU Extension Community Development, resulted in a series of informational kiosks and water access projects.

- SCCDC has been working with the Clark Fork Valley Hospital and City of Plains in preparation of Community Block Grant proposal linked to \$9 million hospital expansion and upgrade project.

4-H & Youth

4-H in Sanders County has a tradition of well-qualified adult leaders being a core of the program. Leaders, members and the extension office maintain a strong "partnership" regarding program development.

Statistically speaking, Sanders County 4-H members remain active longer into their teen years than their state or regional counterparts. We like to believe that this is due to the responsibility Junior Leaders assume as they grow in the program. Opportunities are continually made by the Extension office to involve all interested people in program planning and implementation. Sanders County 4-H members are active in a wide variety of program areas, which contribute to successful lives beyond their 4-H careers. Four-H alumni make valuable contributions in both business and community service throughout Sanders County, Montana and beyond. Learning the real value of community service through food drives, making coats for needy children, visiting and caring for the infirm, are just a few examples of what 4-H brings to the community.

Sanders County Extension is located at the Courthouse in Thompson Falls

Phone: 406-827-6934



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.

Demonstrations are expected of youth involved in the Sanders County 4-H program. Public speaking via demonstrations develops skills, which serve members for the remainder of their lives. Nearly 90% of 190 enrolled members participate in the Demonstration program. Leaders and Extension staff commonly hear positive feedback from school personnel regarding 4-H members in the classroom. By participating in Demonstrations, youth learn to organize their thoughts and present information in a semi-formal setting. By participating in public speaking, they learn to face one of the greatest and most common fears known to mankind.

Youth Camps

Every May approximately 90 sixth grade students from Plains and Thompson Falls participate in a two-day Environmental Education camp hosted by the Plains District of the Lolo National Forest. This hands-on learning laboratory represents a cooperative effort of the United States Forest Service, Fish Wildlife and Parks, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Plum Creek Timber Company, Sanders County Extension office, and the Plains' and Thompson Falls' School Districts.

Northwestern Montana 4-H youth participate as full planning partners for three camps held annually at the Darrell Fenner 4-H Youth Facility near Bigfork. Every June, Multi-County Youth Camp, Skills Camp and TWEEN Junior Leadership camp, a new concept camp, are held, utilizing the talents of kids 12-18. Sanders County has traditionally been a strong partner in this multi-county effort. Adult leaders from Sanders County generously devote their time and talents towards the success of this camp and have made it a project that everyone is very proud of. Approximately 80 youth from Sanders County participated in the 2001 4-H camps program.

Noxious Weeds

Noxious weeds have impacted tens of thousands of acres of range, pasture and forest land in Sanders County. Since 1988, groups of landowners have formed districts and controlled invasive species on over 35,000 acres of privately owned rangeland in Sanders County. Over one hundred landowners have been involved in structured weed management districts via the Big Bend, Niarada, Markle Hill, Dixon, Camas Prairie, Little Bitterroot, Boyer-Lynch Creek and Emerald River cooperatives.

In addition to the broad-based control efforts, the Sanders County Extension Office has actively been involved with noxious weed *prevention*. Due to our location, Sanders County is like a "biological doorway" for noxious species currently established in the Pacific Northwest. Rush skeletonweed, Eurasian water milfoil, yellow starthistle, and tansy ragwort are just a few species of concern.

Local landowner initiated projects, such as the Beaver Creek project, organized by Ron Reedy and the Green Mountain Conservation District, are fine examples of local ownership.