



# County Corner

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## Flathead County Extension

The Flathead County Extension Office brings the resources of Montana State University to the people of Flathead County. 56 MSU Extension Offices throughout the state illustrate the effectiveness of a voluntary cooperative partnership between local governments, MSU and the USDA. The result is a dynamic cycle of timely and relevant knowledge, resources and support to help Montanans meet new challenges, make informed decisions and take action to improve their own quality of life.

The Flathead County Extension Office consists of two full time Extension Agents, Karole Sommerfield and Wesley Gwaltney. The primary work focus of the two Extension Agents is; Karole 4-H/Youth Development; Wesley, Agriculture, Community Development and Natural Resources. The person that keeps the office going with proficiency is our full-time Administrative Assistant Shelley Smith. One time Food Stamp Nutrition Education Assistant, Lacey Bixler, and one time 4-H Military Club Program Manager, Mary Tuck complete our staff.

The Flathead County 4-H program, 563 members strong, offers a wide variety of projects and opportunities. We are most certainly a family affair with tons of project diversity and educational programming. We couldn't have a program without our 140 adult volunteer leaders who mentor and guide and are the backbone of our program. The 4-H experience is real life and prepares today's youth for the future as adults. We often struggle to overcome the misconception that you must live on a farm or raise an animal to be a 4-Her. Or that being in 4-H means you are "square". This is all far from the truth; you are only limited by your



The Flathead County office staff, left to right: Mary Tuck, Karole Sommerfield, Shelley Smith, Wesley Gwaltney, Lacey Baxter.

imagination and attitude. Our program offers project areas in: Family & Consumer Sciences, Animal Sciences, Plant Sciences, Mechanical Sciences, Natural Sciences, Communications, Arts & Leisure Sciences, Leadership and Independent Study. Samplings of these project groups are Sewing and Foods, Rabbits and Poultry, Weeds and Gardening, Aerospace and Small Engines, Forestry and Shooting Sports, Photography and Leathercraft and even Cowboy Poetry! 4-H uses a Life Skills model that embraces the concept of "Learning by Doing". We are developmental in nature, and key into the ages and stages of youth development. Our motto is to "Make the Best Better" and we do. In Flathead County we are 25 clubs strong, with a wide variety of 4-H project strengths and member interests. New this year is the formation of a 4-H Military Club currently organizing around a 4-H robotics project. 4-H is the best Youth Development Program out there and well worth a serious look.

Food Stamp Nutrition Education (FSNE) provides education for food stamp

households and those eligible. Skill-building tips for adults and youth for choosing better foods, food handling, food storage and food safety practices. The Nutrition Assistant in the FSNE Program in Flathead County provides nutrition and food preparation training to adults and youth in schools using a specific curriculum. First, second and fifth grade classrooms are the target audience in our local school system.

Wesley Gwaltney is the new Agricultural/Community Development/Natural Resources Extension Agent in Flathead County. He will begin his responsibilities on May 1st. He will be glad to assist with any questions concerning crops, livestock, lawn, garden and any other agricultural questions. Insect identification and control suggestions will be available as well. Please stop by the office after the first of May and meet Wesley.

The Flathead County Extension Office is proud to provide professional service with quality and integrity. We are located at 800 South Main Street (East Annex) or call 758-5553.

*"The needs of the future take precedence over the demands of the present."*

— County Commissioners: Dale Lauman, Gary Hall & Joe Brenneman