

BECON
2/26/21

We got our money's worth on our 40 paid breakfasts this morning as at least two, maybe three, more tables of members were present today as compared to the previous weeks.

Guests

Our only guests today were our speakers, who all came from the MSU Extension – Yellowstone County office including Roni Baker, Callie Cooley and Jackie Rumph.

Announcements

- Bruce Glennie reminded us that those who need to get their R Serving certification completed to do so ASAP. We have kind of let this slide with the lack of beer pouring responsibilities due to COVID but we'll need to be able to hit the ground running again if and when this returns.
- Several months ago when Vitalant (formerly United Blood Services) came to speak to us they initiated a blood drive challenge that we apparently won. Well done for those who donated a pint or two. Sounds like a plaque signifying our efforts will be coming our way.
- Nominations for our elected positions within the club (ie Board & Foundation) will begin starting March 19th so please start thinking about this if you are interested or would like to nominate someone. Typically, those nominated are given an opportunity to speak before the election to let us know why they would like to serve in these positions.
- Mark your calendars for April 22nd as this will be the date that the Bites of Billings takes place. This is a fundraiser for the Family Tree Center.
- The Exchange Club District convention will be held on May 21-23 in Butte. If interested in attending, please let Dina know.

Speakers

We had an extremely interesting presentation this morning from some ladies from the Yellowstone County (MSU) Extension office. It was interesting to me because I had no idea of the scope of programs extension offices and stations have to offer to us, common people existing outside of the MSU University setting. Their charge is, after all, to educate us and convey information and research that MSU has done, and is doing, in the areas of not only agriculture but also with regard to Youth, Natural Resources, Community, Family and Home and Yard and Garden. Extension offices exist in every county in MT (typically in the County Seat), on all of the Reservations and includes a half-dozen Experiment Stations. 92 agents work for the MSU Extension.

I thought extension agencies were only about agriculture. But I didn't know that 4H is also under their charge. Roni Baker, the 4H and Youth Development Agent, outlined the 4H program and their focus on life skill development, leadership, citizenship and civic engagement. 4H actually started as a boys club used to introduce new varieties of wheat to farmers; and a girls club that focused on the canning of tomatoes. I think most of us know 4H best from their presence at county fairs showing their animals and hobby projects, but generally, 4H and the Extension offices, are all about education as outlined in the attached flyers. Speaking of county fairs, it should be noted that MontanaFair was one of the few fairs in the nation in the year of COVID that still took place and as a result, they were able to attract top notch judges for the competitions.

Callie Cooley, the Ag Agent, outlined her responsibilities relating to our traditional cattle/wheat industries although Montana's other major crops of malt barley, hay/alfalfa, sugar beets and corn also influence the information she provides. This includes pesticide and noxious weed training and certification, soil fertility, plant science, etc., and also covers additional non-traditional smaller acreage interests like fruit production and gardening. Did you know that the area between Laurel and Fromberg has a microclimate that is suitable for growing fruit?

Finally, Jackie Rumph, the Family and Consumer Sciences Agent, spoke to us about all of the other topics that the Extension office provides information for ranging from financial planning to food sciences to mental health – a literal cornucopia of family and human development topics. Did you know that the lower acidity in some newer tomato crops (versus the tomato crops of old) necessitates the addition of vinegar or lemon juice to lower the pH to prevent nasty things from growing in your canned goods? And did you know that you should get your canning equipment inspected annually to make sure it is safe? Jackie can do that for you.

The Extension offices seem to be a throw-back to simpler (better?) times which, given their broad purvey of topics, provides a Shiptons Big R-type one-stop shop for information on everything! It's not surprising that they work for MSU, given the services they provide are, you know, useful – not that I'm saying that the other university in the state doesn't provide useful information . . . wait, maybe that is what I'm saying? Ha, just kidding . . . sort of.

Have a great weekend!