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E-Newsletter of the Montana Association of Community Development Extension Professionals

May 2011

President's Corner

The **1st Annual Montana Community Development Update** will take place May 17-18 in Bozeman. We're planning to provide material on CD Core Competencies; E-commerce Training, and a Montana Public Board Train the Trainer Program. The Update is open to all Extension faculty and staff and we're excited that registration is now full. Thanks for all the interest; we're excited to see you in a few weeks!

-Paul Lachapelle
MACDEP President

Upcoming Events

[ORBIT Workshops](#)
May 10, Lewistown
May 11, Laurel
May 12, Belgrade

New Reports/Resources

[What Determines the Price of Gas?](#)

As reported by The Atlantic, in 2004, when the average price for crude oil was \$37 per barrel, crude composed only 47 percent of the price of regular gasoline. Today, crude is closer to \$111 per barrel, composing two-thirds of the price we pay at the pump. The price of a barrel has increased from \$85 to \$110 -- a 30% bump -- in just five months. The graph below illustrates changes in gas prices over the last 18 months.



Every year, the U.S. Energy Information Administration breaks down the price of a gallon of gas into its major components: state and federal gas taxes (which add between 20 and 50 cents to the final price), additional costs like distribution, marketing and refining, and, most importantly, the price of crude oil, which has nearly tripled in the last seven years. The following figure illustrates this cost breakdown.

TechRanch and USDA Rural Development present Optimizing Regional Business through Internet Technology (ORBIT) workshops designed to help Montana entrepreneurs establish an online presence.

[RFI RFP Deadline Extended](#)

RDI's request for proposals for presentations for the 2011 Mobilizing Rural Communities Conference to has been extended to May 6th.

[Helping Small Towns Succeed Institute](#)

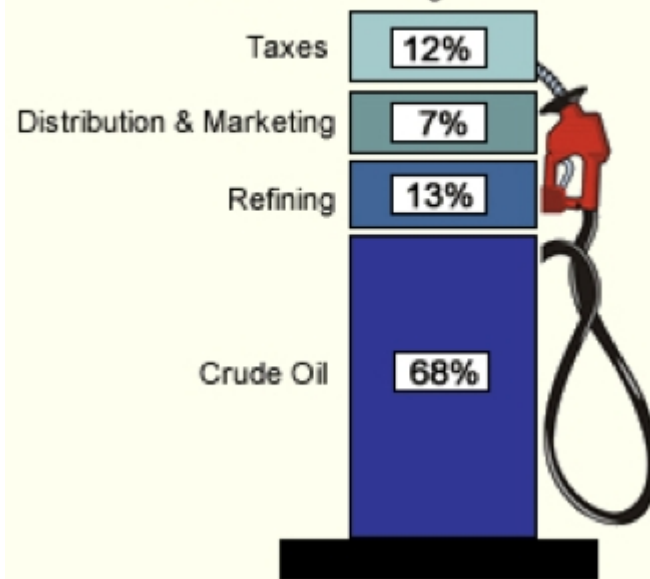
June 6-8
South Haven, MI
Helping Small Towns Succeed is the longest running program of the Heartland Center for Leadership Development and covers the range of the Center's focus and expertise with small communities.

[CDS/RSS Conference Registration Open](#)

July 28-31
Boise, ID
The joint conference is entitled "Reshaping Rural America in An Urban Society: Innovative Approaches For Community Change." The conference schedule included over 200 presenters and more

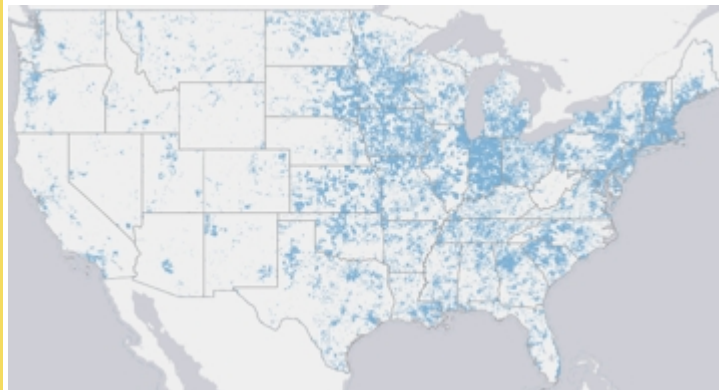
What We Pay For In A Gallon Of Regular Gasoline (March 2011)

Retail Price: \$3.56/gallon



[Broadband Map Released](#)

The National Broadband Map, a tool created by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to search, analyze and map broadband availability across the United States, was recently released. Users can use this interactive tool to determine the extent of broadband access in specific areas. The following map indicates the availability of broadband access in the United States, indicated by the blue areas.



[Broadband Access: Exploring Internet Connectivity by U.S. Community Type](#)

Patchworknation.org reports that, in the counties holding the nation's most-urban areas, the "Industrial Metropolis," more than 99 percent of the population has access to a broadband connection - figured here at three megabytes per second. Looking county-by-county on the following map, it becomes

than 100 concurrent sessions.

Grant/Award Opportunities

[Powering Economic Opportunity Contest](#)

Deadline: May 11th (early), June 15th (final)

eBay Foundation and Ashoka's Changemakers are looking for the most innovative market-based solutions that create economic opportunity and generate employment for disadvantaged populations. Five winners will each receive a cash prize of \$50,000.

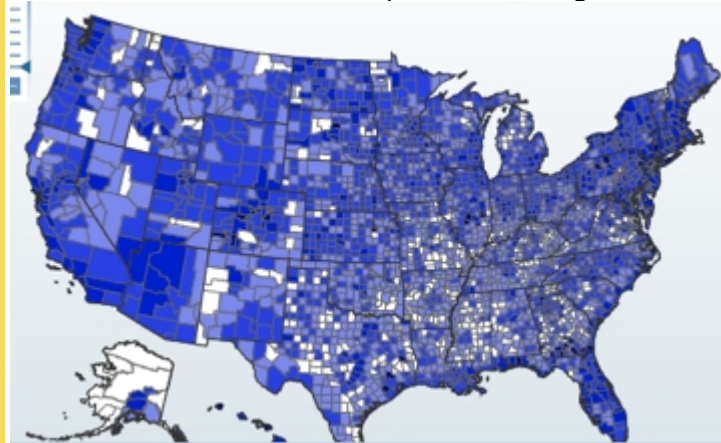
[Regional Community Health Grants](#)

Deadline: May 15th
The Aetna Foundation is offering community health grants on a quarterly basis in the areas of obesity, racial and ethnic healthcare equity, and integrated healthcare.

[Seed Fund School Garden Grants](#)

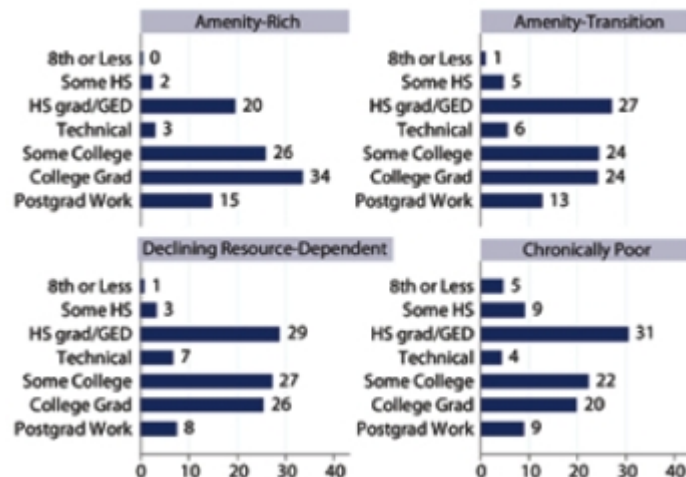
Deadline: May 31st
Yes To is giving out over \$20,000 in Seed Fund School Garden Grants with a mission of teaching kids about nutrition, healthy living, and the importance of fruits and vegetables.

apparent which communities are well positioned for the Web-based economic/cultural/political future. Places like the New York City metro area are saturated with broadband, while places like rural Arkansas have much spottier coverage.



[Education in Chronically Poor Rural Areas Lags Across Generations](#)

The Carsey Institute reports that educational achievement varies significantly by type of place in rural America. In chronically poor rural areas, 45 percent of residents have completed only high school or less, compared with 22 to 33 percent in amenity-rich, amenity-transition, and declining resource-dependent rural areas. Although people from all types of rural communities generally have more education than their parents, those in chronically poor rural areas still have relatively low education levels — a disadvantage that persists across generations. The charts below indicate educational achievement by community type.



[Charles Stewart Mott Foundation Grants](#)

Deadline: Ongoing
The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation funds efforts that promote a just, equitable, and sustainable society.

[States Grow Without Increased Prosperity](#)

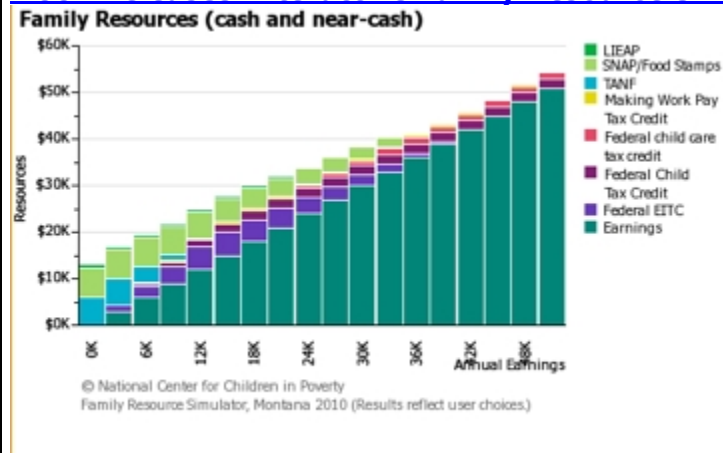
As reported by The Atlantic, the widespread assumption that population growth and prosperity go hand in hand is incorrect. The "Sunbelt" (Southern states and warm-weather Western states such as California, Arizona, and New Mexico) is growing yet states that are adding people are not necessarily growing economically. State population growth does not necessarily translate into higher incomes, notes Harvard economist Edward Glaeser. Economists agree that productivity growth, fueled by invention and innovation, increased skills and human capital, is the main driver of economic growth and greater prosperity. The following map charts the change in productivity measured as gross state product per capita.



[Transportation Options Crucial to Rural and Small Town Economic Development, Quality of Life](#)

A report by the Rural Policy Research Institute indicates that America's rural areas, small towns, and small cities require more flexibility in choosing among transportation investment options to maintain strong economies and quality of life. The study reports upon an in-depth literature review and offers policy recommendations as Congress considers reauthorizing the federal surface transportation bill.

[NCCP Releases Interactive Family Resource Simulator](#)



The National Center for Children in Poverty has released The Family Resource Simulator, which illustrates the impact of “work supports”—such as earned income tax credits and child care assistance—on the budget of a hypothetical family. The graph above is an example of one of several charts that can be produced using this interactive tool. The NCCP has also released a [Basic Needs Budget Calculator](#) which shows how much it takes for families to afford minimum daily necessities. It also allows users to create customized results by changing assumptions about basic family expenses.

Community Development "In the News"

National/International News

[Metro Air Quality Improves](#)

Most U.S. cities with the dirtiest air are getting cleaner, but about half of Americans still live in areas where it's often difficult to breathe, the American Lung Association reports. The group's 12th annual "State of the Air" report comes amid congressional efforts to stop the Environmental Protection Agency from using the Clean Air Act to regulate greenhouse gas emissions. USA Today; April 27.

[Gold Prices Continue to Rise](#)

Since last April, gold prices have risen almost 32 percent. More recently, bullion is up about 5 percent in the last three months, recently hitting a record \$1,506 per ounce. Christian Science Monitor; April 21.

[Report Finds Carcinogens Injected Into Wells](#)

A report by three House Democrats found that oil and gas service companies injected hundreds of thousands of gallons of water containing potentially hazardous chemicals and known carcinogens into wells from 2005-2009 in fifteen states. Billings Gazette; April 20.

[Canadian Dollar Hits Highest Level Since 2007](#)

For the first time since 2007, the Canadian dollar had a nickel premium on the US currency, recently trading at \$1.0529 US. Edmonton Journal; April 20.

[OPEC: No Shortage of Crude Oil in Market](#)

OPEC is worried about the recent surge in global oil prices and its potential impact on the world economy, but the market is oversupplied, several oil officials said recently, suggesting the bloc will not raise its output at its June meeting. OPEC acknowledged price concerns but said the increases that briefly pushed oil futures as high as \$127 per barrel were driven mainly by speculation. Seattle Times; April 18.

[Answering the World's Growing Water Problem](#)

The portion of the global population living in conditions of at least moderate stress involving water – everything from conflict over access to failing traditional sources and lack of access to clean water – will rise to two-thirds by 2025. In other words, two of every three people on the planet will have some form of a water problem, experts say. Yet as grave as that scenario sounds, specialists gathered at an international water summit in Washington emphasized that even a world of reduced development-assistance budgets has the tools to vastly improve – if not solve – the coming global water challenge. Christian Science Monitor; April 16.

[Healthy Soil for Healthy Vegetable Gardens](#)

Interest in vegetable gardening is growing, thanks in part to rising food costs, ecological concerns and incidents of foodborne illness related to produce. The American Community Gardening Association estimates there are now more than 18,000 community gardens in the United States and Canada. While many community gardens exist in rural areas, community gardens are also urban endeavors. In either setting, soil toxicity can be an issue. Food Safety News; Apr. 13.

[US Corn Reserves Expected to Fall to 15-year Low](#)

Rising demand for corn from ethanol producers is pushing U.S. reserves to the lowest point in 15 years, a trend that could lead to higher grain and food prices this year. Reserves are projected to fall to 675 million bushels in late August, when the harvest begins, or roughly 5 percent of all corn consumed in the United States, the lowest surplus level since 1996. The limited supply is chiefly because of increasing demand from ethanol makers, which rose 1 percent to 5 billion bushels, about 40 percent of the total crop. Salt Lake City Tribune; April 9.

[Critics' Review Unexpectedly Supports Scientific Consensus on Global Warming](#)

A team of UC Berkeley physicists and statisticians that set out to challenge the scientific consensus on global warming is finding that its data-crunching effort is producing results nearly identical to those underlying the prevailing view. The Berkeley Earth Surface Temperature project was launched by physics professor Richard Muller, a longtime critic of government-led climate studies, to address what he called "the legitimate concerns" of skeptics who believe that global warming is exaggerated. But Muller unexpectedly told a congressional hearing last week that the work of the three principal groups that have analyzed the temperature trends underlying climate science is "excellent.... We see a global warming trend that is very similar to that previously reported by the other groups." Los Angeles Times; April 4.

[Stocks Rise After Unemployment Dips to 2-year Low](#)

A drop in the unemployment rate to a two-year low sent stocks higher as the Labor Department said the unemployment rate fell to 8.8 percent, the lowest since March 2009, as companies added workers at the fastest two-month pace since before the recession began. Approximately 216,000 new jobs were created last month, offsetting layoffs by

local governments. Economists had expected the unemployment rate to remain at 8.9 percent. Denver Post; April 1.

Montana News

[Crow Tribe Unveils New Transit System](#)

Crow Nation Transit is up and running, with two mini-buses and a conversion van transporting people on three routes, with more buses and routes planned over the next several months. Billings Gazette; April 27.

[USDA Brand Decision Burns Ranchers](#)

The hot-iron brand, the West's most recognized ownership stamp for 150 years, isn't grading well with federal officials searching for uniform ways of identifying livestock. The U.S. Department of Agriculture is expected to propose new "farm to fork" identification rules for tracing animals making their way from the ranch to the grocery refrigerator case. The identification requirements are expected to help regulators trace diseases and other problems back to the source. But the potential exclusion of brands as a means of identifying animals sold across state lines has angered ranchers, who say the issue basically makes brands irrelevant. The USDA in March announced that ear tags will be the official cattle ID. Brands would only be used when states make special arrangements. Billings Gazette; April 26.

[Camelina Falling Out of Favor with Montana Farmers](#)

Camelina, a biofuel crop, is decreasing in popularity among Montana farmers as wheat prices soar. The National Agricultural Statistics Service reports that last year Montana farmers planted 9,400 acres of camelina, less than half the acres planted just two years ago. Billings Gazette; April 22.

[The Impact of Invasive Species](#)

Mussels, fish, plants, and diseases could decimate Montana waters since the state is has an enormous amount of fresh water that's popular with in-state and out-of-state recreationists who could bring such invaders into the state or move them around. Missoula Independent; April 21.

[Missoula Center Offers Visas to Foreign Investors for \\$1M Buy-in](#)

A new private investment center being formed in Missoula aims to attract millions of dollars in foreign money to the state by offering visas as incentives to potential overseas investors. The Northern Rockies Regional Center was recently approved as an Employment-Based Regional Center through U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, meaning that the center can offer so-called "EB-5 Immigrant Investor" visas, which allow "high-net individuals" to obtain visas to live in the U.S. in return for investment in American projects. Missoulian; April 18.

[Hot Rock Under Yellowstone Larger than Has Been Believed](#)

In a first-of-its-kind measurement of electrical conductivity, scientists from the University of Utah have found that the plume of hot and partly molten rock that feeds the Yellowstone supervolcano may be larger than earlier believed. Billings Gazette; April 14.

[Montana Snowpack Above Average, Streamflows Expected to Double](#)

Snowpack across the state of Montana remains above average, and spring runoff flows

should be nearly twice what they were last spring. Snowpack numbers statewide show 120 percent of average, and a whopping 185 percent of last year's paltry snowpack. It's that last figure, courtesy of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, that creates the dramatic difference in streamflow forecasts from last year to this spring. Missoulian; April 8.

[Sanders County Leads Montana in Economic Stress](#)

The extreme northwest corner of Montana is home to some of the state's prettiest scenery, and, according to the Associated Press' 2011 Economic Stress Index, its ugliest economies. The index, which measures the combined unemployment, bankruptcy and foreclosure rates to assess the economies of every county in the nation, says Sanders County has the worst numbers in Montana. Neighboring Lincoln and Mineral counties aren't far behind. Generally speaking, the farther east you go in the state, the better local economies are faring, according to the index. Missoula County's number, for instance, is one of the best in western Montana, but worse than every county east of the Continental Divide. Missoulian; April 2.



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