

Montana Range Days offers scholarships

With an increasing commitment to rangeland education, the Montana Range Days program has announced that \$1,500 in college scholarships will be offered in 2005. Three different \$500 scholarships will be given, including the “Bob Sitz Memorial Scholarship,” presented by the Sitz Family and Sitz Angus Ranch of Harrison and Dillon, a “Montana Range Days Scholarship,” and the “Harold and Lillian Jensen Scholarship,” which is sponsored by the Jensens of Baker.

These scholarships are provided to assist young persons with an interest in range science. Since its beginning in 1977, Montana Range Days has grown to become the largest rangeland education event in the region, involving over 300 adults and youths for three days of on-the-ground training each June. Co-sponsored by the Northern Ag Network and hosted by locations across the state, the event helps thousands of participants learn the skills of good range stewardship. Montana Range Days, Inc. is a non-profit educational foundation with a permanent endowment fund that utilizes tax-deductible contributions and gifts to support range management education.

Students planning to major in range science or a related field (including college students), are encouraged to apply for all three of the Montana Range Days Scholarships, (the

Bob Sitz Memorial Scholarship, the Montana Range Days Scholarship, and the Harold and Lillian Jensen Scholarship), by completing a simple, one-page application form. An application form can be obtained by going to the Montana Range Days web site at www.MontanaRangeDays.com or by contacting: Montana Range Days Scholarship Committee Mike Sjostrom, Chairman c/o Montana Livestock Ag Credit, Inc., P.O. Box 4549 Helena, MT 59604 — (406) 442-3740.

Selection is based on the applicant’s involvement in range activities, leadership, academic achievement and financial need. The deadline for application forms to be submitted is April 30. The winners will be announced publicly at a presentation on June 21 at the 2005 Montana Range Days in Clyde Park.



High school age Range Days students learn at the college level.

How smart is my child?

Many parents wonder how their children compare to other children. They may have very good reasons to suspect their children are gifted (for example, their five-year-old is adding pupils and eyelashes to their drawings of people or their three-year-old can read an “Exit” sign) but they’re not sure how to prove or disprove it. Proof about giftedness can be critical because it helps parents to provide more opportunities for their kids’ increased growth, enjoyment and success in areas of interest.

There are certain childhood behaviors — milestones — that can tell us when children are ahead of or behind others their age. Most of the charts on childhood development show the typical range of behaviors for each age group. If your child is ahead of those tables, that doesn’t necessarily mean he or she is on the fast track or slated to become the next Doogie Howser, M.D. Levels of Giftedness range from those who are simply bright to those who are intellectually astonishing.

Here’s an overview of the various levels of giftedness and milestones that are common—but not necessary—to each Level. Here, also, are the numbers at each Level of Giftedness that you are likely to find in an average elementary classroom of 28 children. It is the overall “feel” of where the child fits that tells you the Level.

1. Level One

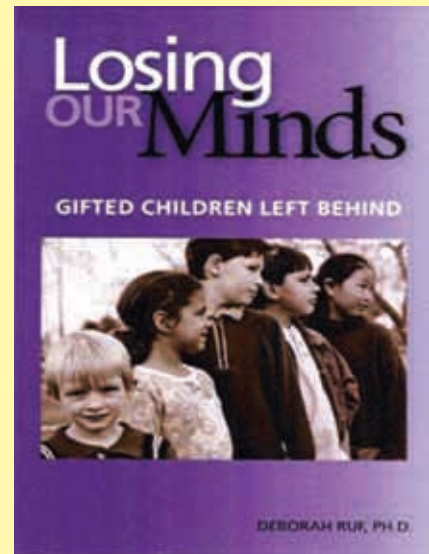
- These children show interest in many things before they are even two years old - like colors, saying the numbers in order and playing simple puzzles.
- Most of them are good talkers by age three and by four, many print letters and numbers, recognize simple signs, their name and know most of alphabet.
- By the time they are six years old, many read beginner books and type at the computer and most read chapter books by age seven.
- It is not unusual to find six to eight Level One children in an average classroom, children who are nearly always a few steps ahead of what the teacher is teaching the whole class.

2. Level Two

- These bright children love looking at books and being read to, even turning pages without ripping them, by 15 months. Some shout out the name of familiar stores as you drive past.
- Many of these children know lots of letters by 18 months and colors by 20 months. Between ages three and four, they count small groups of objects, print some letters and numbers and they very likely drive their parents crazy with all their questions.
- They’ll sit for what seems like hours as you read advanced level books, especially fiction and fantasy, to them but they require a bit less of your time by age six, because most of them read for pleasure and information on their own by then.
- Level Two children can find only one or two others in their classroom who are as advanced as they are, which starts to make it hard to find good friends.

3. Level Three

- They’re born wide-eyed and alert, looking around the room, reacting to noises, voices, faces.
- They know what adults are telling or asking them by six months. You say a toy, pet, or another person and they will look for it.
- Everything Level Two children do by 15 months, these kids do by 10 to 12 months and they can get family members to do what they want before they are actually talking.
- By two years, many like 35+ piece puzzles, memorize favorite books, and know the entire alphabet – in or out of order!
- By three years old, they talk constantly and skip count, count backwards and do simple adding and subtracting because they like to. They love to print letters and numbers, too.
- They ask you to start easy readers before five years and many figure out how to multiply, divide and do some fractions by six years.
- Most of these children are a full two to five years beyond grade level by



age six and find school too slow.

- There are one or two Level Three children in every 100 in the average school. They are rarely in the same elementary class and can feel very, very lonely.

4. Level Four

- Level Four babies love books, someone to read them. They pay attention within a few months of their birth.
- They are ahead of Level Three children by another 2 to 5 months while less than two years old.
- They have extensive, complex speaking by two years and their vocabularies are huge!
- Most of them read easy readers by 3 1/2 to 4 1/2 years, and then read for information and pleasure by age five, with comprehension for youth and adult level books at about 6 - 6 1/2 years.
- There are about one per 200 children in the average school. Without special arrangements, they can feel very different from their typical classmates.

5. Level Five

- Level Fives have talents in every possible area. Everything is sooner and more intense than others Levels.
- They have favorite TV shows before 6 – 8 months, pick out letters and numbers by 10-14 months, and enjoy shape sorters before 11 months.
- They print letters, numbers, words and their names between 16 – 24

months and often use anything that is available to form these shapes and figures.

- They show ability with 35+ piece puzzles by less than 15 months and interest in complex mazes before they are three.
- Musical, dramatic and artistic aptitudes usually start showing by 18 months.
- Most speak with adult-level complexity by age two.
- At two and three-years-old they ask about how things work and science – particularly biological and life and death questions – emerge.
- They understand math concepts and basic math functions before age four.
- They can play card and board games ages 12 and up by age 3 1/2 to 4.
- They have high interest in pure facts, almanacs and dictionaries by age 3 1/2.
- Most read any level of book by 4 1/4 to five years.
- They read six or more years beyond grade level with comprehension by six years and usually hit 12th grade level by age 7 or 8.
- We know they occur more often than once in a million and regular grade school does not work for them. Levels Three through Five score similarly on ability tests—very high.

Once you have a sense of your children's abilities, you can provide them with more activities and experiences that build on these strengths and take advantage of their talents. Parents who have more than one child may notice that each child seems to have different interests and talents even when we encourage them equally. This is because we don't cause our children's abilities; we can only recognize and nurture them. To do less is truly depriving them of chances to do what they are good at and what they enjoy. To do less for our children probably chips away at their potential, too, for how can we get good at the things we don't get to practice? There are more potential geniuses – children who are remarkably intellectually different from their same-age classmates – than most people believe, and your child may well be one of them.

By Deborah L. Ruf, Ph.D., author of *Losing Our Minds: Gifted Children Left Behind* (Great Potential Press). For more information, visit <http://www.educationaloptions.com/>

Save money with the elderly homeowner/renter tax credit

Montanans aged 62 or older as of Dec. 31, 2004 should check to see whether they qualify for Montana's elderly homeowner/renter tax credit for 2004.

If you can also answer "yes" to the following questions, then you may be eligible for the credit.

- Did you reside in Montana for nine months or more during 2004?
- Did you occupy Montana residence(s) as an owner or renter a total of six months or more during 2004?
- Was your total gross household income less than \$45,000 in 2004?

The state of Montana allows elderly persons who qualify a credit for a portion of their property taxes or rent paid based on their income. The credit can be used against their state income tax liability or as a direct refund, even if they are not required to file a Montana state income tax return. Only one claim is allowed per household.

To determine eligibility, complete form 2EC (Rev. 8/04) and return to the Montana Department of Revenue, P.O. Box 6577, Helena, MT 59604-6577, phone (406) 444-6900. Form 2EC may be available at your local library, post office, from tax preparers or at the State or local Department of Revenue Office.

Form 2EC can also be downloaded at the Department of Revenue Web site: <http://www.discoveringmontana.com/revenue>. Under "Features," click on "downloadable forms," then in the box "I am looking for" click on "individual income tax," then 2EC Elderly Homeowner/Renter Credit which is under 2004 forms.

The first item reported on the form is total household income. Next, a homeowner is asked to list the amount of general property taxes, fees, special assessments and special improvement districts billed on his/her residence and land in 2004, not exceeding one acre. The 2004 credit is based on property taxes assessed and billed, on the November 2004 property tax statement—not the property taxes actually paid. A copy of the property tax bill, fees or SIDs billed or a letter from the

County Treasurer showing the total property taxes billed and assessed for 2004 on your primary residence must be attached to the credit form.

Property taxes billed on a residence held in a revocable trust during 2004 that are paid by an eligible claimant are allowable. The eligible claimant and his/her spouse must be the only trustees of the revocable trust, however. If the property occupied by an eligible claimant is in a name other than the claimant, the property taxes billed are allowable only as rent. This includes irrevocable or family trusts.

Qualifying individuals who place their residence in a life estate and who pay the property tax may claim the taxes when calculating the elderly homeowner/renter credit.

Renters are asked to list the amount of rent paid during 2004 on the 2EC (Rev. 8/04) form. Signed rent receipts must be attached to the form. Renters of county or municipal housing are eligible to apply. When a taxpayer lives in a health care, long-term care, personal care, or a residential care facility, the amount allowed is the actual out of pocket rent paid. If a breakdown between rent and other amenities paid is not provided, the rent allowed is limited to \$20 per day (not to exceed \$7,300).

The Form 2EC must be filed on or before April 15, 2005 or with your Form 2 or 2S. If you want to take advantage of direct deposit enter the routing number (nine digits) and account number (up to 17 numbers and letters) in the appropriate sections on the form. If the routing and accounting numbers are not correct, the direct deposit will be rejected and a check will be mailed to you from the Montana Department of Revenue.

If you think you may have been eligible for the tax credit in prior years and didn't take advantage of it, you are still allowed to file for the credit for up to five years. If you need help in completing Form 2EC (Rev. 8/04) or think you may have been eligible in prior years, call (406) 444-6900 or TDD (406) 444-2830 (hearing impaired only).