

# FEEDING MONTANA

Your impact report from Montana Food Bank Network | Spring 2023



Volunteers with Mail-a-Meal boxes they built.

## Making a *Difference*: Donations that Go the Distance

As the need for food assistance continues to increase, so does MFBN's focus and passion for our mission to end hunger in Montana. However, we can't accomplish this on our own. **Donors are vital to our organization's work and in 2022 the support we received made a tremendous impact, whether that help came from monetary contributions or time donated through volunteering.**

This past September, we held our annual FEED MONTANA fundraiser. Folks from all over came together to show their support by taking a stand against hunger in an incredible way. We surpassed our goal, raising over \$80,000, helping MFBN to distribute at least 400,000 meals!

Individuals and companies also volunteered hundreds of hours throughout the year, positively impacting MFBN and our outreach by donating their time in a meaningful way. Over 2,600 food boxes containing protein, canned fruits and vegetables, and other essentials were prepared by volunteers, which MFBN distributed through our Mail-a-Meal program. These boxes are

sent to Montanans facing food insecurity who do not have easy access to a traditional grocery store or food assistance such as a pantry. Volunteers also repackaged 30,000 pounds of rice, pasta, and cereal, saving MFBN and our partner agencies on financial costs without sacrificing food quality while also increasing quantity.

Montana Food Bank Network would like to thank our donors for making our organization's 2022 successes possible. We achieve the greatest impact when working together to help our neighbors, friends, and family and to strengthen the beautiful state we call home. **Thank you for your support in 2022 and we extend our gratitude into 2023, as MFBN continues to expand our reach and help feed Montana communities across all 56 counties with help from donors like you.**

**To learn more about the different ways you can give, visit [mfbn.org/ways-to-give](https://mfbn.org/ways-to-give).**

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## LETTER FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT & COO

**THANK YOU to all our generous donors! You are in essence the fuel which keeps us going day to day and without your continuous loyal support, we would not exist.**



In 2022, Montana Food Bank Network distributed 16.5 million pounds of food to all 56 counties across the state, including indigenous communities located on each of Montana's seven reservations. This significant number can be hard to put into perspective, especially when thinking about the amount of collaboration and logistics needed to acquire and deliver such large quantities across our vast state.

How can 16.5 million pounds of food be visualized so that one can truly grasp what that number represents? This substantial number equates to over 400 full semi-loads of food. **That means, on average, we are sourcing and distributing more than one semi-load per day, every day, 365 days of the year.**

Where does the food that MFBN acquires come from? The food we source and distribute comes from 3 primary sources — 60% is donated, 16% comes from USDA Food & Nutrition Programs, and the remaining 24% is food we purchase.

**What type of food does MFBN source and where does it go?** In 2022, we delivered over 4.5 million pounds of fresh produce and over 4 million pounds of dairy and frozen meat, demonstrating our commitment to promoting good health and nutrition. We delivered almost 100,000 food bags through our Backpack Program to schools, ensuring that children have enough to eat on weekends and school holidays. MFBN's Grocery Rescue Program facilitated retail partnerships with our network partners, rescuing over 8.5 million pounds of non-sellable, perishable food keeping it out of our landfills and into the hands of food-insecure households statewide. Over 29,000 pounds of wild game were processed and distributed statewide through our Hunters Against Hunger Program. Our Mobile Food Pantry Program distributed over 54,000 pounds of food in underserved rural areas that lack access to traditional food assistance resources. During the historic flooding of the Yellowstone River in June, we provided over 100,000 pounds of emergency food and drinking water, in addition to over \$30,000 for disaster relief efforts. We coordinated with our network partners to distribute those resources to evacuation shelters and pantries in communities until long-term disaster recovery efforts were available.

How does all this food get to where it needs to go? MFBN's trucks and professional drivers logged over 112,000 miles accident and injury free to distribute food to over 340 network partners and program distribution sites. **That distance is the equivalent of driving around the Earth 4.5 times! That requires a lot of diesel and coffee.**

So, it is with tremendous gratitude that we recognize the stakeholders who contributed to our success. I like to refer to them as the "Network" represented in our organization's name, Montana Food Bank Network.

First and foremost, THANK YOU to all our generous donors! You are in essence the fuel which keeps us going day to day and without your continuous loyal support, we would not exist. Also, a special thanks to our federal and state government officials protecting our USDA Food and Nutrition Programs, and to Feeding America, our Board of Directors, our dedicated staff, and all our network partners and program volunteers across the Big Sky state.

They say it takes a village to raise a child. Well, it takes a "Network" to support and maintain healthy communities. Thank you for choosing to be a part of our network, making a positive impact on your community, and helping us achieve our mission of making sure all Montanans have equal access to nutritious food.

**Brent Weisgram**  
Vice President & COO



## MFBN GRANT FUNDING:

# Helping Our Partners

## HELP THEIR COMMUNITIES

Network Partners are the heart and soul of Montana Food Bank Network. We strive to improve food access statewide by helping our partners increase capacity for serving their communities with creative, collaborative efforts. This often comes in the form of providing grant funding to our partners so they may implement new projects, increase storage capacity, improve facilities, and reach more Montanans. In 2022, we provided over \$20,000 in grant funding to 11 network partners for a variety of projects.

One special project at **Community Harvest Food Pantry** in Thompson Falls focused on updating entryway access to meet ADA Standards for Accessible Design. This upgrade has improved safety and accessibility for pantry customers and increased efficiency for receiving and distributing food.

Another project MFBN is excited to share is the implementation of nutrition education programming at **FAST Blackfeet O'yo'p Food Pantry** located in Browning. O'yo'p Food Pantry utilized grant funds to purchase food processing equipment and service supplies. The new equipment included a dehydrator which will enable the preservation and longer-term use of perishable foods. Service supplies are providing new opportunities to share nutrition education through cooking demos, hands-on classes, and posters and labeling throughout the pantry.

**In 2023, MFBN is excited to continue expanding our reach across the state by helping network partners achieve their goals with new projects and upgrades that benefit the people and communities they serve.**



Community Harvest Food Pantry's  
entryway BEFORE upgrade



Community Harvest Food Pantry  
AFTER the update

**FAST BLACKFEET**  
FOOD ACCESS AND SUSTAINABILITY TEAM

## NUTRITION & COOKING CLASSES

**7 WEEK SERIES OF CLASSES ON  
TUESDAYS 4:30-6PM  
AT BROWNING HIGH SCHOOL**



Samples of borscht  
soup with beets made  
in cooking class

## ADVOCACY AND POLICY:

# Creating Long-Term Solutions to Hunger



The year 2023 brings several important opportunities to address hunger through advocacy and policy change. At the state level, the 2023 Montana Legislative Session is underway from January through early May. During the state session, MFBN worked to support food security in our state through the creation of a Montana Farm to Food Bank program. This program would operate through the Department of Agriculture to support small farmers, strengthen local food systems, and increase access to fresh, healthy foods for Montanans on low incomes. Additionally, MFBN led efforts to protect SNAP from harmful changes that would weaken or restrict access to essential food benefits.

At the federal level, the Farm Bill is due for reauthorization this year. The Farm Bill is a significant piece of legislation that includes policies impacting how we grow and consume food in this country. In addition to policies impacting the farm and agriculture community, the Farm Bill also includes SNAP, the Food Distribution on Indian Reservation Program (FDIRP), The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), and other programs that help ensure all households can access the food they need. The Farm Bill is reauthorized every five years and is our best opportunity to strengthen SNAP, our

nation's most important anti-hunger program. Working with partners across the state and nation, Montana Food Bank Network is urging Congress to protect and strengthen SNAP benefit adequacy, and to increase access to SNAP for vulnerable populations who face unique barriers, such as college students, seniors, and childless adults.

Throughout this work, Montana Food Bank Network is raising the voices and experiences of lived experts, those Montanans with first-hand experience of food insecurity. Our Amplify Montana initiative is connecting MFBN with lived experts from across the state who inform and guide our advocacy work, meet directly with lawmakers, and lead efforts to create long-term solutions to hunger.

**To learn more about the 2023 Legislative Session or the upcoming Farm Bill, visit [mfbn.org/actioncenter](https://mfbn.org/actioncenter).**



Farmer's Market  
in Montana

## MFBN License Plate

Are you looking to support MFBN's mission to end hunger in Montana in a new way? The next time you renew your vehicle registration, choose Montana Food Bank Network's "Stand Up Against Hunger" license plate for your vehicle. **Every license plate purchased or renewed helps MFBN provide at least 100 meals to Montanans facing food insecurity across the state.**



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Stay connected to  
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