

2023 MONTANA HUNGER RELIEF FORUM



Montana Food Bank Network recently held our 2023 Montana Hunger Relief Forum. Each year, MFBN's Programs Department organizes this opportunity for MFBN employees and network partners from across the state to come together for two days of networking, training, and educational presentations. With over 70 attendees, this year's forum was definitely a success!

The forum's audience was comprised of our network partners including food pantry, shelter, and soup kitchen operators, senior center partners, and BackPack and school pantry coordinators. The first day of the forum resulted in 50 attendees receiving food handling ServSafe certifications and SNAP Assistance training. The second day of the forum showcased nine inspiring and informative presentations. Mark Ford, who is the Director of Native/Tribal Partnerships at Feeding America, gave a wonderful keynote on food sovereignty, and also led a discussion looking into best practices when working with Indigenous communities. Other presentations included a local food sourcing panel comprised of Marie Hirsch from Arlee CDC, Barb Holiday from Hopa Mountain, and George Peirce from Livingston Food Resource Center, as well as a session on incorporating nutrition education into food pantries. Representatives from Senator Tester and Daines offices and Congressman Rosendale and Zinke offices were also in attendance.

We would like to give a special thank you to the presenters for sharing their expertise and to The Salvation Army in Missoula for providing the perfect venue. Last but not least, thank you to all who attended. Our strength and impact only increase as we come together to share ideas, food, and support. **MFBN is honored to host a forum that helps solidify relationships which build upon the foundation for a better, stronger Montana.**



Mark Ford, Keynote Speaker

WITH OVER 70 ATTENDEES, THIS YEAR'S FORUM WAS DEFINITELY A SUCCESS!

Advocacy and Policy: 2023 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

During the 2023 Legislative Session, MFBN organized advocacy efforts to create a Montana Farm to Food Bank program. House Bill 276 would have created a grant through the Montana Department of Agriculture to provide funding for food pantries to buy Montana-grown food from local farmers and ranchers, strengthening local economies and increasing access to fresh, nutrient-dense foods for neighbors facing hunger. MFBN joined with food pantries, local food organizations, and other partners in an informal coalition to inform the vision for the program ahead of the session, and to organize support for the legislation as it moved forward. MFBN's work generated tremendous grassroots and grasstops support for HB 276. Nearly 170 advocates used MFBN's campaign links to contact legislators 3,361 times. Numerous food pantries, local farmers and ranchers, food and agricultural organizations, and many more testified in support of HB 276, including those who traveled to Helena to share their voices.

Our collective advocacy helped to generate considerable support for the bill in the legislature. HB 276 passed the House Agriculture Committee with unanimous support and passed the House in a strong bipartisan 81-18 vote.



Montana State Capitol Building, Helena

Unfortunately, the bill was ultimately caught up in political gamesmanship and calls to limit spending, resulting in the Senate Finance Committee tabling the bill in the final days of the session. However, the incredible support in and out of the Capitol demonstrates the potential for this vision to better connect our food pantry system with our local farmers and ranchers as partners in the local food economy.

Learn more about MFBN's advocacy efforts at our Anti-Hunger Action Center, mfbn.org/actioncenter.

The Power OF PARTNERSHIPS AND PROTEIN

MFBN strives to promote and increase local food sourcing. Fortunately, we have incredible partnerships with The Producer Partnership, Montana Farmers Union, and Farmers Union Enterprises, which all share the same passion for supporting Montana's communities and economy. Thanks to these relationships, MFBN has been able to receive and distribute over 65,000 pounds of much-needed protein through donations to our network partners all across the state so far this year!

The Producer Partnership is a nonprofit organization with the mission to end hunger in Montana by processing donated livestock, then donating the quality ground meat to food banks. In 2023 alone, The Producer Partnership has donated 29,000 pounds of ground beef and pork to MFBN, which was generously

repackaged for distribution to our network partners with the help of volunteers from First Interstate Bank and ATG-Cognizant.

Montana Farmers Union and Farmers Union Enterprises are both dedicated to preserving the agricultural way of life. This year they have come together to generously donate over 36,840 pounds of pork to MFBN. Local, nutrient-dense protein like this pork donation goes a long way towards feeding and strengthening our neighbors facing food insecurity.

Thank you to The Producer Partnership, Montana Farmers Union, Farmers Union Enterprises, and volunteers for joining us in our mission to not only end hunger in Montana, but to provide continued support through local partnerships to make a bigger, more impactful difference.



ATG-Cognizant boxing up protein for distribution



Donated ground beef from The Producer Partnership

REACH AND RESILIENCY – *Round 1*

As the country rebounds from COVID-19, the USDA recognizes that the pandemic exposed inequities within our nation's emergency food network. Remote, rural, tribal, and low-income communities faced and continue to face the biggest challenges. The USDA is interested in "Building Back Better" by expanding The Emergency Food Assistance Program's (TEFAP) reach into areas that are underserved. To do so, the USDA created Reach and Resiliency grants. These grants will be disbursed in two separate rounds that will provide state agencies with an opportunity to re-envision how they can work with participating organizations.

The State of Montana's Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) took advantage of this grant opportunity by partnering with MFBN on the state's Reach and Resiliency – Round 1 project. Project activities include the development of a comprehensive survey that was given to qualifying partners in MFBN's network. This survey will allow each network partner to identify and describe any infrastructure and equipment needs necessary for expanding TEFAP's reach into underserved areas in their community. DPHHS and MFBN will use the survey results to identify the greatest needs in the state, such as renovations to food distribution facilities to increase

capacity. These needs will be addressed with Reach and Resiliency – Round 1 project funding.

Eighteen qualifying MFBN network partners and counting have received assistance through the Reach and Resiliency – Round 1 grant funds, already showing the positive impact of the project. The State of Montana has applied for additional funding through the Reach and Resiliency – Round 2 grant to continue projects across the state. MFBN feels confident that this grant will be awarded.

To learn more about USDA's Reach and Resiliency initiative and how Montana and other states have been involved, visit fns.usda.gov/tefap/reach-resiliency-grant.



No Kid Hungry MONTANA

This summer, MFBN acquired No Kid Hungry Montana in partnership with Share Our Strength, a nonprofit organization working to solve problems of hunger and poverty in the United States and around the world. No Kid Hungry is a campaign that was launched in 2010 through Share Our Strength to not only fight childhood hunger, but also end it by selecting states that could devote resources, forge strong partnerships, and find real solutions. Since No Kid Hungry was brought to Montana in 2012, the goals have been to improve access to and infrastructure of nutrition programs, connect kids to healthy, nutrient-dense food, support food sovereignty work, and reduce childhood food insecurity.



With 1 in 8 children in Montana living in food-insecure households, MFBN shares the same passion reflected through No Kid Hungry Montana and is excited for the opportunity to combine strategies and efforts to end childhood food insecurity and make No Kid Hungry a reality.

FEED MONTANA 2023

MFBN is gearing up for FEED MONTANA, our annual month-long fundraiser in September. We would love for you to join us! This campaign aims to raise funds for the upcoming winter season. Winter brings higher heating bills which compete with soaring grocery costs, making people choose between food and basic utilities. With your help, we can feed fellow Montanans.

This year's FEED MONTANA goal is to raise \$90,000, allowing us to distribute at least 450,000 meals!

We encourage and challenge individuals, businesses, and teams to join us in our mission to end hunger and help raise funds to meet our 2023 goal. FEED MONTANA provides a great opportunity to come together to **stand up against hunger!** Will you join us?



FEED MONTANA
montana food bank network

DID YOU KNOW AUGUST IS NATIONAL *Make-A-Will Month?*

With a legal will, you can approach the future with peace of mind. You can plan for your future while ensuring your wishes are honored, protecting and providing for your loved ones, and sustaining the causes you believe in. We've partnered with FreeWill to make it easier than ever to start your will. FreeWill's free estate planning tool, available to all MFBN supporters, is a simple and cost-free opportunity to chart your own way during National Make-A-Will Month. Thank you for making an impact with your legacy.

To learn more about FreeWill and how you can leave a legacy gift to MFBN, visit mfbn.org/secure-your-legacy-with-freewill.

F R E E W I L L 



Hunters can help feed Montanans

Hunger is an ongoing concern in our state: an estimated 1 in 12 residents experience food insecurity. Since the Hunters Against Hunger program began, 340,000 lbs of donated game has been distributed throughout 40 counties in Montana.

Every dollar makes a difference

It's not always about the meat. You can make monetary donations while purchasing tags or directly to MFBN. Monetary donations cover meat processing costs, keeping HAH available to local community food pantries.



To learn more or to find your local processor, visit [MFBN.ORG/HUNTERS-AGAINST-HUNGER](https://mfbn.org/hunters-against-hunger)

Make an extra trip for those in need

Any donation of legally harvested deer, elk, antelope, moose, or bison is processed free of charge for the donor and then distributed to a community hunger-fighting agency. Get an extra tag, and provide meals for your neighbors.



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