

2024 MONTANA HUNGER RELIEF FORUM



MFBN is honored to hold our annual Montana Hunger Relief Forum. Each year provides a perfect setting to learn and collaborate with our vast network of partners. Our two-day forum was held in Helena at Carroll College's beautiful campus. **On the first day, we provided agencies with free ServSafe and SNAP trainings, while the second day was dedicated to presentations and sharing. A total of 48 individuals attended, representing 29 different partner agencies. We were able to provide 11 of those partner agencies with grants to help them cover the cost of travel.** MFBN also ensures that all forum materials and presentations are shared with partner agencies who are not able to attend. Partners and supporters from Producer Partnership, Hopa Mountain, and MFBN's Amplify Montana Advisory Board were also in attendance.

Welcoming words came from Helena Food Share staff members. They spoke on the power of collaboration, sharing the struggles their organization has gone through to get them to where they are today, and how these struggles inspire them to continue improving support for their community into the future. Feeding America's Chief Communications and Community Engagement Officer, Rajesh Mirchandani, gave an inspirational keynote speech, reminding everyone of why we have the passion for the work we do. He emphasized that we have a responsibility to cultivate deep partnerships and community engagement in order to extend our reach and impact. Presentations were also given by Kat Cowley from UM Food Pantry, who demonstrated how to create an inclusive pantry; Montana DPPHS, who provided a thorough understanding of USDA and DPHHS food distribution



Keynote speaker, Rajesh Mirchandani from Feeding America, inspiring forum attendees.

programs and how they can enhance the lives of those we serve; and MFBN staffers who shared tips on food bank operations and fundraising.

The Montana Hunger Relief Forum reinforces how important it is to collaborate. It affords a unique opportunity that strengthens support between MFBN and our partner agencies which is critical when working together to end hunger in Montana. This year's forum was an invaluable experience for all who attended. We are already looking forward to next year's forum!

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CEO CORNER



While some communities have summer feeding sites, children living in rural communities and those without access to transportation find it challenging to access these sites.

Whether you call it fall or autumn, there's something about the season that makes you want to slow down a little. After a busy summer of long days, hectic schedules, and keeping up with the kids, we are all ready for a more relaxed pace before the holidays hit.

For the over 39,500 Montanan children living in food-insecure homes, fall means returning to school where they have regular access to nutritious meals through school meal programs. While most of us look forward to summers, for families living in poverty, having their children out of school can add to an already strained budget. The average cost of childcare in Montana is nearly \$800 per month. Food costs, on average, can nearly double for families when school meals are not available. While some communities have summer feeding sites, children living in rural communities and those without access to transportation find it challenging to access these sites. For struggling

families, the return to school provides some relief knowing that their children have access to regular meals.

Through Montana Food Bank Network's Child Nutrition Program, we strive to improve food access for all Montana children by working with schools and youth programs to expand meal programs year-round. To learn more, continue reading or visit our Child Nutrition webpage at mfbn.org/child-nutrition.

I would urge you to join MFBN in our efforts to ensure all Montana children have access to nutritious meals regardless of the season. Visit mfbn.org to make your gift today.

With appreciation,

Gayle Carlson
President and CEO
Montana Food Bank Network

Update: CAMPAIGN FOR BIGGER IMPACT

It's official, construction is underway! We have launched our Campaign for Bigger Impact, an ambitious initiative to advance our mission of ending hunger in Montana. The centerpiece of our \$15 million campaign is a brand new facility. With this new facility, we'll be able to expand our network, serve our partners in new and better ways, acquire more fresh, nutritious, locally sourced foods, and be able to make every dollar donated go further than ever before. But we can't reach our Campaign for Bigger Impact goal without your support. Will you join us?

To learn more or to make a donation towards our Campaign for Bigger Impact, visit mfbn.org/campaign-for-bigger-impact or contact Bill Mathews, Chief Development Officer at (406) 215-1777, bmathews@mfbn.org.





Policy Pulse:

SUMMER ADVOCACY REPORT

Lawmakers in Washington, DC heard directly from Montana food security advocates earlier this summer.

During the first visit, members of MFBN's Policy and Child Nutrition staff attended the national Anti-Hunger Policy Conference. There, they joined with advocates and experts from across the country to learn about strategies to advance policy priorities that support food security. Then, they took action and met with Montana's Congressional offices on Capitol Hill. MFBN staff shared information about summer child nutrition programs that have been made possible by federal actions over the past several years. MFBN staff also continued our advocacy for farm bill priorities, including rejecting any cuts and expanding access to the SNAP program and increasing support for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), which is a vital source of food for MFBN's network of partners.

The very next week, two Lived Experts from Montana flew to DC to participate in Elevating Voices, a Feeding America conference for individuals with lived experience of food insecurity to develop and use their advocacy skills. Samuel and Matilda graduated from MFBN's Big Sky Leadership Academy last year, and on this trip, they put their skills and perspectives into action by speaking directly with lawmakers.

We continue working with Lived Experts here in Montana to connect them with lawmakers. This year's Big Sky Leadership Academy is in full swing, led by our Empowerment Specialist, with participants building community and knowledge that they can leverage into advocating for issues important to them.

Visit mfbn.org/public-policy to read more about MFBN's advocacy efforts and learn how you can become an anti-hunger advocate.



United States Capitol Building, DC

SUMMER MEALS KEEP

MT Kids Fed!



Childhood hunger is an urgent issue in Montana, now more than ever. According to the most recent data published by Feeding America, **1 in 6 Montana children live in a food insecure household. That is an increase of over 10,000 children from the previous year.** On top of this spike in hunger, summer proves to be the hungriest months for school-aged children who miss out on meals which they would usually receive at school during the academic year.

That's where the newly permanent provision of summer meals comes to help fill the hunger gap: non-congregate service! Non-congregate summer meal service allows kids to pick up their breakfast and/or lunch from a meal site and take it to eat elsewhere. This "grab-and-go" model has been proven through research and pandemic operations, to be one of the best ways to expand access to the summer meals program in rural communities. This flexible option is an exciting opportunity to expand the reach of summer meals including multi-meal distribution, home delivery, and parent/guardian pick-up.

Last summer saw nearly 100 non-congregate summer sites across our state serving hundreds of thousands of meals to youth aged 18 and younger.

Now that this "grab-and-go" model is permanent, more summer meal sites are finding that the flexible option works best for their communities. MFBN's Child Nutrition staff have been visiting meal sites this summer, hearing about the benefits of this model and helping sites to run their programs smoothly. Flexibility to meet children's needs provides more nutritious summers and brighter futures.

FEED MONTANA 2024




FEED MONTANA
 Help us provide
340,000 meals
 in 30 days
**STAND UP
 AGAINST
 HUNGER**

Teshia



MFBN challenges you to Stand Up Against Hunger during our annual FEED MONTANA fundraiser. For the month of September, our goal is to raise \$85,000 to help provide enough food for at least 340,000 meals for Montanans experiencing hunger.

FEED MONTANA is all about getting the community involved. MFBN invites individuals, local businesses, and teams to join us in our mission to end hunger. We need folks like you to fundraise on our behalf. Please consider asking friends and family for support or maybe even starting a workplace competition!

Will you join us and Stand Up Against Hunger?

To learn more about FEED MONTANA, become a sponsor, create a fundraising team, or to simply donate, visit mfbn.org/feed-mt.



August IS NATIONAL MAKE-A-WILL MONTH

This month is all about protecting what matters most — create or update your will today and be a part of MFBN’s movement! Harness the power of your will and empower your future, loved ones, and Montanans facing food insecurity with your legacy today.

To learn more about how you can leave a legacy gift to MFBN, visit mfbn.org/planned-giving.



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