

LETTER FROM AN **MFBN Partner**

Dear Reader,

Helping Hands Great Falls is a food pantry that had been a ministry of First English Lutheran Church for almost 40 years. When the church closed last year, the congregation voted to donate the property to Helping Hands. What began decades ago as a small food cupboard intended to help struggling congregation members has now grown into a non-profit pantry that supports approximately 14,500 people each year in downtown Great Falls in an area of concentrated poverty. The numbers only tell part of the story. The vision of Helping Hands is to not only meet the basic needs of our neighbors, but also to do so with dignity and compassion. How amazing to be able to partner with an organization like MFBN to accomplish these goals! Our core values speak to how this actually happens at Helping Hands, with the help and support of MFBN: Equality, Love, Radical Hospitality, Dignity, Compassion, Hope.

We could not do this alone. Our partnership with community and statewide organizations, such as MFBN, allows us to not only support our neighbors,

but also allows us to do so in a way that is affirming and honors our shared humanity. We believe THIS is where real change can begin in people's lives, when they know they are cared for and respected. MFBN allows us to give a wide variety of great food to our neighbors, allowing them a certain level of choice about what they'll bring home to their families. It's amazing how much a jar of jelly can mean to someone with only bread and peanut butter! We are also so grateful for the trainings, the recall notices, the grant opportunities, and the solidarity. This can be hard work, and it is so wonderful to have an organization like MFBN behind us, and on our side. I know if I have a question about best practices or needed support in any way, they will be there. Thank you, MFBN, for the good work you do, and for the huge role you play in empowering all of us across the great state of Montana to do this work too! Our families, neighborhoods, towns, and state are stronger, healthier, kinder, and BETTER because of you.

Sincerely,
Carrie Parker
Executive Director, Helping Hands Great Falls



Helping Hands Great Falls recently partnered with MFBN in March 2024.

INSIDE

A LETTER FROM AN MFBN BOARD MEMBER

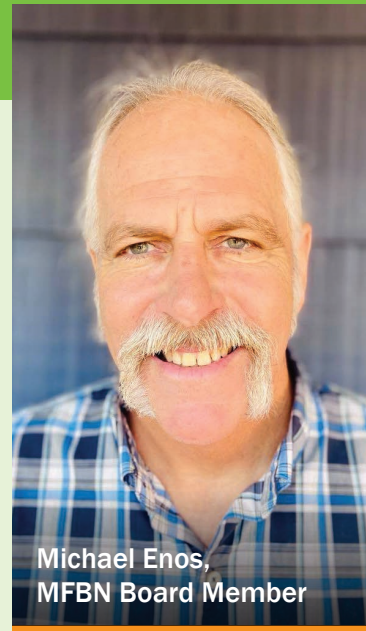
As I approach my first anniversary serving as a board member for MFBN and continue to learn about food security challenges Montanans face, I am inspired by the many opportunities available and the significant community support dedicated to overcoming these challenges.

I have had the opportunity to work with many food banks across the country in various operational capacities. As a result, I have seen firsthand the impact that food banks, food pantries, food rescue programs, and other initiatives have on improving and nourishing communities. They create support networks and act as lightning rods for positive change, removing biases and breaking down the barriers that sometimes divide us. Food relief organizations are not only beacons of hope and community spirit, they are also an integral part of our critical infrastructure.

When Hurricane Katrina devastated much of New Orleans in 2005, I volunteered to help bring the Food Bank of New Orleans back online. I recall standing on the food bank's lawn as a Red Cross helicopter touched down in front of us to collect food for distribution to some of the inaccessible parishes. In that moment, I was reminded of the immediacy of food as a basic need and the importance of organizations, like MFBN, that work to address unmet food needs.

As Montanans, I feel it is our civic duty to support the food security infrastructure so that our state can continue to be healthy and thrive.

Michael Enos
Senior Director of Community and Platform,
TechSoup Global



Michael Enos,
MFBN Board Member



Construction
progress on
MFBN's
new facility



Update: CAMPAIGN FOR BIGGER IMPACT

MFBN is in the midst of our Campaign for Bigger Impact as we look to significantly advance our mission to end hunger in Montana with the building of a new facility. Our \$15 million campaign will double the size of our warehouse, cooler, and freezer capacities. We will be able to expand and better serve our network of partners, acquire more fresh, nutritious, locally sourced foods, and make every dollar you donate go further than ever before. Foundations for our new facility have been poured and the walls are up, but we can't reach our Campaign for Bigger Impact goal and complete this ambitious project without your support. We all have a stake in a Montana where no one goes hungry. You can play an integral part in helping Montanans facing food insecurity by joining our Campaign for Bigger Impact today.

Make your donation and join our Campaign for Bigger Impact by visiting mfbn.org/campaign-for-bigger-impact.



NEW SOLUTIONS **Farm to Food Bank**

MFBN jumped on the opportunity to help a local Montana farmer distribute 160,000 pounds of fresh, surplus potatoes before they spoiled and went to waste. However, saving half a million servings of spuds is no easy task! Due to the amount of potatoes, their need to be washed and packaged, and the short window of time before spoilage, no Montana food bank facility could accept and process the potatoes. Instead of giving up and leaving the farmer in a bind, we collaborated with our partners Feeding America and Feeding the Northwest to move four semitruck loads of potatoes from Toston, MT to El Pasoans Fighting Hunger Food Bank in El Paso, TX.



Loading potatoes into an MFBN semitruck in Toston, MT.

While getting fresh food onto pantry shelves is always a positive impact, MFBN's goal is to keep local produce in-state whenever possible so that it reaches fellow Montanans facing food insecurity. With our soon-to-be-built Agricultural Quarantine Room in our new facility, MFBN will have the added space to sort and package certain fresh produce donated from Montanan producers. It will also provide more opportunities for volunteers to be a part of our mission and increase our capacity to source fresh, nutritious, local food.

MFBN works to keep food out of landfills through innovation and collaboration. We look forward to being able to do even more in the future in our new facility. With the larger warehouse we're currently building, we will be able to better support Montanan farmers and serve our partners in new and improved ways, resulting in more local food on our neighbors' tables. But we can't accomplish this goal and complete our new facility without your support. Will you join us?

Big Sky. Big Impact. Will you join us?



BIG SKY LEADERSHIP ACADEMY Graduation

This fall, we were thrilled to celebrate the accomplishments of three exceptional individuals who graduated from MFBN's Big Sky Leadership Academy (BSLA), a 13-week leadership course offered through our Amplify Montana initiative. The participants have shown remarkable dedication and commitment, investing over 30 hours of their time and energy into honing a wide range of valuable skills. Through this intensive program, they developed expertise in areas such as public speaking, community organizing, and leadership, equipping them with tools to make a meaningful impact in their communities. Their journey has been one of growth, perseverance, and empowerment. We are excited to honor their dedication to being changemakers in Montana.

MFBN held a graduation ceremony in September to formally celebrate their hard work and dedication and to hear the graduates' prepared speeches about their own stories and calls for public policy change. This event is a significant milestone, marking the culmination of their journey through BSLA and celebrating their commitment to serving as advocates. Several lawmakers and community leaders attended, giving them the opportunity to hear their speeches. It was powerful to see our graduates directly engage with decision-makers on the issues they are most passionate about. They spoke about topics including food insecurity, economic challenges, and safety for Indigenous peoples. This interaction helped to foster a meaningful dialogue, amplifying the voices of our graduates so they can keep expanding the real-world impacts of their advocacy and leadership.



Visit mfbn.org/amplify-montana to learn more about MFBN's Big Sky Leadership Academy and our Amplify Montana initiative.

MFBN LICENSE PLATE Stand Up Against Hunger



Help us end hunger in Montana by choosing Montana Food Bank Network's "Stand Up Against Hunger" license plate the next time you purchase or renew your vehicle registration. Every license plate helps provide enough food for at least 80 meals for our neighbors experiencing hunger. Ask for MFBN's license plate at your local DMV today!



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Montana Food Bank Network

