

## MFBN Provides Emergency Assistance DURING GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

From early October to mid-November 2025, the U.S. federal government shut down after a spending package for the 2026 fiscal year did not pass. The shutdown lasted 43 days, making it the longest government shutdown in U.S. history. During this time, food pantries across the state saw a sharp rise in need as thousands of Montana families faced new financial strain.

More than 77,000 Montanans who rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to afford their groceries experienced disruptions to their November benefits due to the shutdown. SNAP, formerly known as food stamps, helps people with low incomes afford groceries by providing monthly benefits. Without these benefits, families turned to food banks to bridge the gap. Additionally, more than 17,000 federal workers and contractors in Montana faced delayed or lost paychecks, making it difficult for many families to afford meals, rent, and essentials. With the holiday season approaching, the increased demand for help came at an especially challenging time.

MFBN moved quickly to respond. We connected with more than 150 pantries in our network across the state to learn what their communities were experiencing and to keep them updated on the shifting situation in Washington, D.C. We also joined with our Network Partners to advocate for temporary funding that would have helped provide SNAP benefits during the shutdown.

Thanks to generous donor support and strong teamwork across our network, MFBN raised over \$250,000 used to source and distribute over 220,000 pounds of food

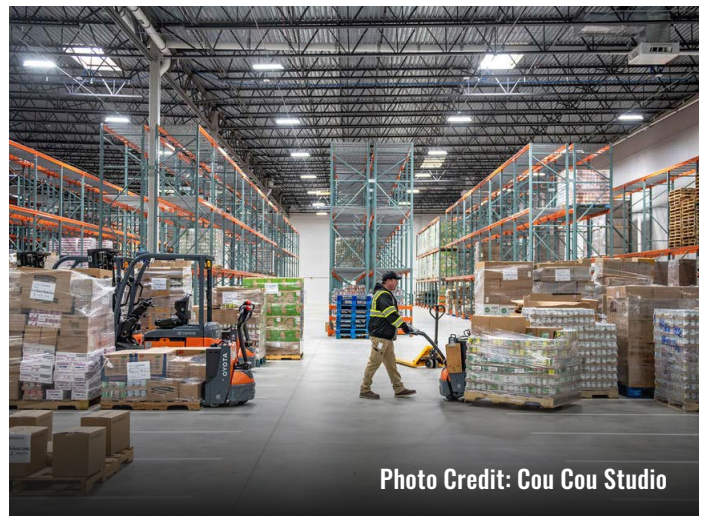


Photo Credit: Cou Cou Studio

across Montana through our Network Partners during the shutdown. This included pantry staples, protein, produce, and pre-packed food boxes for rural and tribal communities with limited access to local services.

Our Network Partners played a major role in making this possible — helping move food where it was needed most, sharing space, and coordinating deliveries so that every community had support. Their collaboration allowed MFBN trucks and staff to keep meeting regular holiday needs while also responding to the shutdown.

Montana has a long tradition of neighbors helping neighbors, and this crisis was no exception. We are grateful to our donors, volunteers, partner organizations, and community leaders who step up not only during emergencies, but every day, to make sure all Montanans have access to the food they need to thrive.

### INSIDE

## CEO CORNER



Now that we've made it through another Montana winter, we can begin planning activities that will take us out of our warm, comfy homes. Our new facility has provided us with ever-expanding opportunities to benefit our network and the neighbors they serve. One that we are most excited about is the expansion of our volunteer opportunities.

Comedian and actress Lily Tomlin said it best, "I always wondered why somebody didn't do something about that. Then I realized I was somebody." The fight against food insecurity can only be won by coming together as a community to strengthen access to affordable, nutritious food. MFBN and our network of partners across the state couldn't do it without our volunteers.

According to the US Census Bureau, over 75.7 million people volunteer at non-profits across the nation. The current estimated value of volunteers in

Montana is \$32.15 per hour, but truly, you can't put a price tag on what they bring to our organization. They help their neighbors, serve their communities, and provide their expertise. No matter what kind of volunteer work they do, they contribute in invaluable ways.

So, if you're looking for a way to contribute to your community, look no further than MFBN or your local food bank, food pantry, shelter, or meal program. You'll meet some wonderful, like-minded people, make a difference in your community, and give yourself a sense of purpose and accomplishment. Be "somebody". Be a volunteer.

Best wishes,

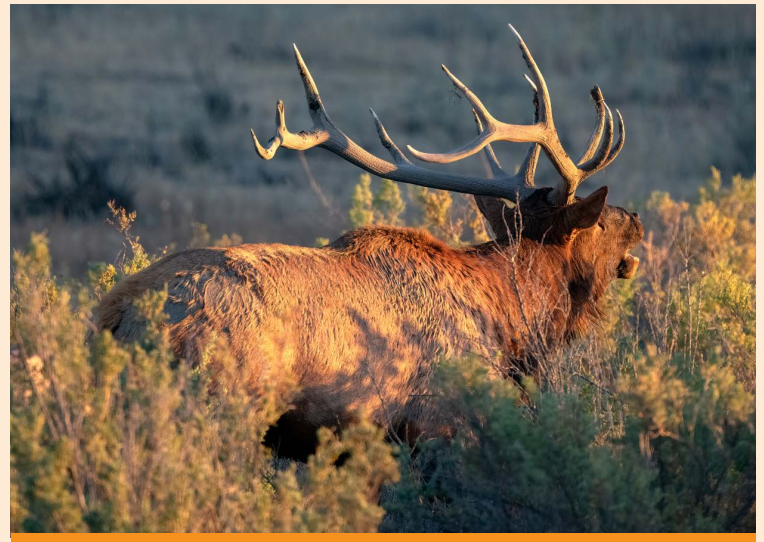
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gayle Carlson".

**Gayle Carlson**  
President and CEO  
Montana Food Bank Network

## Hunters Against Hunger

"Hunters Against Hunger is the foundation of our food bank's meat distribution program," shares Karen Coleman, Director of Meagher County Nutrition Coalition. "Many of our clients are over 55 and have lived in our community all their lives. They have been raised on their family's wild game, and they are so happy to receive this wild game from our local food bank."

Meagher County Nutrition Coalition is just one of the many organizations that receive meat through the Hunters Against Hunger Program, a partnership between MFBN and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. This past hunting season, our Hunters Against Hunger program has already received and logged over 25,000 pounds of fresh wild game meat, and we anticipate an even higher



final total once all reporting is complete. Once donated, the meat is processed free-of-charge by participating local meat processors throughout the state, who are reimbursed for their work. The processed meat is then distributed to nearby food pantries for families, seniors, and neighbors to use in their meals. We are proud to have had yet another successful Hunters Against Hunger season and thrilled to continue growing the program in upcoming hunting seasons.

# ABOUT OUR NETWORK PARTNER, **COMMUNITY FOOD BANK OF MINERAL COUNTY**

After renting spaces for over 30 years and moving seven times, the Community Food Bank of Mineral County (CFBMC) purchased a building in 2022. Although the building was the oldest commercial building in Superior, the size and location were perfect. After a structural engineer inspection in 2024, the building was termed non-viable and unsafe for continued use. However, the four lots in the middle of downtown Superior still made the location perfect. A new building was needed.

Knowing the crucial need for this resource, the Town of Superior, on behalf of the food bank, applied for a highly competitive Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Community Facilities Grant from the Montana Department of Commerce to support construction of a new facility. After an extensive process, the grant application was approved. CFBMC could now start on their forever home.

The grant did not cover the removal of the old building or readying the site for a new building. Local volunteers stripped the old building of useable materials, and a local contractor completed the removal at half the cost quoted by other companies. The building was demolished, hauled off, and the site leveled in two days.

The local Masonic organization offered their building for the food bank to use as a temporary distribution site while in transition. Food insecurity still needed to be addressed and clients needed to be served.

As hurdles came up, the food bank always seemed to find a way around, over, or through. Construction cost

overages are rampant. More funding was going to be needed to complete the project. The food bank has been busy writing grant applications and holding fundraisers. District XI Human Resources provided the grant writer and pledged in-kind funding. Their mentorship was key to giving the food bank the tools and assistance it needed to obtain the CDBG funding. The county commissioners led the way with some available ARPA funds, Headwaters Foundation kicked off fundraising with a grant, and CFBMC participated in the Town Pump matching funds annual “Be a friend indeed, helping those in need,” fundraiser, which brought in additional donations and made the food bank eligible for matching funds. Town Pump Charitable Foundation also sent funding to all Montana food banks to help with the higher demand due to the current economic crisis. CFBMC received a grant from The Sample Foundation to purchase equipment for the new building, and The Woodhouse Family Foundation contributed as well. Most recently, grant applications sent to the Dennis & Phyllis Washington Foundation and to the Treacy Foundation were approved.

The new 2,200 square foot building will provide a waiting room, privacy office, bulk breakdown area, dry storage area, unloading dock, porch, accessible ADA ramp, and two restrooms. When funding allows, the food bank will begin working towards a future Phase 2, which will include a community meeting room with a commercial kitchen available for public use.

The Community Food Bank of Mineral County is very grateful for the Montana Department of Commerce’s State CDBG program that made this project possible. Thank you to all the nonprofit foundations who assisted CFBMC with the grant application process. Without friends of the food bank, who donate year-round, fundraising partners, fellow nonprofits, loyal volunteers, and this generous community, this critical resource could have been lost. Soon, CFBMC will be announcing a spring grand opening, celebrating its new forever home in the heart of downtown Superior, where the food bank will continue its mission, “ending hungry tomorrows, today.” Come and celebrate.

Sincerely,

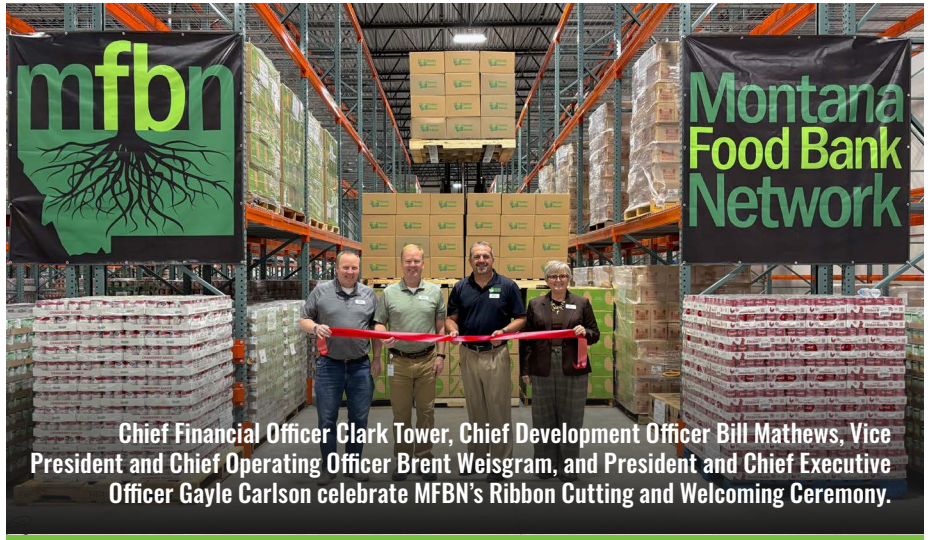
**Rose Duncan**  
sec. Treasurer  
Community Food Bank of Mineral County



A crew makes progress on Community Food Bank of Mineral County’s new facility.

# RIBBON CUTTING & Welcoming Ceremony

On Wednesday, October 22, we were joined by donors, volunteers, Network Partners, board members, and longtime supporters to celebrate our Ribbon Cutting & Welcoming Ceremony at our new facility. As we have settled into our new home, the larger warehouse, additional loading docks, and enlarged repack room have enabled us to distribute more food than ever before. We are grateful for all the support we received to make this new facility a reality, and to better serve those in need across Montana for generations to come. We welcome you to connect with us if you would like to tour or volunteer at our new building.



Chief Financial Officer Clark Tower, Chief Development Officer Bill Mathews, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Brent Weisgram, and President and Chief Executive Officer Gayle Carlson celebrate MFBN's Ribbon Cutting and Welcoming Ceremony.



Photo Credit: Cou Cou Studio

## MFBN LICENSE PLATE **Stand Up Against Hunger**



Help us end hunger in Montana by choosing MFBN'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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