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missoula food bank
& community center



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SPRING 2023

news from missoula food bank & community center



missoula food bank
& community center

NOURISHING TIMES

we nourish community



NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

You may be surprised to hear that the food bank only has 24 paid staff members. 24?! I know! I was when I started a few months ago.

How can that be possible when you consider the staggering number of people we serve each year?

How do we do it, you ask? It's all thanks to people like you. Our community- the thousands of volunteers and over a hundred community partner agencies who make this incredible feat happen each year.

Maybe you're a community partner ensuring that kids who go to the Boys and Girls Club get their snack after school. Or you may be a staff member of Missoula County Public Schools carefully tucking an EmPower Pack in the backpack of a child who will not know hunger over the weekend. You could be a member of the Housing Advocate Network spending time each week at the food bank helping people find housing or a Hunter against Hunger harvesting an extra deer to help ensure we have enough protein to distribute.

You may volunteer at our ROOTS Box builds where you are in charge of placing one can of soup into every box that passes by and then you push it to the next person. A new box arrives. You place the can of soup. You pass it along. Over and over and over again. You may be a greeter or a resource assistant sitting down with each new guest in our store. You may spend hours sorting cans or repackaging bulk items. Or you may do some other volunteer work that is not easily seen, such as sorting bread or potatoes, but is just as vital to the food bank.

Your support and dedication to this work is how we make such a significant impact on hunger in our community. So, you may think what you do in partnership with MFB&CC isn't a big deal; that you are just packing cans of soup, or loading Fresh Food Boxes, or entering data, but what you are really doing, is nourishing community.

And we couldn't do it without you.

Thank you for all you do!

Amy

- ▶ **24,287** people in
- ▶ **7,525** different households, distributing
- ▶ **1,256,983 lbs** of food in our store alone.
- ▶ We made **41,524** EmPower Packs,
- ▶ **143,881** Kids Table snacks and meals and
- ▶ delivered **6,313** grocery boxes to our aging neighbors.



School Meals Engagement Night

Tuesday,
March 7th

Join the movement to make
school meals free for all
students.

CANdemonium March 31 - April 14

CANimals stampede into Southgate
Mall for this year's annual canned
food design & build competition.
It'll be a roaring good time.

Vote for your favorite
structure on MFB&CC's
socials!



Empty Bowls Full Souls

Wednesday,
June 21st

Tickets on sale this summer.

Find more information on programs & events at www.missoulafoodbank.org

Save the date for **MISSOULA GIVES!** May 4th - 5th, 2022 at missoulagives.org.

We lead the movement to end hunger through advocacy, volunteerism,
and healthy food for all. We nourish community.

THE POWER OF A SNACK: SURVEY REVEALS EXCEPTIONAL IMPACT OF SCHOOL SNACK PROGRAM

BY KATIE WOODHOUSE

In 2020, MFB&CC partnered with Western Montana Mental Health Center to address the impact of food insecurity in Missoula County classrooms. Insufficient nutrition has long been linked to attention deficits, behavioral problems, and decreased school performance, negatively impacting childrens' physical and mental development. Together with school counselors and therapists, we launched the Kid's Table School Day (KTSD) program, which distributes a 5-week rotating menu of snacks to elementary, middle, and high school students. KTSD underwent its first evaluation last December, and the results are inspiring - not only have students' school engagement increased, but staff and students alike have experienced benefits in confidence, climate, and capacity.

Distribution site leaders agreed that KTSD has helped kids spend more uninterrupted time in their classrooms and engage more with their academic work. And, while our snack program is meeting its academic goals, counselors' testimonies reveal that KTSD is succeeding far beyond the classroom.

... the "abundance in snacks that are visible and accessible" provides students with a level of safety surrounding their access to food ...

Food insecurity aggravates adolescent stress and anxiety – when a child feels insecure about their next meal, it is predictably difficult to focus on much else. The abundance of snacks KTSD offers has made a marked difference on improving behaviors characteristic of food insecure students.

"In the past, I had 2 or 3 kids each year who would "hoard" or save food from [school] breakfast in their lockers as they felt insecure about when they would have food again," one program counselor said. She went on to describe that the "abundance in snacks that are visible and accessible" provides students with a level of safety surrounding their access to food, which garners hoarding and the anxiety fueling it unnecessary.

The consistent, abundant provision of snacks in schools have allowed children the confidence to follow their body's cues and take what they need, rather than hold back due to fear of there not being enough. KTSD is the difference, as one site reported, between a food insecure student who formerly would "shyly ask for more than one snack," and now "takes what she needs, says thank you, and heads to class to do her work."

KTSD cultivates a healthier school climate as its snack provisions make mental health screening and treatment more efficient. Staff remarked the presence of snacks in the counseling office gets students in the door, creating opportunities to evaluate students' mental wellbeing and check in on other issues. In cases of emotional disturbance, students "often do not recognize that their emotional imbalance is due to hunger," one therapist reported. KTSD equips counselors to meet this basic need and quell hunger-driven emotionality, allowing the student to be reincorporated into the classroom faster and more effectively. Plus, once inside the classroom snacks are reported to reduce power struggles and work avoidance, and act as a sensory tool to stay focused in lessons. One middle-school math teacher

KTSD was heralded by its partners as appreciated, amazing, even "life changing" for students and staff alike.



reported that KTSD "completely changed the climate of her math class," as when students entered anticipating a snack, they were "better focused, happier, and ready to learn."

If these diverse, beneficial program outcomes were not enough, the KTSD program also increases educator's capacity to teach. Partners reported relief that staff no longer "spend their personal money on snacks for kids," and the presence of snacks alongside learning have allowed them to expand childrens' understanding of "snacking" to "nourish the body instead of mindlessly eat."

Clearly, providing snacks to children makes a difference in the effective functioning of both the student as an individual and the school as a holistic unit. KTSD was heralded by its partners as appreciated, amazing, even "life changing" for students and staff alike. At school, one therapist reflected, "none of my kiddos ever have to worry about whether they will have enough to eat."

One snack at a time, MFB&CC is elevating our students' confidence, our schools' climate, and our educators' capacity to foster the bodies and minds of the next generation. The Kid's Table School Day program proves that food's importance cannot be overlooked – even if it's just a snack.

Passionate about meeting kid's nutritional needs at school? Join us in our work to make school meals free for all during our School Meals Engagement Nights hosted monthly.

March 7th 5:30-7 pm



missoula food bank & community center

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HOUSING ADVOCATE NETWORK

Missoula Interfaith Collaborative's Housing Advocate Network (HAN) and Missoula Food Bank & Community Center are collaborating! Facilitated by Zeke Campfield, Megan Clifford, and a committed group of volunteers, HAN focuses on connecting individuals with housing resources in the Missoula area. HAN offers drop-in housing assistance at their main location, Monday through Thursday from 10 am-12 pm, and in MFB&CC's conference room every Tuesday from 2-4 pm. This space provides laptop, printer, and Wi-Fi access along with non-judgmental support for our neighbors in the housing search and application process. HAN volunteer advocates aren't expected to be experts on housing in Missoula, but are able to provide fresh insight and remind customers that they are not alone. Inflated housing costs are often what bring folks to MFB&CC's doors, and having this service available right in our building is one less barrier to combatting this issue. Volunteer advocates have said that this program is a wonderful addition to MFB&CC's mission and love having another onsite resource to refer people to. We cannot wait to see this program continue to flourish!

GROW A ROW

Calling all green thumbs: Gather your seed packets and prep your soil! Well, when it thaws... We're inviting all backyard and community gardeners to grow a row for Missoula Food Bank & Community Center! Make fresh, local produce more accessible by planting a little extra this growing season to donate. How can you take part?



Together, we can nurture food security right from the soil!

- 1) Let us know you're planning on donating. We're making special Grow a Row garden markers for gardeners to grow for good and inspire neighbors to do the same! Sign up at missoulafoodbank.org
- 2) Get growing! Whether you have a whole plot or few potted plants- fresh fruit, veggies, and herbs are amongst the most requested items in our Store.
- 3) When harvest season comes, bring by the fruits of your labor to share with your neighbor!

VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION WEEK

Jess & Katie spread the love with an array of hot drinks & sweet treats for ROOTS volunteers. We couldn't nourish community without the dedication of our volunteers!

