



The Montana Food Bank Network

The Montana Food Bank Network was created by the Legislature as hunger began to become a problem in our State. Feeding Montana since 1983, the Montana Food Bank Network's mission is to end hunger in Montana, through food acquisition and distribution, advocacy and education. Guided by its sixteen member Board of Directors and core values of Justice, Excellence, Trust, Integrity, Respect and Diversity, the organization fills a unique niche in solving Montana's hunger problem, through its broad statewide network. Its support base of hunger fighters include over 25,000 individual donors, multiple foundations and corporations, legislators, government agency directors, school administrators and nearly 200 local Partner Agencies, which include all types of crisis feeding programs such as your local food pantry, low income daycares, homeless shelters and senior citizen centers. The Montana Food Bank Network provides up to 90% of the food some of our Partner Agencies distribute, in order to meet the emergency need the most vulnerable among us have for one of life's most basic human needs – food. The organization simultaneously works to address the root causes of hunger, in order to provide long term solutions to the problem.

Currently, hunger in the state of Montana is at an all time high. Contributing factors include the reality that only 20% of the jobs provide a living wage, which explains why hard working Montanans often work two jobs yet are still not able to pay their bills and provide enough food for their families. Hunger affects every demographic, including seniors, children, the disabled and veterans. Last year, over 175,000 Montanans needed emergency food. More than 40,000 of them were children. In truth, 1 in 5 of our kids in Montana lives in poverty and 1 in 10 lives in *deep* poverty. It is known that poverty leads to empty tummies and that has long lasting ramifications for the future of not only our children, but for our state. For chronically hungry children, consuming an adequate amount of nutritious food is a significant problem. Chronically hungry children do not live healthy, happy lives. They cannot learn and often do not develop physically, socially or mentally to their full potential so that they can become individuals that make positive contributions back to their communities. They simply need adequate amounts of nutritious food in order to grow into strong, capable adults. Research associates chronic hunger with a host of educational problems among grade school children, which include a negative impact on regular attendance, attention problems, low math scores, and impaired social interactions. Innocent, helpless children experience hunger as perhaps the most unfair and cruelest of life's hard lessons. As you saw in the video, their eyes reveal bewilderment at their terrible need. Alarmingly, this is happening right now, right here in Montana

The organization's programs are indicative of a consistent focus: find and distribute food to hungry Montanans and work to eliminate the root causes of hunger. Montana Food Bank Network programs include 1.) The Food Distribution Program which provides food to Partner Agencies statewide for distribution on the local level, 2.) The Backpack Program to provide food on the weekends and school breaks for children that depend on school lunch and breakfast, 3.) The Mobile Pantry Program which brings a full semi truck full of food (20-40,000 pounds) into areas without enough local infrastructure to support those in need, 4.) The Community Engagement Program to create relationships, collaborations and grassroots involvement at every level, and 5.) The Food Purchase Program which leverages purchasing power in order to provide as much food as possible to those most in need. In addition, the Montana Food Bank Network has a Food Security Council that has identified 10 steps to end child hunger by 2021, through the End Child Hunger Program.

The efficiency of the Montana Food Bank Network is demonstrated best by its administrative costs of just 6% according to its 2010 audit, which earned Charity Navigator's four star rating. Through economies of scale and leveraging power, the organization can distribute 9 pounds of food for every donated dollar. A staff of sixteen talented and motivated individuals is led by its Chief Executive Officer and Senior Staff, whose goals include, being as effective as possible in all endeavors, while continually evaluating the cost efficiencies of various programs and processes. Volunteers are engaged in a wide variety of ways, which greatly enhance the organization while keeping operating costs low.

The Montana Food Bank Network is committed to ending hunger in Montana, through its statewide system of partners, associations, relationships, collaborators and donors. The organization provides an opportunity to *make a profound difference in the lives of the most vulnerable among us*. Many are joining together to help their hungry neighbors, because together we can end hunger in Montana.