

MISSOULA FOOD POLICY ADVISORY BOARD NEWSLETTER

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SNAP-Ed the End of an Era & its Implications

BY ALEXANDRA BROWN



November arrived with a nation-wide focus on SNAP funding. Triggered by the federal government shutdown, the USDA directed states to stop issuing SNAP (Supplementary Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits until the shutdown was resolved.

Close to Home

More than 77,000 Montanans, over 7% of the state's population, receive SNAP benefits ([Montana Budget & Policy Center](#)). 8,269 Missoula County residents were enrolled in SNAP as of October.

These numbers reflect the substantial number of Montanans that have taken a tremendous blow to their budgets and, consequently, their health, due to the halt on SNAP funding.

Beyond SNAP

While the government shutdown's effect on SNAP caused a huge splash across the nation, a related program has already come to a quiet end.

On September 30, 2025, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education, or SNAP-Ed, was cut as part of President Trump's so-called Big Beautiful Bill. The program was introduced by the USDA in 1992. According to the USDA, "The goal of SNAP-Ed is to improve the likelihood that persons eligible for SNAP will make healthy food choices within a limited budget and choose physically active lifestyles consistent with the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the USDA food guidance."

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Any individual enrolled in SNAP or eligible for SNAP benefits was eligible to participate in SNAP-Ed. Over 30 years after its introduction, SNAP-Ed had expanded to reach individuals in all 50 states.

According to Food Bank News, “As recently as 2022, the USDA had positioned the 33-year-old SNAP-Ed program as a key mechanism for helping Americans achieve nutrition security. Now food banks are contemplating the pivots they will have to make to overcome big hits to their nutrition education budgets.” ([SNAP-Ed Is Gone. Now What? - Food Bank News](#))

Montana's CHALLENGES

- **1 in 9 Montanans** face hunger/food insecurity
- **65%** of Montana youth do not participate in enough aerobic activity to meet guidelines
- **68%** of Montana adults do not meet the vegetable intake recommendations
- **66%** of Montana adults are overweight or obese
- **74%** of Montana American Indian adults are overweight or obese
- **14%** of Montana children in grades 9-12 are overweight or obese

SNAP-Ed STRATEGIES

TEACH

low-income youth and adults in the locations, online or in-person, that they eat, live, learn, work, play, and shop.

COLLABORATE

with community and statewide partners to leverage resources and increase program reach to eligible audiences.

EMPOWER

organizations and individuals to create changes in policies, systems, and environments that make the healthy choice the easy choice.

SNAP-Ed OUTCOMES in Montana

Adults

- **36%** ate fruit more often
- **44%** ate veggies more often
- **70%** were more physically active
- **72%** improved food safety practices
- **67%** improved food management practices

Youth

- **43%** improved physical activity behaviors
- **52%** improved food safety practices
- **82%** made healthier food choices

While the breadth of future impacts can only be guessed, **Montana's 2024 SNAP-Ed Impact Report** provides insight into the health challenges faced by Montanans, and the role SNAP-Ed played in alleviating these challenges.



Delivering Fresh & Local



MFPAB board member, Blake Lineweaver, walks past towers of Montana-grown cherries, waiting for transport to one of WMGC's many retail partners.

Behind the Scenes at Western Montana Growers Cooperative

BY BLAKE LINEWEAVER



In our last newsletter, we highlighted a recent investment in our local food system happening at the Western Montana Growers Cooperative (WMGC). Through an expanded warehouse footprint, increased freezer capacity, and much-needed improvements at their 1500 Burns Street location, Missoula's local food hub is scaling up to better serve growers in the Flathead, Jocko, Mission, and Bitterroot Valleys while meeting rising demand for fresh, delicious, and nutritious Montana-grown foods.

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This past summer, members of the Missoula Food Policy Advisory Board (MFPAB) had the opportunity to visit WMGC and check in with Dave Prather, General Manager, about WMGC's expansion project and deepen our understanding on how the co-op's distribution and marketing services drive our regional food economy (pun intended).

WMGC currently supports 30 farmer members and 70 non-members; this diversity supplies a full plate of Montana-grown products—including fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables, dairy, meats, legumes, and other value-added items—to over 300 restaurants, grocery stores, and institutions in Montana, Northern Idaho, and Eastern Washington. While growing its wholesale channels, WMGC maintains personal connections to the community through its direct-to-consumer CSA (Community-Supported Agriculture) program, which delivers weekly boxes of in-season produce, as well as meat, cheese, milk and other add-ons, to 580 individuals and families from May through October.

As a farmer-owned cooperative, WMGC's owners govern the co-op democratically by electing a board of directors from its membership. The Board ensures the organization abides by its cooperative principles and makes strategic decisions aligned with its member-driven mission. As the business's fiduciary body, the Board provides sound financial management of debts, improvements, and reserves; any remaining profits, called "surplus," are allocated back to its members after each fiscal year, which it has done four of the last six years. Looking ahead, as WMGC completes renovations to its facility (occupied since 2014), leadership is investing in personnel, staying ahead of rising costs, and deepening regional partnerships to provide fresh, quality products from Montana farmers.



Dave Prather (right), WMGC General Manager of 17 years.

MFPAB extends its gratitude to WMGC for their hospitality in hosting us, as well as the collaborative spirit and passion they have for serving our local food system. And with bittersweet hearts, we share that Dave Prather had his last day at WMGC on October 31 after dedicating 17 years to the co-op. We recognize the incredible legacy and spirit of cooperation Dave instilled while at WMGC and wish him the very best on his next adventure!



Missoula County's **GREEN TEAM** Leads the Charge Toward Zero Waste

BY JAMIE BREIDENBACH

Missoula County is deeply committed to preserving the natural environment that makes our community so special. It's one of the main reasons so many of us call this place home, and why so many others choose to visit.

As part of that commitment, the City of Missoula has developed a comprehensive **Climate and Sustainability Plan**, outlining actionable steps toward a greener future. One of the plan's key initiatives focuses on **Zero Waste**, an effort you may have noticed in action throughout the summer.

At the heart of this initiative is the **Green Team**, a dedicated group of volunteers and staff members from Home ReSource. This hardworking crew spent countless hours collaborating with event planners and vendors, sorting through waste, and ensuring that thousands of pounds of materials were diverted from the landfill to be composted or recycled instead.



Throughout the summer, the Green Team could be found at major community gatherings such as the Western Montana Fair, River City Roots Festival, quietly working behind the scenes to make Missoula's celebrations more sustainable.

Their efforts are a powerful and inspirational reminder that every small action contributes to a larger goal: **Keeping Missoula clean, green, and thriving for generations to come.**



FURTHER READING & LISTENING

PODCAST **LEVL With Us**

- Lived Experience Voices & Leaders (LEVL) focuses on sharing stories and exchanging perspectives on important issues like food and housing insecurity. Produced by the [Missoula Food Bank & Community Center](#)

ARTICLE **SNAP Crisis: Meeting the Moment Without Federal Funding**

- By [Food Bank News](#), a national, editorially independent, nonprofit media organization.

MFPAB wants to hear from you!

Community groups, individuals, and organizations all over Missoula County are advocating for increased access to healthy food for all. If you are a part of this effort, we want to hear your story! The more we stay connected to local action, the more effective we can be as a whole.

Contact us to share your story!

foodpolicyadvisoryboard.msla@gmail.com



Who We Are

The Missoula Food Policy Advisory Board (MFPAB) was established in 2020 to advise local government on policies and programs related to food and agriculture.

MFPAB is specifically charged with providing recommendations to elected City and County officials to support the following:

- Healthy food access & nutrition
- Sustainability of human & natural resources necessary for agriculture
- Economic development of small & mid-sized food & farming businesses
- Strong & vibrant local food systems

The Board is comprised of nine appointed volunteer members who represent a variety of key interests within the food system, including members with expertise in food access, health and nutrition, local food production, food businesses, farm to school education, food system governance and analysis, and land use.

Meetings are open to the public!

3rd Monday of the month, excepting holidays

3:30 pm - 5:00 pm

G.W. Marks Exploration Center, 1075 South Ave. W.

Missoula, MT 59801

Clover Board Room, 2nd Floor

CONTACT

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