

Missoula Food Policy Advisory Board Newsletter

Nourishing community



COOKING A COMMUNITY BY JAMIE BREIDENBACH

Trying to teach a two-year-old how to cook is both stressful and wildly fulfilling. Not to mention the potential for injury and an extra messy mess to clean up. But I'm in it for the long game, in hope that she someday will cook me a

Mother's Day brunch 😊 and be able to feed herself when she's left the nest.

The basics of cooking entail the learning of independence to care for oneself, but there are many other benefits to cooking, that may not be as obvious. A quick google search suggested that cooking is good for mental health, requiring concentration and being present so as not to burn your meal. It is more cost effective than eating out regularly, creates healthier eating habits as well as fosters creativity. Cooking at its greatest potential creates opportunities for shared learning, building community, and nourishing the body.

Missoula continues to grow in ways where we can gather as a community to learn how to create more delicious dishes, from items we grow in our backyard or are traditional to our new neighbors from around the globe. Gather in the newest learning kitchen at Missoula Fairgrounds in the Gerald W. Marks Exploration Center in the [Honeyberry Culinary Classroom](#), or in the [Demonstration Kitchen](#) on the fourth floor of [Missoula Public Library](#), available to adults or families with [Families First cooking classes](#), in the [Bill & Rosemary Gallagher Learning Kitchen](#) at Missoula Food Bank & Community Center, or register for a cooking class with the [Lifelong Learning Center](#). If you want to take your skills and experience one step farther, you can consider a culinary career with [The Big Sky Culinary Institute](#).

MEET OUR NEWEST BOARD MEMBERS!



Alexandra Brown has worked in the world of agriculture since 2018, both farming and in an educational capacity. She recently joined the Missoula County Department of Ecology and Extension to develop programming for the Rocky Mountain Gardens. As a board member, Alex hopes that her background in sociology and environmental studies provides a helpful perspective as Missoula continues to develop local food policy. Be it reducing barriers between Missoula residents and healthful meals, connecting local producers to local markets, or other tasks on the board's plate, Alex is looking forward to listening to, learning from, and growing alongside these efforts.

Alex grew up in Missoula and holds a Bachelor's degree in Sociology from the University of Montana. She enjoys good food, good music, fresh air, and spending time with the people and animals she loves.

Jamie Breidenbach is the program manager for Missoula Food Bank & Community Center, where she has served since 2016 and oversees nutrition programs aimed at youth and seniors and satellite pantries. The food bank's senior nutrition and delivery programs consist of a federally funded program called ROOTS and the Fresh Food Box Program. Jamie was instrumental in designing the Fresh Food Box Program, which delivers perishable food items to our neighbors' homes.

Jamie holds a bachelor's degree in recreation management from Western Washington University and enjoys spending time outdoors with her husband and three children.



Virginia Harris is originally from Virginia but has called NW Montana home since 2017 when she moved here for a farm apprenticeship. Before farming, Virginia was a high school Social Studies teacher in the DC metro area for eleven years. She volunteered with nutrition programs in Washington, D.C., and discovered her passion was food accessibility and urban farming/community gardens.

Virginia is currently pursuing her Masters of Social Work at the University of Montana. She can be found in her garden or scaling a rock wall in her spare time.

POTOMAC SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE MANAGER WOWS

BY JODY WILLS

Amy Truett was recently presented the Montana School Nutrition Association (MTSNA) WOW award by Patrice O'Loughlin, President of MTSNA.

This award recognizes a school food service employee in Montana with a lot of heart. As Potomac knows, Ms. Amy works tirelessly each day feeding students nutritious, well-balanced meals.

The WOW award is sponsored by the Julie Leister family of Missoula and memorializes Julie who passed away from cancer. Her school nutrition legacy lives on every year as MTSNA presents a hand-carved knife from Julie's father to Ms. Amy.

Amy has been the food service manager for Potomac Elementary School for several years. She grew up in Potomac and attended the school. She uses about half prepared foods and half scratch foods. If using the prepared foods, she always "tweaks" them, so it isn't same old same old. She is very creative presenting the food in a fun, kid-approved way. As she says "make it fun and you have clean plates".



Amy prefers to use (and the kids prefer it too) fresh vegetables and fruits rather than canned. She makes her own pico de gallo and guacamole, pumpkin dip for apples, fruit parfaits, and salads, for example. She tries to use local food when it is available. Turner Farms and Pattee Creek market have been very helpful to accomplish this. She has used beef (Iverson/Hathaway) from Potomac and well as KOP BEEF from Clinton.

She love special weeks of nutrition education. For MONTANA CRUNCH (a program to promote local foods in local schools) she served beef sticks from KOP BEEF, decorating the kitchen area with thank yous to the Kopp family.

Coming up is National School Lunch Week with a pirate theme. She will make the kitchen look like a boat and serve pirate tacos (shaped as boats); pirate burgers; and cannon balls (meatballs). She makes "cat in the hat" cookies for Dr. Seuss day and other silly, yet, nutritious items for the students.

Amy also goes once a month into the K-3 grades and has the students try new fruits or vegetables. She explains the nutritional value of each compared to fruits and vegetables they may be more familiar with. She has introduced them to fresh cranberries, arugala, and spinach, among others.

Amy also manages the summer food program, involved preparing around 24,000 meals for 270 kids. The boxes were made up with what is necessary for 7 breakfasts and 7 lunch meals per kid. This is where the local fresh food is used to the most. And Amy always adds in a special treat.

In reflecting on what the greatest return of her job, she said "the smiles from the students, staff, and community" makes it all worthwhile.

MISSOULA HOSTS FIRST EVER 'FOOD RX' SUMMIT

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BY JENNY ZASO-HITCHCOCK

The state's first annual Montana Food Rx Summit took place in Missoula in September at the Rocky Mountain Exploration Center. The summit was focused on "produce prescription" programs that serve Montanans living with chronic illnesses (e.g. diabetes, heart disease) and facilitate the prescribing of free fresh fruits and vegetables from healthcare providers to patients through vouchers that can be redeemed at local farmers markets, farm stands and local grocers.

Hosted by Farm Connect Montana, Montana Department of Health and Human Services (DPHHS) and the Montana Partnership to End Childhood Hunger (MT-PECH) the summit welcomed about 100 professionals working in healthcare, non-profits and government agencies to find opportunities to collaborate statewide and learn how to improve current produce prescription programs.

Lisa Lee, Co-Executive Director at the Montana Partnership to End Childhood Hunger shared, "Families in rural communities across Montana struggle with accessing fresh quality food. That's why this first-ever produce prescription program summit is so important for moving the needle in rural Montana--it gets new and existing programs together to share program information and best practices to identify food insecure patients with children and one or more diet-related health issues (like diabetes, heart disease, or hypertension) to help give them consistent access with good food to address their health and nutrition needs."

The summit included a presentation from Mariah Gladstone who works on the revitalization of traditional Indigenous foods through her business Indigikitchen and has been recognized as a Luce Indigenous Knowledge Fellow through the First Nations Development Institute, a Culture of Health Leader through the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and an MIT Solve Indigenous Communities Fellow. Another presenter was Laurie Harvey, the Director of the Diabetes Department at the Rocky Boy Health Center in Box Elder, MT and is a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP), overseeing both the Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI) and Produce Prescription Pilot Program grants.

You can read more about the summer at [MTPR](#) and the [Missoulian](#).

WINTER IS COMING...OPPORTUNITIES TO STOCK UP ON VEGGIES:

- Oct. 23, 24: Garden City Harvest [veggie stock up sale](#)
- Nov. 1: Harlequin Produce [stock up sale](#)
- Winter CSA's still available through [Harlequin Produce](#) and [Western Montana Growers Co-op](#)
- Oct. 26: Final Clark Fork Farmer's Market
- Nov. 16: Missoula Winter Farmer's Market begins, Saturdays @ South Gate Mall
 - Nov. 16 - Dec. 28 9am-3pm
 - Jan. 4 - April 12 9am-2pm

Have a policy idea or want to get in touch?

Email us at foodpolicy@missoulacounty.us