



Community Food Quarterly

FALL 2024

Unveiling the New Grocery Share Market: A Fresh Experience for the Community

“Everything brought me to tears! It’s so easy to shop and makes me feel like a regular shopper, where people bag and box for individuals. It’s BEAUTIFUL!” —customer comment from the first day.

A group of Helena Food Share customers were asked to share comments after their first shop in the new Grocery Share Market, which opened last month in Helena Food Share’s Community Food Resource Center. The smiles, easy conversation, and positive energy filling the room shared much more than words. Customers were delighted with the open space and the feel of a modern market, reducing anxiety and the hesitancy of asking for help when needed.

The spacious new facility allows more customers to shop at once, significantly reducing wait times that once left people standing outside in unpredictable weather. Customers can now relax in the newly added lobby before the Market opens or if they are waiting for a ride after shopping, ensuring comfort and convenience during their visits.

The larger space allows Helena Food Share to offer a greater variety of food options, making

it easier for customers to choose items that meet their families’ needs. Mary, a regular customer, shared her excitement about the new facility: *“I can’t believe what a lovely space the new Market is. Getting around and finding the items I needed is so much easier. I don’t have to worry about holding other shoppers up while deciding what items my family needs this week.”*

For individuals like Mary, who have turned to Helena Food Share during challenging times, such as when unexpected bills strain monthly budgets, the new Market offers dignity and ease, as well as sustenance. The layout provides a more familiar grocery shopping experience, with spacious aisles and well-stocked shelves, resembling larger retail grocery stores.

Volunteers, too, benefit from the new storage and roomy layout, offering more efficiency. With more room for sorting food, larger aisles and shelves, and spacious coolers and freezers, volunteers can keep food stocked throughout the day more easily. The improved workflow ensures Helena Food Share can better meet the community’s growing needs.



Customers Peggy & Pete were some of the first to shop in the new Market and their initial reaction was *“Answered Prayers! This Market will improve the quality of our life.”*

The opening of the Grocery Share Market is a significant step forward in Helena Food Share’s commitment to providing accessible, reliable food assistance to those in need while offering dignity, respect, and convenience. The new facility marks a major milestone in addressing the continued growth of food insecurity in the greater Helena area.

Your gifts of food and funds are essential for ensuring the Market shelves are filled for our neighbors when they are in need. Please support our fall food drives, and take advantage of the Town Pump match to double your financial gift, now through the end of November.

Season of Change:

Q&A with Jordan and Bruce

Each season brings changes, and this fall brings a leadership change to Helena Food Share. Jordan Evertz was selected as the new Executive Director and she will work with Bruce until his retirement at the end of the year. They recently took some time to reflect on this transition and Helena Food Share.

Q: *Bruce, what do you want the community to know as you retire from Helena Food Share?*

A: Helena Food Share is grounded in its mission and has the people and resources to succeed. We have a strong staff, engaged volunteers, and a supportive community, all critical to meeting current and future needs. Jordan's skills and experience will help advance Helena Food Share during this crucial time, as we progress in the new Community Food Resource Center and address the growing demand for services.

Q: *Do you have any plans as you begin a new chapter?*

A: I'm looking forward to more time with grandkids, more hiking and camping, new travels, and re-engaging a few long-delayed creative pursuits.

Q: *Jordan, what are you most looking forward to in your new role at Helena Food Share?*

A: I am excited to meet all the wonderful people behind



Jordan Evertz and Bruce Day will collaborate on the ED transition.

carrying out the Helena Food Share mission, from team members to volunteers to community partners. It is energizing to join an organization with such strong connections in the greater Helena area.

Q: *How do you spend your time outside of your work?*

A: I enjoy spending time with my family and friends, including our dog Seeley, exploring the outdoors, and attending family events. I also volunteer at various community events and activities to stay connected to the community. I enjoy activities that allow me to channel my creativity through the arts.

Q: *For both EDs, what are your short-term and long-term goals for Helena Food Share?*

A: Bruce: In the short term, we are focused on continuing to provide a high level of service to the community through our new Community Food Resource Center and programs that meet the varied needs of a diverse customer base. In the longer term, I believe we might work to expand our

reach and our programs. For example, we might serve folks in more rural communities through partnerships with other local organizations and take on increased food rescue and production from the new production kitchen.

A: Jordan: My short-term goal is to work with Bruce during onboarding to ensure a smooth leadership transition. In the first 60 days, I'll work to build relationships and contribute to ongoing projects, especially around the Community Food Resource Center. In the long term, I'll assess community needs with staff to ensure our programs and strategies align and explore program expansion and development opportunities.

Q: *How can the community best support Helena Food Share?*

A: Bruce & Jordan: With the holiday season fast approaching, Helena Food Share provides many valued programs to our neighbors in need. Community support is essential – through contributions of food and funds, and volunteerism during the holidays and throughout the year.

The Production Kitchen: A Game-Changer for Reducing Food Waste and Feeding the Community



Sally Beck talks about the kitchen features during the open house last month.

Extending the usability and nutritional life of food donated by grocery stores and gardens throughout the area is the primary goal of Helena Food Share's new production kitchen. It is a transformational addition that will help to better serve our community by providing fresh, nutritious meals while reducing even more food waste. The kitchen offers the space and equipment to clean, prepare, and package food for immediate distribution in the Grocery Share Market or to freeze and store items for later use. Volunteers clean, sort, and package donated food each day, giving it a second life.

The production kitchen staff and volunteers will prepare various seasonal recipes, including soups, baked goods, deli salads, and ready-to-eat meals and side dishes for distribution in the Market or quick-frozen so they can be offered later in the season. These efforts will maximize

the use of donated food while increasing the variety of healthy, ready-to-eat options available to customers.

Kitchen Manager Sally Beck shared her excitement about the new venture: *"We will be incorporating Montana-grown products in almost all the food we prepare. Not only does this mean our customers are getting healthy, nutritious food, but we are supporting local growers, too."* Bulk produce and whole grains from Montana farms can be re-packaged for families

who shop in the Market, with delicious recipes included to easily incorporate them into family menus.

The kitchen will be staffed by volunteers, with Sally directing their work. *"We're eager to create opportunities for volunteers to join us in the kitchen and be part of something truly impactful,"* said Sally. *"If you have a passion for baking or making soups or salads, the new kitchen can be a place to join a great group of people while utilizing your culinary skills."*

Additionally, internships for local students will be offered in the future, providing valuable experience in a commercial kitchen environment and preparing them for careers in the food industry. Later next year, the kitchen will be available for outside use. If a nonprofit group needs to prepare meals for an event or an aspiring entrepreneur wants to perfect a recipe, the commercial kitchen can be rented during weekends and evenings.

The possibilities the production kitchen brings and its impact on reducing food waste will be game-changers for reducing food waste and hunger in our community.

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Contact Us:

(406) 443-3663

To Volunteer: ext. 106

To Donate: ext. 103

To Get Help: ext. 110

Grocery Share Market:

1280 Boulder Avenue, Helena

East Helena Mobile Pantry:

50 Prickley Pear, East Helena

Office: 1280 Boulder Avenue, Helena



[HelenaFoodShare.org](https://www.HelenaFoodShare.org)



Creating a Hunger-Free Community

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We believe access to food is a basic human right.

2024

TURKEY CHALLENGE

Food & Fund Drive

Donate & Learn more at:
HelenaFoodShare.org/turkey-challenge/



NOVEMBER 22nd

Bring food or funds to the Library on November 22 to provide holiday meals for our neighbors in need.



Will Match Up To \$10,000 Donated NOV. 22

