



Community Food Quarterly

SUMMER 2025



We believe by sharing food, we share hope.

Growing Hope: Addressing a Growing Need

July in Montana is a time of abundance. Gardens bloom, orchards ripen, and neighbors across the Helena Valley share their harvests. At Helena Food Share, we rely on this same community spirit to help stock our Market with fresh, nutritious food, especially now, when more families than ever are turning to Helena Food Share for help.

Since opening the new Community Food Resource Center last October, we've welcomed an average of **109 new households every month**, each one facing food insecurity in an increasingly uncertain time. On average, these households support 2.3 people, many of them children or seniors.

The reality is stark: **food prices are rising, social safety nets are shifting, and economic uncertainty is growing.** We're seeing more working families, people on fixed incomes, and neighbors facing unexpected crises walk through our doors. To meet this surge in need, we urgently need your help.

Joan is one of those neighbors. She uses the Market and volunteers when she can. *"It just feels good to give back,"* she says.

"I know what it's like to go without. Helping in the Market makes me feel connected—like I'm part of the solution."



Montana Youth Leadership Forum (MY LiFe) volunteers came to work in the HFS Garden last month.



Market volunteers ensure shelves and coolers are stocked every day the Market is open.

Jim is another customer sharing this spirit of community. On a recent visit, he stepped out of line

to help another shopper carry groceries to her car.

"She'd hurt her shoulder," Jim explained *"and it just felt right to help."* When a volunteer thanked him, Jim simply said, *"That's what the world is all about—helping each other out."*

Your support makes stories like theirs possible. Here's how you can help:

- **Donate funds** to purchase healthy, local food that provides critical nutrition.
- **Share your harvest** to bring variety and vitality into the Market.
- **Volunteer your time** to keep our garden, kitchen, and Market running strong.
- **Support and thank our local stores** that power our Grocery Rescue program, providing the bulk of our daily food supply, keeping good food out of landfills and into the hands of those who need it.

Now is the time to act. Together, we can make sure everyone in Helena has access to the food they need, with dignity, respect, and care.

Let's grow a hunger-free community together.

Eating Local: Nutrition for a Healthy Community



Joe grows red Swiss chard and kale for his local customers and restaurants.

Fresh, nutritious, and rooted in community—those are the values behind Joe Naiman-Sessions's farm, N Bar S Microgreens, nestled in the Helena Valley. What began with microgreens has blossomed into a diverse, nutrient-dense harvest of lettuce, kale, chard, root vegetables, and leafy greens, feeding families across Helena through local stores, restaurants, and Helena Food Share.

Joe's produce is a powerful example of the farm-to-table model in action. By harvesting just before delivery, Joe ensures that his greens reach customers at peak freshness, rich in vitamins, minerals, and flavor. Unlike produce that travels hundreds of miles, his local greens retain more nutrients and contribute to a more sustainable and resilient food system.

In June, Helena Food Share featured greens as the Montana Harvest of the Month, purchasing 30 pounds of Joe's crisp, colorful lettuce mix. Volunteers packaged the greens for the Market, while

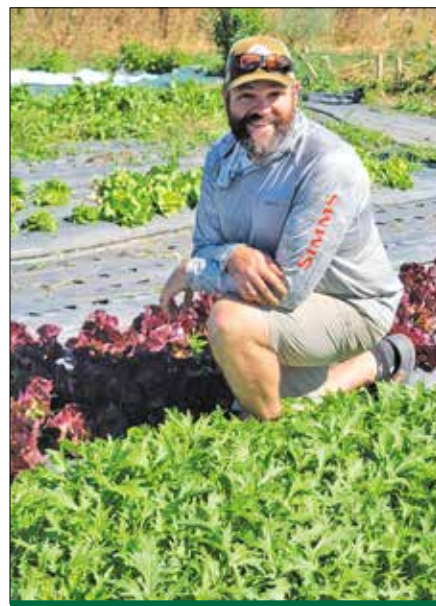


Fresh greens accompanied chicken salad in ready-to-eat meals for the Market.

others prepared ready-to-eat salads in the Kitchen, offering shoppers a meal that is both convenient and packed with nutrition.

Joe's commitment to community extends beyond his customers. At the end of each Farmers Market, he brings any extra greens—chard, kale, lettuce, and mix bags—to donate to Helena Food Share. *"As a business owner, I'm always looking not to have any waste, and I don't want [cost] to be a barrier for anybody to access the food that I grow,"* Joe explains. *"It's important to me when I have surplus to make sure it's available to people who may not be able to purchase it. I want people not just to have access to food but to have access to good food."*

When you buy local, you're not only nourishing your own body, you're investing in the health of the entire community. Joe's greens can be found at The Real Food Store, Town & Country Market, and a growing number of local eateries like Benny's Bistro, The Silver Star, Rockstarr BBQ, The Union, and seven other restaurants. Or meet him in person every Saturday at the Helena Farmers Market and discover how fresh, local food can make a lasting difference.



Joe Naiman-Sessions tending his Helena Valley garden.

Grocery Rescue: Nourishing Families, Reducing Waste

Helena is home to 13 grocery stores, seven bakeries, and a strong community of producers who grow vegetables, raise livestock, and contribute to our valley's abundance. With that abundance comes opportunity—and responsibility.

Through our **Grocery Rescue program**, Helena Food Share plays a vital role in making sure surplus food doesn't go to waste, but instead reaches the people in our community who need it most.



Nutritious food is rescued from area stores each weekday.

Every day, Helena Food Share drivers visit stores across the Helena Valley, collecting nutritious food that can no longer be sold but is still perfectly good to eat. These donations include items nearing their "sell by" dates, seasonal goods, and overstocked products. Several times a week, our drivers also stop by local bakeries to pick up bread and baked goods that are still fresh but unlikely to sell before the next day.

"Knowing that our unsold food goes straight to helping families in our community makes a



Safeway staff assists a HSF volunteer with food for Grocery Rescue.

huge difference to our team," said Eric Dowell, Safeway Store Manager. "We're proud to be part of something that keeps food out of the trash and puts it where it belongs—on someone's table."

During the growing season, our team also collects unsold produce from the Helena Farmers Market, and local farmers often alert us when they have surplus crops or meat they can't bring to market.

All rescued food is brought back to Helena Food Share, where it's quickly sorted, shelved, or prepared for distribution. Some is

transformed into soups, salads, and ready-to-eat meals by volunteers in the kitchen. **80% of the ingredients in these prepared meals come from rescued food.**

Even food that's no longer fit for people to eat isn't wasted—it's shared with local farmers to feed livestock, keeping it out of the landfill and completing a full circle of sustainability.

In total, **43.8% of all the food Helena Food Share distributes comes from the Grocery Rescue program.** It's a powerful example of what our community can do when we come together to reduce waste, protect the environment, and make sure no neighbor goes hungry.



Staff stock the Market with bread rescued from Park Avenue Bakery. For a complete list of stores that donate food, visit HelenaFoodShare.org/reducing-food-waste/.

Community Food Quarterly | Summer 2025

A publication of Helena Food Share

Contact Us:

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To Volunteer: ext. 106

To Donate: ext. 103

To Get Help: ext. 110

Grocery Share Market:

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East Helena Mobile Pantry:

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HelenaFoodShare.org



*Creating a Hunger-Free
Community*

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*We believe by sharing
food, we share hope.*

Be a Kid Pack Champion *and help Helena's kids head back to school ready to thrive!*

As a new school year approaches, more than **1,200** children in our community are at risk of facing weekends without enough to eat. Our **Kid Pack Program** provides nutritious, kid-friendly food to help them stay healthy, nourished, and ready to learn—every week.

To start the school year off right, we're working to raise **\$63,000** to cover the cost of Kid Packs for the **first 10 weekends**. With your help, we can make sure no child starts the year hungry.

Rally your team. Engage your customers. Inspire your members. Mobilize your congregation.

*Together, we can set Helena's kids up for a strong,
nourished start to the school year.*



**Ready to make a difference?
Become a Kid Pack Champion!**

Contact Maddie:

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