Montana School Nutrition Association

Back to School Newsletter
2015-16

Challenges and Changes
By Jane Elwess, MTSNA President 2015-2016

Here we are with another school year ahead of us! Thank you to those of you who were able to attend our state conference this year in Billings. I hope you had a great time! We look forward to seeing you at our 40th celebration of MTSNA next year on June 20-23, 2016 in Great Falls. Be sure to mark your calendar as it will certainly be a fun (and educational) time!

As I reflect the many changes school lunch and breakfast programs have gone through over the past 40 years, I am in awe of all the Montana School Nutrition Professionals who have stepped up to the challenges facing them and made the changes necessary to continue feeding our children healthy, and great tasting meals. From the beginning of our Cooperative Purchase Program to USDA Food (commodity) improvements, expanded breakfast programs, the popularity of nutrient-based meal planning only to change to only food-based meal planning, to the popularity of Recess Before Lunch programs, After School Snack programs, Back Pack programs, the Healthier US School Challenge, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable programs, the focus on 100% whole grain-rich, and now Professional Standards... well, it’s been a challenge keeping up. Those of us who have been working in school kitchens for 15 to 30+ years, have seen more changes then we can even remember!

Some of you might say, “We have always been doing this in our program!” and you would be right! That’s because someone ahead of you, in your School Nutrition Program, met the challenge and made the change! As the years go by, and we continue with our careers in School Nutrition, I have no doubt that we will face many challenges. I know we will meet them and make the changes needed.

I know you will succeed, because it is what YOU have always done!

Have a wonderful and successful school year!

A Treasurer that will be Missed

By Jane Elwess, President

It is with sadness but heart felt good wishes that we say goodbye to one of our long standing Executive Board Members, Becky Green. Becky has served on the board for more years than she (or any of us!) can remember. First Becky was MTSNA Secretary followed by Treasurer. Becky always kept the Executive Board on track with spending the membership money wisely!

Balancing the budget to maximize the best use of the money was no easy task, but Becky always made it seem simple! We will miss her and her knowledge, but wish her only the best! We know her family is going to enjoy having her around next summer without a computer strapped to her side! Thank you Becky, for your many years of volunteer service on the MTSNA board. We will miss you!

MTSNA wants you! Join our team today!

Fall 2015

Inside this issue:

Senior High Scholarship

Farewell to Debbie Heuscher

How to Increase School Funding

ANC Report

Smarter Lunchrooms

Kids Eat Right Month

Schools on Administrative Review

Be sure to see:

- A call to action: Step Up and Find New Horizons
- National School Lunch Week October 12-16, 2015
- Apply for a MTSNA member scholarship by March 1
- Don’t forget about getting your SNA Certificate!
Thank You

Dear Montana School Nutrition Association Board and Members

Sincerest and heartfelt thanks for your very generous donation of 450 fruit cups to the Billings and Lockwood Public Schools Backpack Meals Programs. That is enough fruit cups to provide each child participating in the Backpack Meals Program with a serving of fruit and still have a third of the amount of fruit we need for the next food giveaway. This is wonderful news, as fruit cups are one of the students’ favorite items to receive in their Backpack Meal kits.

The volunteers who deliver the meals and I deeply appreciate the excellent work each of you do by providing nutritious meals and an inviting atmosphere in each of your own school cafeterias. We know your efforts provide stability for many food insecure children in your communities. Your generosity is much appreciated. I know the children who will receive the Backpack meals will be equally grateful for the sweet fruit treats.

Best Regards, Ginny
Virginia Lee Mermel, PhD, CNS
Backpack Meals and Teen Pantry Programs Coordinator
406-661-2642
ginnymermel@gmail.com

Follow the Backpack Program on Facebook at:
https://www.facebook.com/BillingsBPMP

Welcome back! A Note From your MTSNA Vice President

By Salley Young, Vice President

I hope you all had a great summer, maybe with a few vacations and a little time to relax.

This past year I had the honor to serve as President of Montana School Nutrition Association. It was a year full of huge successes and heart breaking losses. I learned to give just a little more and stay strong. Thank you for your support as I passed through the ranks of Vice President, President-Elect and President. It was a great three years of learning to be a leader and spokesperson for MTSNA. That said I would also thank you for your confidence and re-electing me to the position of Vice President!

I have some more exciting news about your MTSNA Executive Board! We have welcomed two new board members Wendy Shreeve from Forsyth and Maria Schwarzrock from Plentywood. Wendy will be taking over as our new Certificate Chair, and Maria is our new Single Unit and Awards Chair. We are so thrilled to have them join our leadership team.

We had a devastating year with the death of two dedicated friends and board members, Julie Lester and Debbie Heuscher. Words cannot express our loss of two strong, vital women taken from their families and earthly duties far too young. These were both emotional losses for all of us on the board and as part of the membership.

Our organization won’t run itself and those are big shoes to fill, so again, thank you Wendy and Maria for stepping forward and taking a leadership role with SNA, it’s going to be fun!!

If anyone else is considering joining our executive board please don’t hesitate! Reach out to any board member and let them know you’d like to get involved. We’d love to have your perspective and energy. Join us!

Scholarship for High School Seniors

By Carol Simanton, Scholarship Chair

MTSNA and Western Marketing are proud to offer three five hundred dollar scholarships to graduating seniors planning to further their education in the field of nutrition. This can be in the education field as a home economics teacher, a food, nutrition and dietetics program or attending culinary arts school, for example.

Along with our commitment to feeding children we also want to help them by furthering their education. Please have students submit their application to Carol Simanton by April 1, 2016. Recipients will be notified by May 1, 2016.

We hope the scholarship recipients can join us for recognition at the annual MTSNA conference banquet held in Great Falls June 2016. Please find the scholarship application here and on our website. Encourage students you know to apply.

Feel free to contact Carol Simanton with any questions.
Montana School Nutrition Association
Professional of the Year: Sofia Janik

After forty-plus years of working in School Nutrition at the Office of Public Instruction (OPI), Sofia Janik retired from her position as Summer Food Program Officer and Accountant.

MTSNA is proud to honor her as our 2015 Professional of the Year.

Sofia graduated from Carroll College with degrees in Public Administration and Business Administration.

She has been a long-standing advocate for increasing access to healthy meals for children during the school year and summer months. OPI and MTSNA will greatly miss her dedication and commitment to School Nutrition.

Treasure's Report

By Joan Karls, Treasurer

Thank you for electing me as your new treasurer of MTSNA. It is indeed an honor to serve you, our members, on the Montana School Nutrition Association Board. I look forward to this new challenge and appreciate your confidence in me. Enjoy the start of the new school year and let's continue to feed Montana's youth.

Best job EVER.

A sad farewell to Debbie Heuscher

MTSNA leader and President Elect, Debbie Heuscher passed away July 3, 2015. She was devoted to nutrition education and our SNA members for 18 years. Her passing is a huge loss to our association and board. She will be dearly missed.

Her family moved often when she was younger so Debbie grew up all over the country. When she visited Bigfork to spend the summer of 1977 she met the love of her life, and never left.

Debbie married Vernon Dee Heuscher on Aug. 12, 1978, in Bigfork where they lived and soon after raised their four children. She was the rock of her family. Always willing to listen and always ready with kind advice.

She had many jobs throughout her life, but finally found a fulfilling career when she joined the Food Services Department of Bigfork Schools in 1998. She enjoyed getting to know the kids of Bigfork and knew almost every one of their names and lunch numbers by heart, which the kids loved. She also loved working on the Montana School Nutrition Association Board, and traveling to National Conferences and trainings. She was committed to education and training for our Montana membership.

Debbie posted this on Facebook the day she passed away. She was an inspiration to us all.
Healthy School Meals, Snacks and Beverages: State and Local Policy Options

Below are policy options to help you implement the new national school nutrition standards in your state and community. These policy changes can be accomplished through legislation, regulation, school board policies, school wellness policies, media advocacy, or other approaches.

Implementation Plans

State Child Nutrition Program: Each state has a child nutrition agency working on school food issues. In Montana, the agency is housed within the Office of Public Instruction. The state child nutrition program is responsible for providing technical assistance to help schools implement the school food standards, certifying that schools meet the standards, and monitoring schools to ensure they remain in compliance. We call this an Administrative Review.

Work with your state child nutrition program to provide technical assistance and training to school and district level food service staff. Materials and training could include: menus and recipes, healthier product specifications, how to use commodities healthfully, strategies to increase meal participation and reduce stigma, how to accurately price meals and a la carte items, how to encourage students to select healthier options, resources on vendors offering healthy items, etc.

Work with your local school district or school to ensure they are getting the technical assistance they need from the state child nutrition program, USDA, School Nutrition Association, or others.

What are Indirect Costs?

Indirect costs are costs charged to the food service program other than direct costs (labor and food costs). In some districts, food service programs are expected to pay for the electricity used in the cafeteria and kitchen, a share of the wages paid to janitors, and a portion of the superintendent’s salary.

In contrast, the science department does not pay for the electricity used in science classrooms, the math department does not pay a share of the janitor’s wages and the art program does not budget for the superintendent’s salary.

The more money a food service program pays in indirect costs, the less funding available for healthy school food.

Speak with your clerk or business manager to make sure your program isn’t being charged for these costs.

Source: Center for Science in the Public Interest
How to Increase School Food Funding

Sensible School Food Pricing

- Attend an upcoming fall workshop to get information on how to price paid lunches and a la carte items to ensure they over their own costs and do not drain resources from meals for low-income children as required by the HHFKA.
- Analyze current paid meal and a la carte prices to ensure they reflect the true cost purchasing, preparing, and selling the item.
- Price a la carte items to ensure the school breakfast or lunch is the best deal for students.

Increase Participation

- Encourage all students to apply for F/R lunch.
- Increase direct certification. Students who receive SNAP, TANF, FDPIR, benefits, or who are foster, migrant, homeless or runaway are automatically eligible for free lunch.
- Consider providing universal free breakfast or lunch to students in schools with a high percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch.
- Periodically send reminders home to parents that they can apply for F/R lunch at any time during the year if their financial situation changes or if the number of members in the household increases.

Encourage Students to Eat the Healthy Foods

- Get students involved—have recipe contests, students ambassadors who strategize how to get peers involved and excited about school meals, taste tests, voting on meal options, student-led school food marketing campaigns, etc.
- Work with teachers—offer taste tests so teachers are familiar with new school offerings and talk supportively about them with students, encourage teachers to eat school lunch with students, conduct teacher trainings on nutrition education and the benefits of new school nutrition standards, etc.
- Send information home to parents—send a letter or include messages in the school newsletter and website about the improvements to school meals, provide tops for how parents can reinforce healthy eating at home, invite parents to eat lunch at school, have taste tests and a school nutrition table at parents nights, encourage parents to participate on a school wellness policy or health committee, etc.
- Implement a policy to require recess held before lunch. Students are more likely to finish their meals and return ready to learn when they return to the classroom.
- Increase school meal appeal. Cook vegetables to preserve vibrant color; vary the cuts of fruits, vegetables, sandwiches, use catchy names like zippy zucchini.
- Implement cafeteria practices that promote healthy choices. Look at the set up of the cafeteria. Are there other configurations that would promote better student flow and selections?
- Change the placement and prominence of healthier choices.
- Increase variety of fruits and vegetables—install a salad bar, feature a fruit or vegetable each month with fun facts, etc.
- Work with farmers to bring more fresh produce into schools.

Fundraisers

Healthy fundraisers set a positive example and support healthy eating and physical activity by children, nutrition education and parents’ efforts to feed their children healthfully. Schools have found healthy fundraising options to be practical and profitable.

- Apply nutrition standards to all school fundraisers.

Food Marketing to Students

Prohibit unhealthy food to be marketed in schools.

Wellness Policy

The Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act of 2004 required each school district with a federally funded school meal program to develop and implement a wellness policy that addressed nutrition and physical activity. Though many districts have adopted a policy, they are weak and not fully implemented.

- Periodically monitor and assess the school wellness policy.
- Have a standing wellness committee that meets regularly and includes representation from administration, staff, parents and students.
- Send information about wellness policies to parents and post on school website.
- Institute a closed campus policy to support participation in school meals programs and reduce children’s exposure to unhealthy foods during the school day.
- Set nutrition standards for foods at school parties and prohibit using food as a reward.
Step Up and Find New Horizons

By Carol Simanton, Legislative Chair

I would like to take this opportunity to tell you about becoming part of the national education committee. While Salley Young and I were at national conference in Kansas City in 2013, I expressed that I would like to do more for our association and she made sure I met Julia Bauscher, SNA President 2014-15 and let her know my desire to be more involved. I wasn’t home long and I started receiving emails asking me a few questions about my position in my school and I was asked to be on the education committee to be the representative for small school food service directors.

As a committee we have addressed the Keys of Excellence program and why it has not been used. To be honest I knew very little about the keys and have learned a great deal. I feel it is something that can be used to help you really know where you are in the success of your program. It is still under review but will be available very soon.

We also did a great deal of work on helping the association find the best way of documenting your continuing education credits so we all have what we need to show we are up to date with the new Professional Standard guidelines set by USDA.

I have enjoyed my experience with the national committee and feel I have learned so much; I have also made some wonderful friends during the experience too. I would encourage anyone interested in sharing their voice from Montana to become involved in MTSNA and more!

I would like to close with a few words about two amazing ladies our board has recently lost. We lost Julie Leister last spring to cancer, then were completely blindsided by losing Debbie Heuscher just a week after our summer conference. Both ladies were such an inspiration to us all. They are part of what made me want to be more involved. They were such a wonderful example of doing all they could to make our programs for Montana children the best they could be. None of us know how long we will be with our loved ones doing the things we love. We can all make a difference and do at least one wonderful thing every day. Don’t miss the dance.

Innovative Strategies for Creating Smarter Lunchrooms in Montana

Preliminary Descriptive Statistics for Pre to Post Changes* in Salad Bar Waste, Milk Waste, and Meal Participation Rates Among Five Montana High School Participating in a Smarter Lunchrooms

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<th>Salad Bar Waste Post</th>
<th>Milk Waste Pre</th>
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Recommended Strategies for High Schools

1. Create a Smarter Lunchroom Action Committee to gain student buy-in to enhance menu and participation levels.
2. Cafeteria redesign to motivate students to select fruits and vegetables.
3. Increased use of signage to promote fruits and vegetables.
4. Having a fruit/vegetable share basket available.

Learn more from the Smarter Lunchrooms Movement at:

http://www.smarterlunchrooms.org

Montana Team Nutrition Program

www opi mt gov/MTeamNutrition

Katie Bier, 406-994-1561, kbier@mt.gov

Molly Stenberg, 406-994-7217, stenberg@montana.edu

Carmen Byker Shanks, 406-994-1952, carmen.byker@montana.edu
This year, Annual National Conference was held in beautiful Salt Lake City and we were lucky enough to have more than 13 conference attendees from Montana! As President-Elect I represented Montana at the National House of Delegates.

One of the proposed changes brought before the House was the restructuring of the governing board. With the passing of the restructuring, one change will be the deletion of the National Vice President position. This will give the board a better chance to elect National Presidents as it will only be a two-year commitment. There will be no need to make changes at the State level unless each state chooses to change their by-laws to follow the National by-laws.

Sunday we attended the Red Carpet Award Ceremony and cheered for Salley Young as she accepted her President’s Award of Achievement and the State’s Membership Goal Award.

Thank you, to all our members!

During the week, Salley and I attended wonderful General Sessions, State Leadership Meetings, and took advantage of over 90 educational sessions ANC had to offer! Salley and I also spent time with the new National President-Elect Becky Domokos-Bays who will be attending our State Conference this June in Great Falls, and enjoyed attend a class on “Making your Lunch Rooms Smarter” presented by are own Katie Bark! At lunch times we made our rounds of the vast vendors show, and in the evenings we took in some of the great sites (and food) of Salt Lake City!

Next year, ANC will be held in “Unforgettable San Antonio” July 10-13, 2016. If you have ever thought about attending a National Conference this would be a one to plan for, and it will truly be one to remember. I would love to see you there! Contact me, Jayne Elwess, if you are interested in attending!

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**Innovative Strategies for Creating Smarter Lunchrooms in Montana High Schools**

**Authors:** Katie Bark, RD, LN, Carmen Byker Shanks, PhD, and Molly Stenberg, RD, LN

**Relevance**

Maintaining good participation rates in high school nutrition programs can be challenging due to school policies (open campus, restriction of cell phones) and the changes in the menu choices due to the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010. Food waste is a national concern and school nutrition directors are committed to motivating students to consume fruits and vegetables as part of a balanced meal.

**Design**

This project involved five diverse Montana high schools that implemented a minimum of three Smarter Lunchroom strategies determined by a Smarter Lunchroom Advisory Committee made up of students, foodservice manager, and a teacher. Cornell University’s Smarter Lunchrooms Self-Assessment Scorecard was the foundation for selecting the strategies. A three-day plate waste study was done in the pre and post intervention phases.

**Evaluation**

Success was evaluated by reviewing changes in the following factors:

- Smarter Lunchrooms Self-Assessment Scorecard
- Salad bar and milk waste
- Meal participation rates

The response from the school nutrition managers in implementing Smarter Lunchroom strategies was also an important factor in measuring success.

**Conclusions and Implications**

Results from this project indicate:

School nutrition managers plan to maintain a Smarter Lunchroom Advisory Committee for enhanced communication with students.

On average, salad bar and milk waste decreased while student participation rates increased after implementation of Smarter Lunchroom strategies.

On average, Scorecard values increased by 13 points (33%) (6-27 range).

Smarter Lunchroom strategies need to be further evaluated in high school nutrition programs.

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Funded by USDA Team Nutrition and Cornell Center for Behavioral Economics Grants

“It’s Not Nutrition Until It’s Eaten”
Kids Eat Right Month

By: Karla Dumas, RDN

You can almost hear it. The pitter patter of little feet is ready to fill the cafeterias once again.

August not only marks the beginning of the school year for most, it is also a month dedicated to helping kids eat right as the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics reminds us. It signals the beginning of the far-reaching impact that child nutrition professionals can have on individual children. Just like students rely on their teacher to educate them, they rely on you to provide foods for daily nourishment, influencing their lifelong dietary choices.

With over 31 million children participating in the National School Lunch Program each day, this is not a task to be taken lightly. Currently, one-third of American children are overweight or obese, increasing the likelihood of developing preventable diseases such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease and certain cancers.

With the last dietary guidelines approval in 2010 came the most dramatic changes to the National School Lunch Program’s nutrition standards in decades. Being pioneers in large scale societal shift is not without challenges, but child nutrition professionals should be proud to know that history is being made to improve the health of future generations.

The proposed Scientific Report for the 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends an emphasis on sustainable diets with increased consumption of vegetables, fruits, plant-based proteins and whole grains with a decrease in consumption of foods high in calories and saturated fat, most commonly found in animal-based foods.

Many schools across the country recognize the importance of introducing plant-based meal options and advocate for Meatless Monday or Lean & Green Day on their lunch menus and in cafeterias. Encouraging kids to choose tasty foods that happen to be meatless even just one day a week will have a beneficial impact on their health for a lifetime.

Districts have the flexibility to make these programs fit within their model in whatever way works best for them, and the opportunities in which to participate are endless: from creating new meatless meals to highlighting many familiar favorites like bean burritos, chili or pasta. The Humane Society of the United States supports institutions’ efforts with free recipes, promotional materials, participation ideas, and best practices from districts all over the country.

Introducing plant-strong meals, even one day a week, educates our youth to protect our environment and national food security as well. As the Scientific Report states, “sustainable dietary patterns...promote food security now and for future generations and create a ‘culture of health’ at individual and population levels.”

Choosing to participate in Meatless Monday or a Lean & Green Day provides vital support to efforts for increasing produce consumption, supporting Farm to School and the local economy, while working to create a “culture of health.” Now is the time to continue the momentum of positive change that will help kids eat right!

“Encouraging kids to choose tasty foods that happen to be meatless even just one day a week will have a beneficial impact on their health for a lifetime.”

SNA CERTIFICATE

By Wendy Shreeve, Certificate Chair

With two $500 MTSNA member scholarships available there has never been a better time to gain your SNA certificate!

Earn your SNA Certificate while you meet the new Professional Standards which require all school nutrition employees working 20 hours or more per week to have 8 hours of continuing education units (CEUs) per school year and managers to have 15 hours of CEUs per year.

When you are a SNA member all you need to certify is a copy of your certificate of completion for the following 8 hour classes that you have taken in the last 5 years:

#1 ServSafe or Food Safety in Schools from National Food Safety Management Institute (NFSMI)

#2 Nutrition 101 from National Food Safety Management Institute (NFSMI) - available online!

These classes are being offered at the 2016 MTSNA conference in Great Falls. ServSafe is also available during the year at different locations.

Please contact Certificate Chair Wendy Shreeve with any questions at wshreeve@forsyth.k12.mt.us or 406-351-1965.
Recognize National School Lunch Week in Montana Schools!
Let’s help Montana make the news!
By Jennifer Spellman, Public Communications Chair

Many of you already do activities throughout the school year and make efforts to provide a welcoming environment in your cafeterias. It is often those little things you do that make a difference to the students.

You may be decorating your bulletin boards for special times or putting on a special meal for homecoming week or dressing up in a costume?! All those things really do make a difference.

This year for NSLW, let’s all get together and do something special to get our School Lunch Programs recognized for all the good work that we do!

First, plan out what you want to do during the week of October 12-16. It could be just a single day of celebration or events during the entire week.

Second, invite the news media for your event!

Lastly, let MTSNA help you brag about what you are doing. Send photos and a write up about your district to Jennifer Spellman so we can post it on our website!

NSLW: October 12-16, 2015

By Carol Simanton, Scholarship Chair

MTSNA is proud to continue to offer our scholarship to MTSNA members. We are offering two five hundred dollar scholarships to our members. Application are due by March 1. Scholarships will be awarded by March 15 so it can be used for the annual MTSNA conference in June.

Any member can apply for the scholarship regardless of the number of hours the individual works. The applicant needs to make sure they meet all the scholarship criteria, complete the application and send the application to Carol Simanton (address provided on the scholarship form).

This scholarship was designed to help individuals that need assistance in coming to our state conference so they can meet professional standard requirements and complete their continuing education hours. We would like to make it possible for all school nutrition professionals to attend our state conference each year.

We are truly excited about our conference in June 2016 in Great Falls and are hoping all of you will be marking your calendars for the event. I hope you are all truly blessed through this coming school year and are able to be with your families. The school year promises to hold many new and exciting things for us so let’s get started by applying for this scholarship to help you along the way.

Visit our website www.mtsna.org for applications!
Don’t wait!
Apply today!

TWO MTSNA MEMBER SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE
## SY 2015-2016 Administrative Reviews of School Nutrition Programs

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**MTSNA wants YOU! Join us!!**

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"Montana School Nutrition Association is dedicated to protecting and enhancing children's health and well-being through school meals and sound nutrition education."

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If you’d like to submit an article, the deadline for the next MTSNA newsletter is November 10. Please send to Tara Ray at tray@mt.gov.

The date of the next in-person MTSNA Board Meeting is October 16-17, 2015 at the O’Haire Motor Inn in Great Falls, MT. Any and all members are welcome to join!

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**2015-16 School Breakfast Grants!**

By Colin Wethered, No Kid Hungry

It’s called the most important meal for a reason! Breakfast has proven to be a crucial component when it comes to childhood development. When served in school, most educators agree that they see improvements in both academic and social behavior. The *Breakfast after the Bell* initiative offers alternative breakfast models like Breakfast in the Classroom and Grab n’ Go to ensure that your students are given every opportunity to succeed.

On average, *Breakfast after the Bell* has shown to double school breakfast participation, compared to when it is served before school. This, in turn, leads to lower rates of tardiness, fewer school nurse visits and less disciplinary action. Research also indicates that students who eat breakfast at school perform 17% better on math tests.

Last school year, $115,000 was granted to 36 schools throughout Montana to expand participation in school breakfast programs. The results were outstanding with 3,600 students gaining access to a healthy breakfast, more than 80% of whom qualify for free and reduced-price meals. Additionally, more than 5 million breakfasts were served statewide last year, a 7% increase from the previous school year.

There are more than 100 schools offering *Breakfast after the Bell* throughout Montana. Join the movement to eliminate barriers for your students to reach their full potential. If you are looking to implement a new or alternative breakfast model at your school, No Kid Hungry offers grants up to $5000. Contact Lisa Lee, Montana No Kid Hungry Director, at 444-3518 to learn more.

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