

Montana Farm to School Success Story



Farm to School at Huntley Project School

Ginger Buchanan began as the Food Service Director for Huntley Project School in June 2017. New to the position, she quickly realized that it is not just about serving meals. Ginger's passion for local foods led her to get involved with farm to school at Huntley Project. Upon starting as the Food Service Director, Ginger immediately signed up for the Montana Farm to School Summit and the Montana Team Nutrition Program-sponsored Montana Cook Fresh Leadership Institute.

After learning more about locally focused food service practices, Ginger soon ran into challenges. Tasked with reducing costs, Ginger was determined to provide healthy and fulfilling meals that kids wanted to eat. By the end of the summer, she had run the summer food program successfully with the help of the school staff and learned about USDA requirements, production reports, serving sizes, and more. Huntley Project serves breakfast and lunch and provides snacks for a couple extra programs.

The Montana Cook Fresh Leadership Institute equipped and inspired Ginger to come up with creative solutions to cut costs in the kitchen. She learned how to best cook school meals from scratch, procure local meats, and use resources more efficiently. For example, the Institute taught Ginger how to serve milk from a milk dispenser rather than in cartons. That way, serving milk is much cheaper and kids are able to drink all they want. Ginger got three milk machines donated from Montana State University's surplus equipment list.

In the summer, the school greenhouse produces all of the fresh herbs, cucumbers, radishes, tomatoes, and peppers for salad bars. Along with sustainable serving methods, local procurement, and a school greenhouse, Huntley Project also participates in Montana Harvest of the Month. When Huntley Project School joined Montana Harvest of the Month, Ginger was very excited to introduce new fruits and vegetables to the kids. Since, they have showcased foods including carrot salad, roasted butternut squash, and kale chips, which were a huge hit among students. Ginger also embraces a fresh-food philosophy in creative ways, one of which was serving fruit-infused water in the cafeteria Pre-COVID.

When COVID hit, Ginger applied for and won over \$100,000 worth of grants to replace obsolete equipment and purchase coolers to transport those meals. Ginger was also able to get Yeti Coolers to donate 4 large coolers on wheels for the hot sandwich transports! She bought new ovens, a mixer,

Learn More

WEB

www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool

FACEBOOK

@MontanaFarmToSchool

INSTAGRAM

@MTFarmToSchool

CONTACT

Aubree Roth, Montana
Farm to School Coordinator

aubree.roth@montana.edu

(406) 994-5996

324 Reid Hall
PO Box 173370
Montana State University
Bozeman MT 59717-3370

Montana Farm to School is a collaboration between Montana Office of Public Instruction, Montana Team Nutrition Program, Montana State University, and other partners. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

“The Montana Cook Fresh Leadership Institute equipped and inspired me to come up with creative solutions to cut costs in the kitchen,” Ginger Buchanan, Huntley Project School Food Service Director, said.

warming cabinet, and the prized Oliver Machine, among other new equipment! Ginger also received the Montana First Lady Award from the Governor’s wife for making “from scratch” meals.

There are about 800 enrolled students at Huntley Project Schools. Located 18 miles east of Billings, it is in a farming and ranching community. In the cafeteria, there are eight staff members and up

to four student workers at times. The administration loves being involved with serving and helping as much as possible. At Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter, the principals serve the kids’ meals as a special treat.

As food services evolve at Huntley Project, Ginger is committed to serving quality meals and promoting a culture of care in her kitchen. She aims for the entire kitchen to show love and kindness to every kid that comes through the lunch line. Ginger’s goal is for all of Huntley Project’s school meals to be fresh and made from scratch.

For more information, please contact Ginger Buchanan at gbuchanan@huntley.k12.mt.us.

