



MT Farm to School Successes Webinar: School Gardens

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AUBREE ROTH: Hello everyone and welcome to the Office of Public Instruction School Nutrition Program's Webinar Wednesday. I hope you're doing well, staying safe, and healthy. I just want to give a huge thanks before we start to all the school staff who are keeping kids fed and educated during this difficult time. So, today's topic is Montana Farm to School successes and we're focusing on school gardens, and I hope it gives you a little bit of inspiration and excitement in what is a stressful time. This is the final webinar in this three-part series that highlights Farm to School successes from around our state. This webinar is being recorded. All of our recordings and slides will be posted on the OPI School Nutrition Program's webinar archive in MAPS as well as on the Montana Farm to School website and social media channels. So, I'm Aubree Roth and I'll be leading the webinar today. I'm the Montana Farm to School Coordinator for Montana Team Nutrition Program. Montana Team Nutrition works in close collaboration with the Office of Public Instruction's School Nutrition Programs to provide training and guidance to schools, and we're housed at Montana State University. I'm excited to be joined by Faith Oakland, Rachael Jones, and Riley Devins. This webinar provides snapshots of Montana Farm to School successes to provide you inspiration and resources to start or grow your farm to school program. During this webinar I will discuss farm to school basics and school garden resources. Faith, Rachael, and Riley will provide their experiences and tips for providing farm to school in terms of school gardens, and we'll wrap up by discussing opportunities and then answer your questions. So, let's dig in! Farm to school is an umbrella term or a movement to connect children to their food to improve their health, support farmers, ranchers, and food businesses, and strengthen communities through the three core elements. Procurement: local foods are purchased, promoted, and served in the cafeteria or as a snack or taste test. Education: students participate in education activities related to agriculture, food health or nutrition, and school gardens. Students engage in hands-on learning through gardening, and that will be our topic today. Farm to school programs generally work best when each of the three core elements are represented. As you'll see throughout the webinar, there are many ways to implement farm to school. Farm to school is not a

program you sign up to do. You build it to meet your school's interests and resources. So, let's take a look at each of these core elements. First, procurement, which includes buying and serving local foods in school and after-school meals and snacks. Schools are sourcing local foods across all five food groups, from apples to beef and beyond. This can include special meals like this one at Manhattan Christian School that feature as many local ingredients as possible, or you could feature one to two local ingredients in meals throughout the year. If you're interested in buying or serving local foods, I recommend watching the recording of the Buying and Serving Local Foods Webinar in this series, which is posted to our Montana Farm to School website and Montana Team Nutrition Program's YouTube channel. Growing and raising food with students is a great way to engage them in the process and get them excited about unfamiliar foods. School gardens vary in size, type, and purpose, as we will see from our other three presenters. Gardens could be in-ground gardens, raised beds, greenhouses, or indoor gardens. Located on the High Line, Hensdale School boasts an incredible school garden with a passive solar greenhouse and root cellar, all of which the students helped build. The cafeteria uses garden produce in school meals. Your garden could even be unconventional, like Gallatin Valley Farm to School's Bob the Greenhouse Bus that provides mobile school garden education throughout Gallatin Valley. School gardens compliment and support other farm to school core elements and initiatives, such as harvest of the month which I'll talk about later. Definitely the broadest of the core elements, the education piece spans food nutrition and agriculture-based education and is the topic of the second webinar in the series. Farm to school education can take place anywhere, here Gallatin Valley Farm to School provides in classroom lessons at a Bozeman elementary school. Keeping kids engaged in cooking is another important piece in farm to school. The GROWW program at and Ennis School has been cooking up a harvest of the month storm. The students made heart-shaped beet ravioli. Farm to school is well rooted in Montana. 57.1% of Montana schools are participating in at least one of the farm to school core elements. This includes over 48% are serving local foods in their school meals, 22% are conducting nutrition AG and food-based education, and 19% are creating and tending school gardens. There are many benefits to farm to school programs, as you'll see through the examples in this webinar. Students can improve academic achievement through garden-based education, increase their awareness and acceptance of unfamiliar foods, support ranchers, farmers, food businesses, and local economies, and more. I encourage you to check out the National Farm to School Network benefits fact sheet whose link is at the bottom of the slide for more information about the impacts of these initiatives. One opportunity for connecting these three core elements together is by participating in the Montana Harvest of the Month. Montana Harvest of the Month is one way you can implement farm to school, as it provides an easy framework to follow, ready to use materials, and helpful resources. The Montana Harvest of the Month program features a different Montana grown or raised food each month. Shown here is our calendar for this school year. We strive to add new foods each year and change the calendar to keep it fresh. The program is open to K-12 schools and after-school programs, summer food service programs, early care and education sites, healthcare facilities, grocery stores, and food pantries. The program offers many resources, such as posters, handouts, guides, menu templates, and more. For registered sites, we now have farm to plate videos for several of the Harvest of the Month foods and they are publicly available on our Harvest of the Month YouTube channel. Even for those who are not registered for the program, these can be used to support continued farm to school learning while students are learning at home. You guys can register for free on the Harvest the Month website as shown here anytime during the school year. With any new project, including farm to school, it is best to start small and build upon successes. The following are a few considerations and recommendations to ensure your school garden doesn't become a dreaded weed patch. Teams are critical to this sustained success of farm to school initiatives and especially school gardens. Consider who needs to be on the team, who makes decisions, who manages the landscaping, cast your net wide with team members and be clear about roles and

responsibilities. Consider the purpose of the garden - is it educational? Is the garden intended to produce food for school meals? The size and type of garden is determined by the purpose, so it is important to be clear about that upfront. Who will be managing the garden? Who is ultimately in charge of making sure that garden is cared for? Although a team is critical, having a central point of contact or someone to facilitate the connections will help make the process go much more smoothly. The second row here shows a few design considerations. Consider who will access the garden and when, what is the water source and who controls it, will it be automated or does someone need to do the watering? Plan out the planting schedule. Will the garden be cared for in the summer? Is the garden only for the school year? Your schedule will dictate what you can grow and when it needs to be planted. The third row has critical elements to keep your garden growing. Know what resources you need – is it funding for a coordinator? Garden supplies? Supplies and soil to help build garden beds? While there are grants available from different sources for gardens, you may have an easier time getting your garden supplies through donations from local businesses. Consider having a sign in the garden that thanks funders. Communication in all things is key to success. Set up a method for communicating with your team, with other schools, staff, parents, and volunteers. You'll be more effective at bringing teachers and volunteers into the garden if it is clear what they can do and when. Lastly, it is important to chronicle your school garden's progress and impact. A few ideas for how you can measure your reach and impact include number of students engaging in school garden activities, number of or hours of garden activities conducted, and pounds of food produced. Gardens are rich educational environments and there are many curriculum connections, from cooking with garden produce to conducting scientific experiments, to drawing garden still lifes. The connections map here gives many ideas for how you can cultivate the connections to topics at your school and get many educators involved in your garden project. And rest assured, there are many resources to help you through the process of planning, designing, and maintaining your garden. We have collected and highlighted a few of those resources on the Montana Farm to School website on the school garden page. This includes food safety in the school garden, curriculum connections, planning checklists, and more. One particular resource I want to call to your attention is the Garden to Cafeteria Tool Kit. Food safety is so important, especially if you want kids to be eating the garden produce and feature the garden produce in school meals. We recommend you contact with your county sanitarian, also known as the health inspector, before getting any school garden activity to ensure the food is being grown and handled safely. In addition, this Garden to Cafeteria manual has templates and standard operating procedures that can be a huge help to making sure the garden produce can safely add color, flavor, and nutrition to the lunch tray. So, now that you have a good foundation of school garden considerations and resources, I'm excited to hand it over to our three featured Montana farm to school successes. First up we have Faith Oakland with Fairview School District. Take it away, Faith.

FAITH OAKLAND: Thank you. Hi, I'm Faith Oakland, and I am the Farm to School Coordinator for Fairview School District. We are located on the eastern border of Montana, we have part of our community located in North Dakota. A few years ago, our science teacher Mrs. Pierce started talking about bringing the farm to school program into our community and several of us were very excited about this and began researching the concept. Next slide. As a result of these conversations and the ensuing research, the Family and Consumer Science teacher Mrs. Hopes and I attended the Farm to School Summit in Missoula in September 2018, and we fell in love with the idea. We spent at the 11-hour drive home planning our next steps. By the time we reached Fairview, we had sketched out a strategy with attainable goals, one of which was a school garden. To make this happen, I approached the school superintendent about creating two Farm to School classes - one for the fall with a focus on harvest and one for the spring with a focus on planting. He agreed with this idea and in fact created a Farm to School Coordinator

position, which allows me to oversee the program. Next slide. We knew our district would support us in this journey to bringing fresh food into our school, but we did not want the district to fund the garden, so we decided to put a fundraising plan into action. Next slide. Because the school district does not fund our school garden and we did not want to take money away from our AG program or the Family and Consumer Science program, we found another way to find to fund the farm to school program. Our AG teacher, Mr. Hardy, who is also a local farmer, planted an acre of corn and only charged us for the seed. The AG teacher and his son planted and irrigated the corn crop. Next slide. To sell the corn, our farm to school students solicited other schools and local grocery stores. We sold the corn for \$5 a baker's dozen. Every local grocery store bought corn from our program and indicated their interest for this coming year as well. Local schools were excited to receive the fresh corn. Next slide. Some schools requested us to remove the husk first, which the students gladly accommodated. Students also set up signs and sold the corn to local residents from the AG parking lot under teachers' supervision. As the Farm to School Coordinator, I also placed an advertisement on Facebook which reaped many sales. We had people coming from Wolf Point Montana and Poplar, Montana, as well as Williston, North Dakota to purchase our corn. All of these locations are at least an hour away. Each day, our farm to school students were bused to the corn field where they picked boxes and boxes of corn. The students removed husks and created bags of 13 ears and I delivered the orders to local schools, grocery stores, and citizens who could not come to the school for pick up. Next slide. Once the corn was getting to the point of not being super fresh, we set up shop in our Family and Consumer Science classroom and removed the kernels from the cob, placing at least six years' worth of fresh kernels in freezer quart bags. We were able to deep freeze this corn in our school's cafeteria freezer, which is set to negative 30 degrees. This allowed us to sell our corn well into the fall and early winter, and far past the regular sweet corn season. We sold each quart bag for three dollars. This was an important move because many local farmers plant sweet corn and give it away or sell it, which depleted our marketing abilities. Once all of the fresh corn was out of stock in the area, we were able to fill the demand with our frozen sweet corn supply. It did help that Thanksgiving and Christmas were around the corner and people wanted our product for their family dinners. Next slide. To promote our school garden and farm to school program, FCCLA and the farm to school students host an annual harvest dinner. The dinner is a free-will donation and this year we raised \$1,200, which was split between FCCLA and the farm to school program. The dinner was pure profit because FCCLA and farm to school request local gardeners to donate their extra produce for the dinner. We also asked local ranchers to donate beef and chicken. Once the produce and meat is received, the FCCLA and farm to school students create the menu. Those who donate are recognized at the dinner, as well as on our school website and Facebook pages. I would like to add that our students go to the gardens and pick the leftover produce and they also harvest the apples from the trees for all of the neighbors. We pick all the apples for the homeowner and if they want, we will leave them a box, and we do this so they don't have to pick the apples, as most of the homeowners with the apple trees are older residents. Next slide. This past October was our second annual harvest dinner. The first dinner had about 100 attendees, but the second dinner had well over 300 people. One of our main goals with our school garden is to include as many stakeholders as possible. Another very important goal for our program is to utilize as many free options as possible, thus allowing us to reap the most profits for future improvements. Next slide. Last spring our FFA and AG students created garden boxes using free lumber gathered from the savage rail yard. After so many uses, the oak lumber on the flatbed rail cars must be replaced. Yes, oak lumber, so they give it away. We contacted the savage rail yard with the intent of picking up the lumber but because it was for a school project, they actually sorted the lumber and delivered it to our shop, saving us both time and money. The students designed and built six garden boxes, taking into consideration the varying heights of those who would be tending them. Some of the boxes are lower so kindergarten students can participate in planting, weeding, and harvesting, while some of the boxes are higher for our senior

citizens who volunteer to weed and water the garden during the summer. This year, one of my seniors who helped build the other boxes is building two larger garden boxes at his house as his senior project. It was decided that we did not have enough room for the amount of produce we were seeking for our cafeteria. In addition to our raised beds, we have a quarter acre in-ground garden. We plan to continue with our corn sales, which profited our program over \$2,000, but we want to take it up a notch. This spring our farm to school students use some of the monies raised to purchase pumpkin seeds. When the ground is ready, our AG teacher will plow the quarter acre garden and our students will plant hills of pumpkins to sell in the fall. When fall comes and it is Halloween season, the FFA students, farm to school students, and FCCLA students will team up to create a pumpkin patch, complete with a hay-bale maze, face-painting station, food, and games. This activity should increase our profits through the food sales and the pumpkin sales while giving our community of family-friendly activity. Now, we've learned some lessons over the past two years. The biggest lesson we learned from selling corn is to get pre-orders early. Once the corn ripens, it does not stay fresh very long. If possible, it would benefit ourselves to plant a few rows at a time to stagger the harvest, but right now we are at the mercy of our farmer's ability and we appreciate what he does. We want to build a winter greenhouse that is large enough to hold classes as well as grow produce for our cafeteria all winter long. This is an expensive goal that will require multiple fundraising events. There is a grant from the USDA that will help with the greenhouse interior items but not the permanent structure, so once we have our funding in place for the structure, we will seek the USDA grant to help supply interior for the hands-on classroom of the green house. Next, as you move forward in your farm to school program, here are some fundraising ideas to consider. You could plant vegetables in pots early enough for transplanting and sell to community members, you could host a harvest dinner, you could host a fall festival, you could create a pumpkin patch, or you could plant flowers in pots early and sell them for Mother's Day gifts or to summer gardeners. Next slide. Whatever your program decides to do, make sure to invite your creative thinkers into the planning stage. They will be the ones who come up with ideas that will benefit and help sustain your program long term. If you have any questions or wish to visit our school, please contact me. Aubree, I'm going to turn it back over to you.

AUBREE ROTH: Awesome, thank you so much, Faith, that was fantastic - love those photos. And it's incredible to see what you and your team have accomplished in just a couple years. So, next we have a program that has been established for several years - Farm to School of Park County. I'm delighted to have Rachael Jones sharing her wealth of experience with us today, so it's all yours Rachael, go ahead.

RACHAEL JONES: Thanks Aubree, hi everyone! I'm Rachael Jones I'm the executive director of Farm to School of Park County. I'm especially pleased and feeling privileged to talk about school gardens with you because I'm a trained horticulturalist, so, this is very near and dear to my heart. Park County, Montana is located at the northern entrance of Yellowstone National Park. The population is about 16,000, with approximately 8,000 people who reside in Livingston, that's the county seat. Park County's economy is agricultural and tourism based. Farm to School Park County's roots are in the Livingston public school. In 2008, the Livingston farm to school program was founded by a group of educators and concerned community members who were interested in building a farm to school experience for their children. We organized, well we actually reorganized, in 2008 as Farm to School of Park County with an eye towards establishing a countywide presence. We currently have a team of five plus a high school intern or pre-apprentice and ten directors. Next slide. So, for the past 12 years farm to school in Park County has evolved into an independently funded school-based nonprofit initiative. Currently we operate as a 501c3 organization under the auspices of the Park County Community Foundation. We're in the process of establishing ourselves as an independent nonprofit. Right now, funding for our organization is provided primarily by a combination of grants and community donations. We are underway with a 2019 USDA

Farm to School Implementation grant that is mobilizing our efforts throughout Park County, all the way from Gardiner to Wilsall. Through a unique service agreement with the Livingston Public Schools, our programs have become really embedded into the curriculum and daily school food services of Livingston schools. For example, I share an office with the food service director in the main kitchen located at Park High School. Also, our staff members each have office spaces in the elementary schools in which they serve. So, today I'm going to tell you about just three components of the comprehensive work that we do. First, I'll tell you about our Harvest of the Month program, and then our school gardens, and the new Lincoln School farm. Finally, I'll tell you about our well-established garden to cafeteria procurement system. Next slide. But first, I just want to tell you a few words about why our work matters. With childhood obesity, diabetes, depression, tooth decay, and other nutrition-related diseases on the rise, all of us at Farm to School of Park County believe it is imperative that children learn the connection between their diets and their health, and how to eat and enjoy nutritious foods and beverages. Despite the fact that a nutritious diet is the bedrock of sound physical and mental development and well-being, most parents and children do not know why good food matters or how to source healthy ingredients in order to plan and prepare delicious, nutritious, well-balanced meals. At the same time, we're finding that small, local farms and ranches that produce these healthy foods are struggling with procurement. So again, all of us at Farm to School of Park County, we believe that preparing children for a future of lifelong healthy habits has never been more important. In order to give Park County children a strong, healthy start at life, we work in our local schools to provide early exposure to good nutrition and a blueprint for healthy eating that can last a lifetime. Our vision is to place healthy, local, and sustainable food on the plates and in the minds of all Park County school children and their families. Our mission is to partner with the pre-kindergarten through 12th grade Park County Schools to teach schoolchildren the connection between the environment, their diet, and their lifelong health. We work with schools to purchase and prioritize the use of fresh, healthy food in school meals. We support local and regional economies through encouraging local food production and increasing schools' purchasing of local foods. And importantly, we play a leadership role in the growing culture of health and wellness in Park County. Our programs are designed to address the interrelated nature of food education, food access, food affordability, and the need to construct healthy dietary patterns for children within our community's severe economic constraints. In partnership with the school districts, we carefully tailor educational programs in ways that suit the particular needs of children, educators, families, and communities in Park County. We build strong relationships with local food producers. Those relationships generate direct economic benefits for them and additional indirect economic benefits throughout the whole community. So, since the 2018-2019 school year, we have been teaching 100% of all pre-kindergarten to fifth grade students and at least 50% of students in grades 6 through 12. Over the next five years, our goal is to significantly impact all school-age children in the county. We follow research at Johns Hopkins University, which shows that at least 10 hours of food and nutrition education per school year are necessary to positively change children's eating behaviors and attitudes about foods, so to reach that goal we have developed a comprehensive and one-of-a-kind Farm to School of Park County curriculum. Our team of educators enters schools and leads hands-on lessons related to food health, agriculture, and nutrition. During each school year, Farm to School of Park County provides hundreds of learning experiences in all Livingston schools and in some schools throughout the county. As part of our unique curriculum, each month we utilize the Montana Harvest of the Month program. Thank you, Aubree. So, using that we showcase a different Montana grown food by serving it in a meal. We conduct cafeteria taste tests, and teaching lessons, and activities surrounding the nutritional, the culinary, and agricultural aspects of the foods. Our two primary goals for this program are to expose students to new, healthy, local foods and to teach them the value of Montana's farmers and ranchers and their unique agricultural potential and heritage. So, students of all ages grow hundreds of pounds of vegetables throughout the whole year with us. We have

to school greenhouses, we have five school gardens, and we have a new downtown vegetable farm in Livingston, which is the Lincoln School farm. In total, our current growing space includes more than 8,000 square feet of gardens and greenhouses. We teach all kinds of growing techniques, including typical Rocky Mountain gardening, aquaponics, aeroponics, anything and everything of all sizes. We find that these edible school yards bring academic subjects to life. They increase students' willingness to taste new foods and provide schoolchildren with the confidence they need to replicate these gardening skills at home. As of the 2018-19 school year, every public school in Livingston has had an educational garden or greenhouse on campus. Our staff coordinates development and maintenance of new and existing school gardens, we develop school garden curriculum that fits the local curriculum standards, we provide educational programs in the gardens in the spring and the fall during school and after school, and our team manages the gardens throughout the growing season. When school's out for summer, the gardens and greenhouses we create provide a place for teachers and students to connect the food they eat at school with their academic studies and the land under their feet. So, located in the heart of Livingston and just one block from downtown, the Lincoln School farm is our newest vegetable and permaculture garden where healthy food is grown for school meals and where people of all ages and abilities are invited to gain skills and find resources and tools to grow their own food. We pair community volunteers with local agricultural experts and summer school participants to grow food for the community's children. Last summer was our first growing season in the farm, and we're really excited to be maximizing production at the farm this year. So, if all the food grown in these school gardens are either used in classroom cooking projects, or cafeteria taste tests, or as part of the school meal program. Outside of farm to school lessons, teachers are encouraged to make the most of these garden spaces to enhance academic and social/emotional learning, too. We also worked with school food service staff to overcome challenges they face in purchasing and using fresh, tasty, local foods in their cooking. We provide training and resources to promote local food sourcing and procurement, we develop kid-friendly recipes, and we promote the acceptance of local menu items through cafeteria taste tests. Our ultimate goal is to provide a new norm of school meals that feature scratch-cooked recipes that use fresh, local ingredients run by kids for kids and are served in smartly appointed lunchrooms that nurture positive and pleasant mealtime experiences. Thanks everyone, have a great day.

AUBREE ROTH: Thank you so much Rachael. It's really cool to see the different types of gardens and education being done through Farm to School of Park County, in Livingston as well as throughout the county. So, thank you Rachael for sharing your experience. If you have any questions for Rachael or any of our presenters, please enter them into the chat box at any time during this presentation and we will address them at the end. So, our final Montana Farm to School success story comes from the other side of the state from Faith in Frenchtown, Montana, so Riley Devins has joined us to share about the Frenchtown Freedom Gardens.

RILEY DEVINS: Awesome, thank you so much and yeah, I'm super excited to be here and talk about Freedom Gardens in Frenchtown School District and some of the cool things that we're doing in terms of connecting with the community, collaboration with restaurants in terms of education that we're doing in our classrooms, and the big piece of how we've collectively went from a k-5 system of instruction and teaching kids about aquaponics, and growing, and sustainable agriculture all the way to taking that k-12 and really expanding with our teachers and really having them have the autonomy of what we're doing. It's not one of those things that is from the top-down approach of supporting teachers, it's really providing a collaborative environment that we've integrated into everything that we're doing, and that's kind of the big piece as our 12-person board sits down with Spring of Gardens, who's a non-profit that's associated with the school. We spend a lot of time talking about how can we naturally make situations

occur, there are educational and academic opportunities for kids that are not going to put an additional strain on the collective classrooms, but really push that vision forward - sustainable living, sustainable growing, and a lot of positives that can not only branch from the school district but out into the community, so there's a few things that you're going to see my slides here today, I tried to integrate a lot of pictures of what we're doing and give you kind of a vision into what's happening at Frenchtown School District. So, currently right now we're working with Smart Schools on a composting project that ties in with our whole growing system outside as well as what we're doing in our aquaponic systems. You'll see in the first slide up in the corner we have a lot of composting going on within our cafeteria where we've actually taken our MBI initiative and assigned jobs that students go twice a week and we pull stuff off from trays that we can use for composting, because we started realizing we're spending about \$1,500 a year just in terms of bringing in new compost and we thought why not make that a vision that can be here. So, we worked with the county, implemented a plan, and now they've supported us on being able to have our own compost piles that we rotate and do with the kids. Some of the other things that we've done is a lot of volunteer hours to help support not just with kids in the community but also people from the community coming in that need an additional space to be connected in that group environment, and we've done that through giving opportunities of setting up our heating system, or putting insulation up, or just spending time pulling weeds out in our outside gardens. We also partnered with soil cycles, which is a group that provides worm composting bins that you can put inside the classrooms and then Sun and Brew helped us out by putting gardens inside of classrooms as well, so kids from the cafeteria bring their stuff into their classroom and drop them in the corner and watch as the worms break up and do that composting piece inside of their classroom, which really ties into a lot of the things that we're doing in science at the moment, and that also gives an opportunity to have that hands-on piece in their classroom that they can take out as we provide lessons in the greenhouse. So, out in the greenhouse we do provide about fifty-two lessons a week that are run by our Energy Corps members, so we have one member that's signed on with us for the year through EnergyCorps that we pay part of it and then they support the other piece, and they're there every single day to provide lessons in the afternoon and we call these flexible lessons, so as kids come into the greenhouse to learn and go through the composting process and all those things, teachers actually sign up for when it actually integrates appropriately into their curriculum, so that's kind of a big piece that we've really tried to focus on this year, is giving teachers the opportunity to supplant lessons into their curriculum as they see fit, and then she produces the lessons early and works with myself on how we're going to develop those and send those out to kids. And then teachers sign up as they go. Our initial rollout was just preset lessons the teachers had to come and learn our Montana Behavioral Initiative, our T charts that were in there, they had to jump in and learn those first before we actually jumped in hands-on within our system. Inside of the system it was really important that we felt like that we should get the word out for the collective community, so we spent a lot of time working with KPAX, KCCI, the Missoulian, and really trying to get articles out so the community is aware, as well as updating our website and working with marketing companies to really support and saying that this is not just a school initiative, this is a countywide initiative and we're really going to try to expand it out to everyone. So, that's been a big piece and we're really appreciative of the media, they've come out and spent a lot of time with us to give us those opportunities to really not only connect just with the kids, but also connect with the community, get those volunteers, and get those people supportive of different projects that we're working on moving forward. Inside of our green house, in the initial phases we obviously knew that there was going to be some things happening with aphids and different bugs inside of our aquaponic system, so we did do an initial release of ladybugs - you'll see a nice little picture in there of some of the ladybugs that were released and how they're actually breeding inside of our greenhouse. We have new ladybug hatches, which has been really nice to integrate into our lessons and talk with kids about and work with

kids about, and then we're also doing some plan options where we have hanging plants fundraisers that occur that we sell to the community where they can buy different plants for their houses, which really helps us with matching pieces because we are working with the USDA for the Farm to School, we are grant recipient at this moment. We're also working with a couple of other grants that have helped support and keep this thing going inside the school, where the district actually doesn't pay any dollars towards the greenhouse other than we help in terms of fundraising that occurs throughout the course of the year. So, currently right now, everything is self-sustaining in there based on some of the contracts that we have with local restaurants and donors from Triaseeds, to Headwaters, to USDA, to other private donors within the community, as well. You can go to the next slide. One of the big things that we felt like in our vision of putting this thing forward into the community was providing ourselves with an aquaponic system that would support in a lot of science lessons. And with those science lessons, having the fish has been a huge component and it's been a huge learning process for us because this is our first year with our system fully functional and running. So, as we brought in the aquaponic system and got it up and running, some of our concerns were how do we manage the system, and make sure water quality is appropriate, and the food that we produce, which we're producing about 1,200 head of lettuce per month that end up in the cafeteria basically supplants all the lettuce that we provide in our salads. In our school lunches we need to make sure that we're doing that safely so there's been a lot of steps that have happened in terms of us working with the DEQ. Once a week we take water samples in from our two different systems, we actually have a small system and a larger system, the smaller system holds about two thousand gallons of water and our largest system holds about 5,500 gallons of water, and then that integrates about 2,500 fish at the moment and we're about in the next month to put another 600 fish into the system, so those are big pieces that we were concerned about is how do we know that what we're doing is healthy to provide to the kids. So, we've really worked tightly with the DEQ and they give us a recommendation of how often we bring water samples in and provide them to them and then they provide us back our water quality which we produce to the community so they know that the stuff that we're putting on the school table or on it in the cafeteria is something that's appropriate for all students to be eating, and it's not going to put people in an unsafe situation. We also do lettuce sales with the community – three heads of lettuce for \$5 and kids can come in after school and we open that up as a harvest piece, and then we're trying to do some CSA things. With the current situation that we're in right now, being closed, because we do have a lot of lettuce and other microgreens that are not currently going to restaurants or to the community as much as they were prior to the pandemic shut down that we're in right now. Some of the things we have had to do, as well, in terms of our enclosed system, is just making sure that we have an opportunity to provide an appropriate label to get that information out to the community in terms of buying fresh, local vegetables and we've had some great partnerships with our students helping out with different fundraiser options as well as label design, and now we have an official label that is going to grocery stores so as the kids come in, they get to see this stuff in the grocery store happening and see our vegetables out in the community, as well, as Frenchtown is now running a farmers' market for the last year out of their parking lot area and that's been a pretty big success in terms of a partnership with the community and some of the local growers coming in, as well as kids coming in after we provide activities and an option to shop at our local greenhouse in our farmers market, and it's really created a partnership between a lot of the beef producers in the area and other farming groups within the area that bring their vegetables in to sell at our farmers market. And it really makes that community feel and draws out some different eating options in terms of the food trucks and things like that that we didn't originally have in Frenchtown, that would typically be located in the Missoula area. In terms of curriculum, we have had a team of 10 teachers working together collaboratively to put together a strong set up for different grade levels to be able to learn different units as they go, so we have representatives from each grade level sit down with myself and a couple other curriculum coordinators

and we design lessons that fall within our current NDS system and it gives us basically four lessons per grade level. They go about 4 units per grade level to give us about 6 or 7 lessons that associate specifically with that classroom's instruction. Then we've partnered specifically the second grade and fifth grade to have them consistently coming in and have a classroom. if you want to go to the next slide ... A specific classroom setup that is for our pre-instruction before we go out in the greenhouse and go hands-on so our kids can sit down and kind of get that early learning in and get established of what content we're going to be covering, and that way when we go out to the greenhouse everything is very consistent and targeted with what we want to be covering while we're in there so that we're making sure that we keep everyone safe, because there's a lot of different components in there and if we pre-teach all those things first before we go out, we're finding that we're having a lot better results of kids having understanding and comprehension of what they're doing, what the tasks are that are at hand, whether they're doing water sampling or whether they're helping with harvesting or whether they're helping with different planting that we have going on inside an aquaponic system at the moment. And then you can go back to that previous slide. And then our final piece that we kind of have going is we've really worked at community collaboration and took on a microgreens project, which is a lot of restaurants in the Missoula community, which is very close to us, are running our different microgreens inside of their restaurants. So, I've kind of listed up here that Plonk, Rumor, The Camino, The Green Source, Lolo Peak Brewery, Missoula Winter Market, Frenchtown Farmers' Market, and obviously Frenchtown School District, we're using a lot of the things that the kids are putting together and growing inside of or out in the community, so they can take their family out to eat and they can actually get some of the produce that we are producing right now in Frenchtown School District out in the in the community and different meals that they're having out there too, and that's one thing that we're trying to collaborate in terms of some other areas, like Orange Street Food Farms, Fresh Market, and that was why the labeling was so intricate to get that involved in our school district as well, and then the kids can see something additional than just the growing process, we can also see the process of the business model of how this works and how we're collaborating to get money coming back in and funding new projects within our district based on what the kids are producing and helping with, as well. So, I feel like we have a lot of exciting things going on, it's just kind of continuing to get that message to the community and that's one thing that we've really placed focus on in terms of the curriculum piece that has been a process as we go, and really learning that if we can facilitate a situation that has not always led just by our classroom teachers, but also by circumstantial to what we're learning inside the classroom, that there's another option that can occur with it and really expand out beyond what has to be another thing inside of the school because as we did this, we didn't want it to become another thing and become another pressure piece. We wanted to be something that was really fun and edgy and that kids could jump in and they could learn and they can get excited about and they can see physically happening inside of the cafeteria and inside the community, and that's where it's really going to blossom and those conversations start happening at home. And then, how do we continue to connect and get seeds home to the parents so that we start home gardens and really move this forward and understand that everyone can have some fun of gardening component within their own house and within the community, you don't have to own a large piece of land for.

AUBREE ROTH: Awesome, thank you so much, it's really exciting to see the integration of the community as well as integration within the school, so thank you so much for sharing, Riley. Alright, so I'm going to share a few resources that are available and opportunities to get involved, and then we'll answer any questions. Alright, so the Montana Farm to School Leadership Team works through partnerships across the state to build farm to school initiatives that help kids eat healthy, connect kids with agriculture and nutrition through education, support Montana farmers and food producers, foster economic vitality, and

strengthen communities. Our six working groups shown here are open to the public now, so if you're interested in engaging in statewide conversations, please contact me. Bringing in additional staff or volunteers can be helpful for your program. FoodCorps service members are hosted by schools to implement farm to school and are provided training through the FoodCorps program. You can also consider hosting a VISTA intern, paid staff, volunteers, or form partnerships. For those of you who are looking for a little extra help to getting your farm to school initiative started or with expanding your current efforts, we do have two coaches - one of them you've heard from today, Faith, and we have Ginger Buchanan, as well. They are currently covering northeast and southeast Montana. If you're interested in their help, please give them a shout. Although we've reached the end of our Montana Farm to School Successes Webinar series and our planned webinars for this spring, all of our past webinars are recorded and available on the Montana Farm to School website, Facebook page, and YouTube channel. Those options are listed here as part of our USDA Farm to School grant received by the Office of Public Instruction. We are hosting Montana Farm to School Regional Showcases this year and next these one-day events will feature tourist training and networking so you can experience farm to school programs like these in person and connect with others. The first one that was in Fairview was postponed due to COVID-19 and while the registration is still open for the second, which is planned for May 6th in Hardin, it is very possible that it could also be postponed. We encourage you to still register if you want to attend for that event, so that if/when it's postponed we can easily contact you and get you the updated information. We do have limited travel scholarships and you apply in the registration form. We hope that you will join us for the next statewide Montana Farm to School Summit on September 23rd and 24th in Helena. This conference is held every other year and moves locations, so don't miss out on this opportunity! Registration will open soon, and scholarships will be available. We are now accepting workshop proposals for the conference and those are due May 7th, so we encourage you to submit a workshop proposal to share your story and experiences. This year we'll also be piloting a Farm to School Institute along with the Summit. Three school or district teams will be chosen to participate in goal setting and team-building sessions in addition to attending the Summit workshop, tours, and plenaries. We're adapting the Northeast Farm to School Institute, which is held annually in Vermont, and it's an effective model to deepen farm-to-school implementation and engagement, and it's being replicated throughout the country. The applications for the Institute will be available soon. October is National Farm to School Month and is a perfect time to celebrate or launch your farm to school program! One easy way you can do that is by participating in Montana Crunch Time. There are two important changes for Montana Crunch Time since our usual date of October 24th is on a weekend this year, we'll be changing the date to October 22nd. In addition, rather than setting a time of 2:00 p.m., we're changing it to encourage folks to crunch anytime on October 22nd. Help us make the loudest crunch yet! Due to the coronavirus pandemic, this is a very stressful time for many people and especially school staff who are scrambling to make meals and coursework available to students at home. Please know that there are many resources available to support your efforts. I listed just a couple here to get you started. Lunch Assist has fantastic toolkits, templates, and ideas for school nutrition programs to ensure the safety of school nutrition staff and the families they serve, and if you're wanting to learn more about safety precautions for meal service and delivering educational materials, I encourage you join Montana Team Nutrition Program and Office of Public Instruction on a webinar tomorrow, which is Thursday from 3 to 4 p.m. If you can't make the live webinar, the recording should be posted on the following day. So, I encourage you to share your farm to school story using news media, emailing us, on social media with our hashtags #MTharvestofthemonth or #MTfarmtoschool so that we can see and share that information. So with that, I will now answer your questions for our presenters, so if you want to ask a question just type that into the chat box. Sarah, do we have any questions?

SARAH PENIX: Yeah, alright. Our first question is "what is the grant the Montana Department of Agriculture released this week help support the construction of a greenhouse for a school?"

AUBREE ROTH: The question is would it support that?

SARAH PENIX: Yes.

AUBREE ROTH: You know, having not read that application, I am not sure of the answer on that, so I would encourage you to contact Marty Erhardt at Montana Department of Ag and ask her that question directly. I'm sure she'll be able to answer for that quickly.

SARAH PENIX: Awesome. The next one is "How can school gardens still be used during COVID-19 and this summer to inspire kids to learn how to garden? Could a family sign up to work at a school garden or at their own time on a school garden plot?"

AUBREE ROTH: Great, so let's let our presenters answer that question of how they're continuing farm to school and garden-based education during COVID-19 school closures, so let's start first with Faith and then just go through the list in order.

FAITH OAKLAND: Okay well, we obviously had our showcase planned that got postponed or canceled however you want to look at that, so we took all of the supplies that we gathered up for that particular AG Day that we were going to share with people, and we made packets for planting for our kids, so our elementary students each received a Styrofoam cup, the appropriate amount of potting soil, flower seeds, and directions for planting and growing and watering, you know, all those things that they needed to know to grow a cup of flowers. And our junior high kids got the same thing, but they are being asked to record the watering and record the growth rate. So, once a week they report that to their science teacher. With our high school students, we sent home the plant-able pots that we had picked that we had purchased with garden seeds and the directions that go with that, and obviously the soil, everything that they needed, as well. They're also recording the water and growth and reporting that to their science teacher and their farm to school teacher. We'll have the kids bring those back in the middle of May and we will use those, the plants that they grew, for our garden boxes. That's how we're keeping farm to school going during COVID, but as far as the question on can people ... in our particular garden, we have a sign-up system for anybody that wants to come water, weed, whatever, that way it's not being over watered, you know, I don't think you can ever over weed a garden, but we just want people in sign up so we know who's coming in and out of the garden and we can keep it healthy. I hope that answered your question.

AUBREE ROTH: That's great. We can go to Rachael next.

RACHAEL JONES: Yeah, I can see how this can be a challenging concept for some, so I can tell you a little bit about how we're dealing with it right now. So currently, our team is maintaining all the school garden spaces to assure that the students and their families will have a school garden when they return to school, whenever that may be, school gardens and the downtown Lincoln School farm will be vibrant and inspiring spaces, even while schools are temporarily closed. We feel that it's important that children and families, as they drive by their schools, see that some things are as normal. Our team members are busily engaged in planning and preparations for spring planting, for example, Megan Randall, our gardener educator, she is charged with continuing to plant crops in all of the growing spaces for

ongoing use and emergency school meals, and then the plant growth center at Park High School, which was planted in anticipation of the emergency school closures, is contributing currently grains and other healthy ingredients for use in those emergency school meals - so all five school gardens and the downtown Lincoln School farm will be planted with crops easy to incorporate into meals as they become ready to harvest. We're also remaining really dedicated to our educational mission, so our staff is working behind the scenes to provide lessons about the importance of eating healthy foods and all kinds of at-home garden projects, in addition to encouraging fun projects children can engage in at home. Our program director Michael and our FoodCorps service member, Aubrey, and our dedicated classroom educator Sofia, they're developing lessons and activities to share directly with teachers and directly with families. Some of those lessons and activities are being published online on our social media pages, others are even included with the lunches that are delivered daily, so we literally stuff the bags with those lessons and lesson materials. Farm to school summer programming, it's up in the air right now but they are being continued to be developed to ensure the continuity when the emergency closures end. We're working on a volunteer plan for the summer because we believe that there's plenty of gardening that can be done in our downtown farm, even, you know, in respect to the social distance guidelines right now. We haven't had a lot of success in our school district in terms of bringing families in on to school grounds without supervision, and that's because of an insurance issue, so if anyone has found a way to get around that I would like to learn about that.

AUBREE ROTH: Thanks Rachael, and I'm seeing that we're over time right now, so I'll go right over to Riley to answer the question, then we can close the webinar.

RILEY DEVINS: Yeah, so all of our facilities currently, right now, in Frenchtown are closed. We do have our AmeriCorps person still working out there, and we have a couple employees that are harvesters that come out and the week that we do transport to some of our contracts that are going, but we're not doing any form of people coming onto our property and helping and volunteering at this point. We have all our playgrounds closed and fields closed, they were open for a little bit and then we ran into issues of teams trying to do practices that were not associated with the school, and it was just better to shut everything down within the district at the moment. Some of the ways that we're still looking at how we can integrate what we've been doing with families at home, our only concern is that we've already cut back, we're doing a lot of stuff on Google classroom and we've already cut back significantly the amount of work that we're requiring of kids, and at this point, parents are already trying to still continue to work and do all these things and throw one more thing on top of them so as this gets extended, we're going to start having further conversations about how we can do some fun projects and integrate that a little bit more, but we started going bare bones to not overwhelm and then we're slowly integrating things back in as parents start to get the digital understanding of what's expected of kids to continue progressing in terms of education and academics. So, I can't say that we're doing anything great right now in terms of that piece, but we are going to start rolling some lessons out slowly. More of our field right now is just making sure that we're still integrating stuff in our lunches that we're sending out via bus and some other pieces, but not so much in terms of pushing anything above what we feel like bare bones is right now to keep this thing functioning.

AUBREE ROTH: Wonderful, thank you so much, so since we're out of time for now, I'd just like to thank our presenters Faith, Rachael, and Riley for sharing their experiences and their wealth of knowledge, and it's so inspiring to me to hear about what you're doing and it was really a ray of sunshine today so and I also want to thank you all as participants for taking time today to watch and participate in this webinar, and if you're looking for more farm to school stories and resources, I highly encourage you to follow Montana

Farm to School on Facebook and Instagram as it's where we post a lot of funding opportunities, events, etc., and as I've said before, this webinar has been recorded and will be posted on our site and in MAPS and if you have additional questions for the presenters or myself, I recommend you reach out to any of us and we'd be glad to get your questions answered. So again, thank you so much. Have a wonderful day, and stay safe, and be well! Thank you.



The Montana Harvest of the Month program showcases Montana grown foods in Montana communities. This program is a collaboration between Montana Farm to School, Office of Public Instruction, Montana Team Nutrition Program,