Everyone has access to good food at Missoula farmers’ markets

By: Ky Nayfield

I don’t carry cash anymore. For me, it has been a practice slowly phased out over time since my acquisition of a debit card. But this transition from paper currency to a reliance on modern technology has not come without trade-offs. Sure, I don’t have to stuff wads of money into my pockets anymore. But what, for instance, does one do when his favorite restaurants are "cash only," or when he frequents a farmers’ market that is lacking a placard with the logos of various credit card companies?

More than once I have embarrassingly paid farmers in my hometown for produce with the change that somehow accumulates in my backpack, or have just had to walk away altogether empty-handed because I forgot to stop by the bank on my way to the market.

It was therefore a great relief when I relocated to Missoula and discovered farmers’ markets that cater to my purchasing preferences and alleviate the face-reddening possibility of trading handfuls of coins for produce. The booths that provide this service also serve an additional, more important role: they provide access for Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card users.

When the Food Stamp Program transformed into the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the feds increased its funding and created more inclusive eligibility requirements. As expected, more individuals and families were able to receive food purchasing aid. SNAP has also promoted healthier food choices. In effect, the new program has encouraged a larger number of recipients to buy fresh produce.

This policy change has doubled the amount of EBT transactions at both the Missoula and Clark Fork Farmers’ Markets this season. Over $24,000 were spent through EBT at these two markets, continuing the upward trend that we have seen since starting EBT at the Farmer’s Market Program four years ago. I see this expanding customer base as a boon to farmers who would otherwise lose these direct sales— which help keep small-scale farming viable—to supermarkets.

It is important to note this access would not exist without the EBT

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CFAC and the UM’s Environmental Studies program present:

Grassroots Farmland Conservation:
Time-Tested Strategies Crafted by Landowners, Producers & Communities Across the U.S.

A free, public lecture
Thursday, November 12 at 7:00 PM
UM Gallagher Business Building, Room 123

Bob Wagner
Senior Director of Farmland Protection Programs
American Farmland Trust

Bob Wagner has been on the staff of American Farmland Trust (AFT) since 1985 and worked in the field of farmland protection since 1981. In his current position with AFT, Wagner helps communities nationwide build support for and create policies to protect agricultural land. He has co-authored a number of publications, including Protecting Farmland Through Purchase of Development Rights: The Farmers’ Perspective and Investing in the Future of Agriculture: The Massachusetts Farmland Protection Program and the Permanence Syndrome. He was a contributing writer to AFT’s national guidebook on farmland protection techniques, Saving American Farmland: What Works. Wagner holds a BA in biology from Bucknell University and a MS degree in natural resources planning from the University of Vermont.
Good people are where community is born.

CFAC would like to express our deepest thanks to all our major donors, sponsors, and members for their continued support:

- Bullitt Foundation
- Cinnabar Foundation
- Engelhard Foundation
- Good Food Store
- High Stakes Foundation
- Pleiades Foundation
- Sopris Foundation
- Biga Pizza
- Downtown Dance Collective

Hundreds of people lined up to see Food, Inc. in August. The event was co-sponsored by the Good Food Store, the Wilma, Garden City Harvest, and CFAC.

Community Planning for Future Farms: an update from the field

By: Paul Hubbard

Over the past several years, CFAC has engaged in community planning efforts to conserve agricultural lands. Thanks to your voices and participation, farm and ranchlands have taken the center stage of our growing community. Here’s a snapshot of the current activities that CFAC members are involved in:

**Subdivision Review:** Though the real estate economy has slowed, new developments are still being planned on fertile fields and pastures. Subdivision review is the moment a working farm is permanently converted into the residential sprawl. By repeatedly commenting on subdivision proposals and collaborating with willing developers, CFAC is making significant progress toward conserving the most productive soils for farming and ranching. Keep your eye on our website ([www.MissoulaCFAC.org](http://www.MissoulaCFAC.org)) for designs of future subdivision proposals, so that you can join us in advocating for conserving agricultural lands. Subdivision review is a public process, and your voices have made a big impact.

**Target Range Neighborhood Plan:** Target Range is home to rich agricultural soils and extensive irrigation infrastructure. As the neighborhood plans ahead for future growth, Target Rangers called on CFAC to advise them on strategies to keep working farms in their community and protect the lands with the most productive potential. Their dedication and progress have been very encouraging, and the Rangers are almost ready to present their plan to Missoula’s Planning Board, followed by the County Commissioners. Once the Commissioners approve the plan, it will become part of Missoula County’s Growth Policy. Visit our website for more information on the Target Range plan and CFAC’s participation.

The **Orchard Homes Neighborhood Plan** is also taking shape. CFAC has begun brainstorming with them about how they, too, can conserve the best lands for farming. Orchard Homes is similar to Target Range with fertile soils, irrigation infrastructure, and many properties that are still large enough to support working farms.

**Farmland Conservation Policy:** The City and County of Missoula need conservation tools that comprehensively protect the best agricultural lands and facilitate a predictable development process. CFAC is collaborating with developers and OPG to create a subdivision framework that values productive farm and ranchland by minimizing its permanent loss. … Stay tuned for opportunities to support grassroots farmland conservation, born right here in Missoula.

**Report on Agriculture, Farmland & Growth in Missoula County:** Conservation policies need to be rooted in accurate information. To help guide policy decisions, CFAC is combing the best available data on Missoula County’s farms and ranches with the development patterns we have monitored through reviewing subdivisions. Look for the report’s official release around the New Year, and help us make a 2010 resolution that Missoula will protect the lands that feed us for decades to come.

Good food

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booths and the commitment from the workers who operate them at both markets. I had the pleasure of speaking with Jane Solle, one of the AmeriCorps Montana Making Sense (MMS) volunteers who provided service at the Missoula Farmer’s Market about her experience this season:

“I think for Beth [Ryan, another MMS volunteer] and I both, one of the highlights of the summer was getting to know the ‘regulars’—the people who would come up to the booth every single week, often with their kids, to buy their produce. They really made full use of the program and actually did the bulk of their grocery shopping at the market, which was great to see. I also really enjoyed getting to know more of the vendors and the camaraderie that’s formed every Saturday while setting up and getting ready for the day, especially during the really busy months of July and August. I think we both really enjoyed being active participants in one of my favorite events in Missoula!”

Regardless of whether you swipe your credit, debit, or EBT card, the exchange is wooden tokens, which give the markets an amusement park feel. Wandering around on Saturday mornings perusing produce, I have repeatedly witnessed the excitement of children who insist on holding the tokens and the joy they express when trading them for bowls of carrots and bunches of beets. And while I can’t say I’ve outgrown the practice of spending coins at the market, at least it’s with a smile and not a reddened face.

*Ky Nayfield is a Masters in Social Work student at the University of Montana and is working with CFAC to complete his practicum. Ky moved to Missoula in August from Gainesville, Florida.*
National Farm to School policy update

By: Lauren Amato

In the spring 2009 edition of the Missoula Community Food Digest, we featured an article about the national Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR) Act of 2009. The current version of the act was set to expire on September 30, 2009. However, with our national attention focused on the health care debate, the CNR deadline has been extended one year, meaning the bill can be introduced any time between now and September 30, 2010.

A number of child nutrition policy organizations are working together to ensure the Child Nutrition Reauthorization passes with specific priorities to help expand and improve the capacity of Farm to School programs across the country. The top priorities include: $50 million over 5 years in mandatory funding for Farm to School grant programs to help schools access local foods and/or develop school gardens, and a $0.37 per child per meal increase in federal school food reimbursement rates to help schools serve more fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

We cannot let this opportunity to make significant, lasting changes in the way we feed our schoolchildren pass us by. The deadline extension gives us more time to secure support from our Montana representatives and ensure they understand that Farm to School is a top priority for our constituents.

CFAC’s Farm to School program and Grow Montana are launching an outreach campaign to guarantee Senator Max Baucus, Senator John Tester, and Representative Denny Rehberg’s support for the Child Nutrition Reauthorization, including the Farm to School priorities. In order to do this, we need your help.

**Write a letter to the editor.** Our goal is to get a letter to the editor in every single newspaper in the state, asking our representatives to increase funding for school meals and provide mandatory funding for Farm to School by supporting the Child Nutrition Reauthorization. For a sample letter to the editor, email crissiem@ncat.org.

**Make a phone call.** Call our representatives and tell them your story about why Farm to School matters and how it can help improve the health of our schoolchildren. For talking points and tips on how to contact our reps, visit www.growmontana.ncat.org.

**Send a letter.** Write a personal letter or email to our representatives, sharing your story and why it’s important to you that they vote to support Farm to School and CNR. If you are a parent or educator, you might also include a personal note, picture, or drawing from your child/student(s) about why healthy foods matter to them. For more information, visit www.growmontana.ncat.org or contact Crissie McMullan at crissiem@ncat.org.

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**Capturing Missoula’s Foodshed 2010 calendar:**
**The perfect holiday gift for the foodies in your life**

*Life Line Farm by Jeremy Lurgio.*

At the beginning of summer, CFAC put forth a call for photographs that captured food, farms, and community within our western Montana foodshed. We were overwhelmed by nearly eighty submissions from over a dozen local photographers, professional and amateur. After a difficult selection process, the CFAC board chose a number of these depictions to be included in our first ever Capturing Missoula’s Foodshed 2010 calendar.

**Calendars are now available for purchase at the following locations:**
- Good Food Store
- Fact & Fiction
- UM Bookstore
- Missoula Community Co-op
- Rockin’ Rudy’s

Calendars cost $15, or $12 apiece if you order 5 or more. All proceeds directly support CFAC’s work to strengthen and rebuild our local food system. Visit our website, www.MissoulaCFAC.org, or contact us at (406) 880-0543 or cfacinfo@MissoulaCFAC.org or to order your calendars today!

This project was made possible thanks to a generous financial donation from the Good Food Store, the talented work of designer Joanna Yardley, and contributions from the following local photographers: Jackie Corday, Jacob Cowgill, Rohanna Erin, Sara Flanery, Chad Harder, Neva Hassanein, Lewis Kelley, Jeremy Lurgio, Pedro Marques, Christy Meurer, Cole Moeller, Dorothy Patent, Kathy Sherba, and UM Dining Services. CFAC wishes to express our gratitude for their support and generosity!
The Community Food and Agriculture Coalition (CFAC) is comprised of a diverse membership base that represents many facets and perspectives of the Missoula County food system. CFAC is currently seeking new members. **Now is your opportunity to get involved in developing our local food system!**

I want to be involved with the Community Food and Agriculture Coalition to enhance our local food system!

Name(s): ____________________________________________________________

Address: ____________________________________________________________

City, State, Zip: _______________________________________________________

Phone: _____________________ Email: ___________________________________

I am interested in the following issues/activities (check all that apply):

- [ ] Farmland Conservation
- [ ] Food Security
- [ ] Farm to School
- [ ] Farm Transitions (exiting and entering agriculture)
- [ ] Education & Outreach
- [ ] Food Access Projects
- [ ] Food & Ag Policies
- [ ] Other: ________________________________

I'm setting my dues at:

- [ ] $35
- [ ] $50
- [ ] $100
- [ ] $250
- [ ] $500
- [ ] $25 (living lightly)
- [ ] Other _____

Please count me in as a Sustaining Member. Enclosed is an additional $100.

Membership dues and donations to CFAC are tax deductable. Tax ID#: 81-0362732

Please make check payable to CFAC and mail to: Community Food and Agriculture Coalition, P.O. Box 7025, Missoula, MT 59807 or join online at www.MissoulaCFAC.org.