



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 21, 2012

Contact:

Kelli Dieterich | kdieterich@strength.org | C: 202-725-5019 | O: 202-478-6553

Harper Lawson | harper.lawson@gmmb.com | C: 406-465-4474 | O: 406-996-1218

Sarah Elliott | selliott@mt.gov | C: 406-672-8090 | O: 406-444-9725

Governor Schweitzer and Share Our Strength Launch Montana No Kid Hungry
National organization partners with the Governor and the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services to end childhood hunger in Montana

Helena, MT (Feb. 21, 2012) – Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer today joined with America’s leading child anti-hunger organization, Share Our Strength®, the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS), and a diverse group of education, nonprofit and government leaders to launch Montana No Kid Hungry®.

This public-private partnership is dedicated to ending childhood hunger in Montana by promoting proven strategies that increase the number of Montana children who eat healthy meals offered through afterschool and supplemental nutrition assistance programs.

“We all share in the responsibility of making sure that no child in Montana goes hungry,” Governor Schweitzer said. “Montana is a state known for growing the food that helps feed our nation. It’s time to make sure that all of Montana’s children have access to the food and basic nutrition they need to be healthy and to grow and, in partnership with Share Our Strength, we can do just that.”

More than [48,000 children](#) (21.8%) in Montana are at risk of hunger. That means that more than one in five children live in families struggling to put food on the table. Studies show that children who face hunger can have trouble focusing, complain often of headaches, stomachaches and other ailments, have slower memory recall, and are likely to have long-term health and productivity problems into adulthood.

Montana No Kid Hungry aims to increase awareness about the availability of federally funded nutrition programs, including the At-Risk Afterschool Meals Program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program. DPHHS oversees administration of all three of these programs and works to increase the economic security and self-sufficiency of Montana families and ensures the health and safety of Montanans by providing essential services and linkages to community resources.

The partnership will work together to connect Montanans to the At-Risk Afterschool Meals Program, implement outreach strategies to teach more families about SNAP, and offer nutrition education to help them learn how to cook affordable meals on a tight budget. In addition, the partnership will also

conduct an outreach campaign targeted at breastfeeding mothers, promote educational grocery shopping tours for WIC parents to increase the use of fruit and vegetable vouchers, and provide support to local WIC clinics to increase participation in the WIC program.

“Childhood hunger is a public health concern with serious consequences that can last a lifetime,” DPHHS Director Anna Whiting Sorrell said. “When organizations across Montana come together and commit to ending childhood hunger, we are making an investment in a better future for Montana’s youngest generation.”

Share Our Strength has invested \$145,000 in the partnership with DPHHS to build a public-private partnership with the Montana Partnership to End Childhood Hunger that includes state and local level organizations. Montana is one of 18 states where Share Our Strength is partnering with state and local agencies, as well as community-based organizations to raise awareness about childhood hunger.

“Our strength comes from our partnerships, and it will take everyone, including educators, elected officials, corporations, government agencies and community leaders to ensure Montana children have a healthy start in life,” Share Our Strength President Tom Nelson said. “We owe it to our kids to give them a strong start in life. What’s important is to make sure families have the information they need to access these programs. We look forward to working with Governor Schweitzer to do just that.”

“Hunger is a reality often silenced because of shame and stigma,” Michael McCormick, director of the Livingston Food Pantry, said. “In Livingston, our volunteers serve families and individuals who find themselves without enough food because of unemployment, low or fixed incomes, or unforeseen circumstances. It’s never easy for anyone to ask for food. That’s why we must work together, through a network of public and private organizations across Montana to better serve all of our communities.”

“Ending childhood hunger in Montana is a fight that we can win,” Backpack Meals and Teen Pantries Program of Billings founder Virginia Lee Mermel, PhD, CNS, said. “Not only are tools available on the state level, but many local organizations are eager to partner with larger state-wide efforts to help make sure that every child in every community has access to food.”

For more information about Montana No Kid Hungry, to donate or get involved, go to www.MT.NoKidHungry.org.

Share Our Strength’s national No Kid Hungry efforts are supported by core partners ConAgra Foods Foundation, Food Network and the Walmart Foundation. Visit www.Strength.org to learn more about Share Our Strength.

###

About Share Our Strength

Share Our Strength®, a national nonprofit, is ending childhood hunger in America by connecting children with the nutritious food they need to lead healthy, active lives. Through its No Kid Hungry® Campaign—a national effort to end childhood hunger in America— Share Our Strength ensures children in need are enrolled in federal nutrition programs, invests in community organizations fighting hunger, teaches families how to cook healthy, affordable meals, and builds public-private partnerships to end hunger, nationally and at the state and city levels. Visit www.Strength.org to learn more.