



The Road Not Taken

miracles and hazards of letting a project define itself
reflections on a unique community-campus partnership

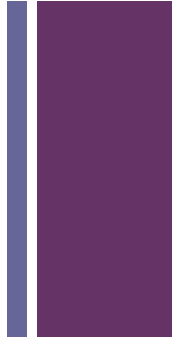


A Blank Slate



Feeding Laramie Valley came to life in 2010, following an inauspicious (and unexplained) firing of Gayle Woodsum as executive director of the local community senior center. She was followed out the door by the majority of her management staff, who quit in protest. No one had a job, the community food projects they had launched were dropped by Gayle's former employer, so they took up shovels, rakes and organizational skills, and got back to work – as volunteers.





The Plan:

1. Create, promote and support community food projects with a countywide, collaborative approach.
2. Follow the voice and vision of the diverse components of the Albany County, Wyoming community at large.
3. Try very hard to avoid repeating past mistakes.



Community volunteers teach the fine art of high altitude Gardening in Laramie, Wyoming





Community education, gardening and gathering is supported by Laramie Local Foods and Feeding Laramie Valley.





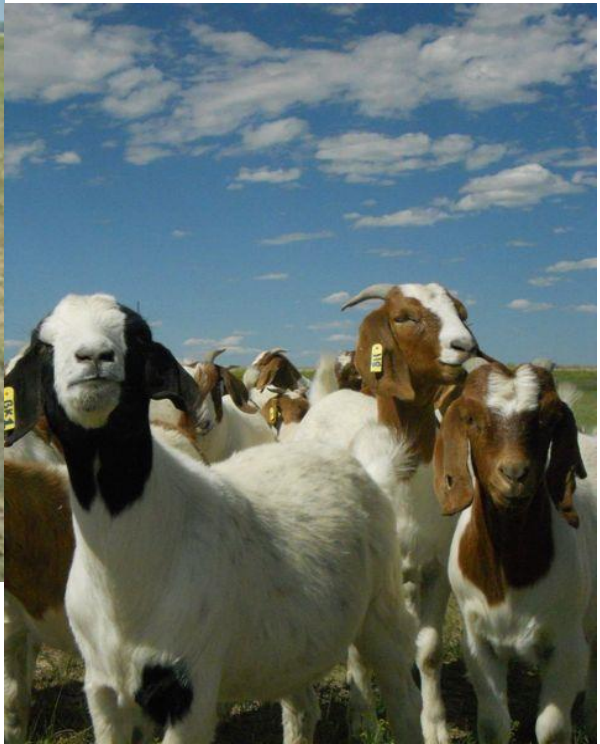
Gayle Woodsum (left) and Lina Dunning (right). Gayle and Lina are founding directors of Action Resources International, the nonprofit organization that fiscally sponsors Feeding Laramie Valley.

Both Lina and Gayle are members of the LGBTQ community. Gayle is mixed race Penobscot and Lina is mixed race Micmac. The women have worked throughout the United States and Canada for the past 35 years as grassroots activists seeking social justice on a variety of issues, and promoting leadership among marginalized populations.





Cattle ranching is an historical foundation of community food production in Wyoming. Feeding Laramie Valley community and campus volunteers include local ranchers in their interviews for the Laramie Valley Food Chronicles.



Sonny Hwang, a local ranch hand, pursues the raising of meat goats in response to increasing Internet sales demand.





Trish Penny is the award winning education director at Laramie Rivers Conservation District. She is responsible for establishing gardens in nearly every school in Albany County, Wyoming, navigated extensive bureaucracy to create the site that houses the gardens and Outdoor Learning Center in LaBonte Park, and heads up that learning center.

Feeding Laramie Valley and the Food Dignity campus-community partnership now provide financial support to Trish in overseeing the Sharing the Bounty production garden, and Feeding Laramie Valley helps provide her with year-round community and campus volunteers.



Linford Elementary School Gardening Club

Community volunteers help plan and break ground for the school garden's greenhouse.



Garden under construction at day care center in Laramie.



The Laramie Valley community and campus interests intertwine in complex ways.



The haying operation of Stockyard Ranches, locally owned and run by Cody Humphries and two family partners. The hay fields abut the city of Laramie, Wyoming (elev. 7000', pop. 30,316, growing season 56 days), and run alongside I-80. They produce over 2000 tons of hay annually and are harvested by Cody and his team of 4 – 5 men.





Kelly Hubbell is an associate lecturer in the Division of Medical Education and Public Health at the University of Wyoming.

Through the campus/community partnership between Feeding Laramie Valley and the USDA/AFRI Food Dignity research grant, she holds a volunteer service and research support position in campus-community placement.

In year one of this 5-year grant, Kelly recruited, placed and successfully helped supervise over 60 student and community volunteers for Feeding Laramie Valley's community based projects. In the coming year, she will also be recruiting and serving as field instructor to several grant-funded internship positions.

The Food Dignity grant affords her with counterparts at Cornell University and Ithaca College.



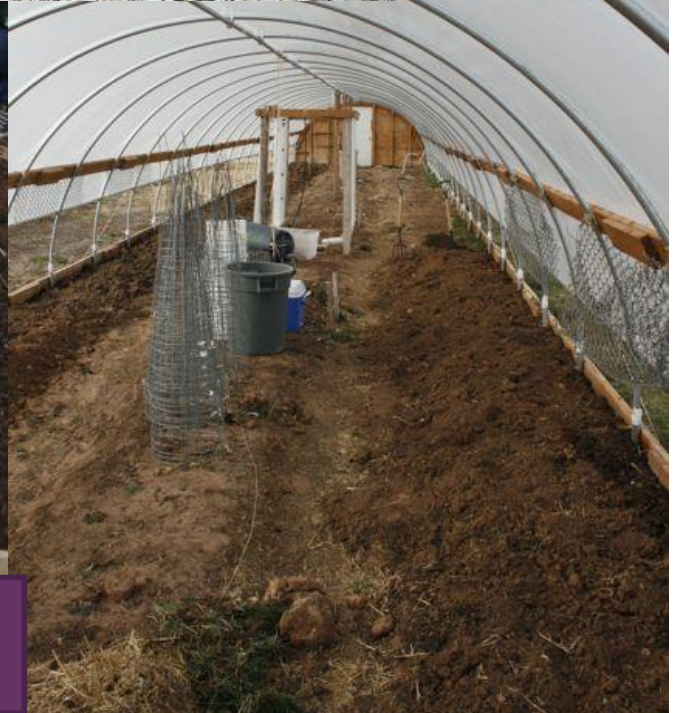


The Worm Wrangler



Community members and university students help plant production garden for Feeding Laramie Valley's Sharing the Bounty community food program.

(right) University of Wyoming Student Acres High Tunnel





In 2011, thanks to solid community support for the community based nonprofit organization Feeding Laramie Valley, together with financial support for a community-campus placement coordinator position at the University of Wyoming through the USDA/AFRI Food Dignity research grant, over 60 student volunteers and interns assisted Feeding Laramie Valley in various community food projects.





Student and community volunteers spend hours sorting through donated blueberries to find berries fresh enough to be included in Sharing the Bounty's weekly community food distribution program, which distributes high quality, fresh produce to people who have limited financial and/or availability access.



Farmer's Market • Centennial, Wyoming
Elevation: 8074' Population: 191



Home gardening
Centennial, Wyoming
at over
8000' above sea level
– in May (left)
and August (below)





Laramie, Wyoming
Community gardens
in the
Greenhill Cemetery



Children learn gardening and volunteer skills at the LaBonte Children's Garden/ Outdoor Learning Center. University students and community members volunteer as mentors.





Peggy McCrackin, a long time community organizer in Laramie, Wyoming, is a key leader, mentor and volunteer for the various Feeding Laramie Valley projects. In the coming year, she will also be contributing research assistance to the Food Dignity USDA/AFRI grant that is partnered with Feeding Laramie Valley.





And they say corn won't grow in Laramie, Wyoming.



LaBonte Park Community Gardens, Children's Garden and Outdoor Learning Center host a field trip for the statewide meeting of Conservation Districts.



Volunteers help clean and maintain this community garden greenhouse.

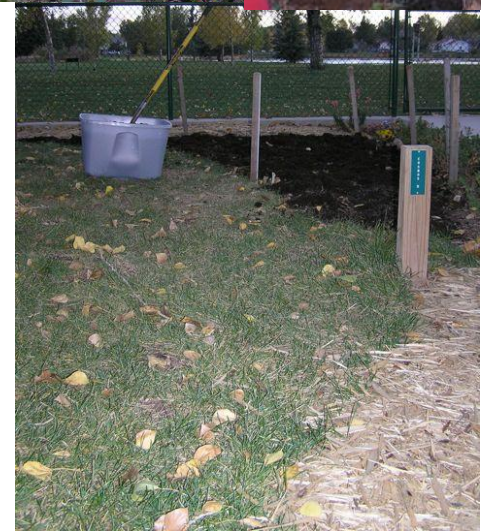


Reece Owens
Community Voice Journalist
Feeding Laramie Valley
Food Dignity Grant Supported Position

Putting the
community
gardens to
bed for the
winter.



Community
volunteers
assisted by
Feeding
Laramie
Valley
student staff
member.





Student volunteers weigh and record fresh produce donations given by community members out of their home gardens or purchases at the





Volunteer workers at the Feeding Laramie Valley production garden, which is supported in part through the community-campus partnership of the 5-year national USDA/AFRI research grant called “Food Dignity.” Albany County is one of five partner communities across the country participating in the grant’s pioneering research of community food projects.



Chi Phan, a gardener at LaBonte Park Community Gardens, gives back by helping in the community children's garden and outdoor learning center.





Over 40 University of Wyoming students showed up for an all-day volunteer service day at the start of the fall semester. The group was divided into teams, which split work efforts between three community/production gardens.





LaBonte Park Community Gardens, coordinated by Feeding Laramie Valley, are designed on a mentoring model, through which community elders, university professors, the Laramie Rivers Conservation District and students are available to offer support, education and assistance. Various plot sizes are gardened by diverse stewards and offered on a sliding scale basis from \$0 - \$20 per year. Plot stewards are required to volunteer several hours per season to help care for the entire site.





In 2011, Sharing the Bounty launched its first production garden to help fill the needs of its highly successful fresh produce community distribution program. The garden and its vast volunteer staff is led by a paid master gardener from the community, a university based volunteer coordinator and intern program all supported by the community partnership held between Feeding Laramie Valley and the national USDA/AFRI research grant, "Food Dignity."



Development of the Rock River elder, student and community gardens under the direction of Trish Penny.





Slade Elementary School Garden





Planting apple trees at Indian Paintbrush School





Home gardening on Jefferson Street in West Laramie, Wyoming





The long wait for summer in Laramie Valley, Wyoming





LaBonte Park Community Gardens
in their August evening glory.



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