

MARCH 2023

# MEEKER-MCLEOD-SIBLEY

## SHIP Highlights

### Partnering for Success

The 2021-2022 Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) grant came and went in a flash but there were plenty of partnerships formed and strengthened. Our Meeker-McLeod-Sibley SHIP Team, consisting of Pam Bagley, Brett Nelson, Jayme Krauth, and Vlada Gladis, have been hard at work throughout the grant year working on exciting projects.

Through SHIP, our staff partner with communities, schools, worksites, and healthcare organizations to help ensure that all people have access to opportunities that enable them to live longer, healthier lives. We have the opportunity to improve the communities in a three county region. Throughout the newsletter, you'll be able to see a few of the impacts we were able to have this past year. Enjoy!



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## Grove City Sharing Garden

Seeing a need for local, fresh, organic produce in our low-income community, the idea for a community garden emerged. The Sharing Garden is a collective garden planted, nurtured, harvested, and shared within Meeker County. In partnership with SHIP (Statewide Health Improvement Partnership), the SW MN Synod of the ELCA, local churches, and local civic organizations, a coalition of community members cultivated a garden that is sustained and nurtured by community volunteers. The goals for this garden are to provide fresh produce at no cost to the community, enhance community health, and to educate about healthy eating and sustainable gardening methods. "Strong communities are built through people of all ages having spaces to come together and work toward a common cause." The Sharing Garden created a new space for community members to build positive relationships and bring awareness to an important community issue.

Each week, two food distributions were held in the parking lot of Trinity Lutheran Church in Grove City, which shares a side with Highway 12. Produce was organized on a beautiful wheeled vegetable cart, which was built by a local Boy Scout for his Eagle project. Over 100 families visited the cart, often two times weekly, to access food. As the summer progressed, the cart became not only a place to pick up vegetables, but also a reliable place to connect and converse with others.

Throughout the 2022 growing season, 46 volunteers from ages 3-92, have come forward to help with jobs from garden planning, publicizing, planting, harvesting, teaching food preservation courses, delivering needed supplies, manning the vegetable cart, making donations, writing grants and more! A sauerkraut making class was hosted and attended by 13 people. The organizers of the Grove City Sharing Garden plan to host more classes pertaining to using different foods and sustainable gardening practices throughout the year.

In addition to nourishing people, the garden is nourishing the earth. The goal of making the garden a raised row no till space was accomplished this fall. This means the garden will increase in fertility naturally and sustainably over the years, and due to ongoing mulching will be a relatively weed free garden that will be a very productive and beautiful place to work and grow food!

**"Strong  
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-MARCIA BROWN







**"Keep an eye out for the 'can't miss' colorful bike fleet to be driving around Meeker, McLeod, and Sibley Counties this year!"**



## Learn To Ride Bike Fleet

Meeker McLeod Sibley (MMS) was fortunate to have extra carry-over funding from previous COVID years. This created an opportunity for MMS SHIP staff to devote extra dollars for community projects, thus the idea of putting together a bike fleet was born. MMS SHIP staff that work on the Active Living Strategy, are a part of the Hutchinson Bike and Pedestrian Committee. The bike fleet idea was brought up in a quarterly meeting and the project was taken by storm. The City of Hutchinson agreed to be the host for the trailer and bikes.

The city of Hutchinson is a great central location to host the bike fleet as we are in a three county CHB (Community Health Board for MMS CHS). The city of Hutchinson Parks Department has agreed to host the bike fleet, transport the bike fleet, and maintain the bike fleet. The bike fleet trailer is currently being assembled with the finishing touches and will be off and running for the spring of 2023. There will be 40 bikes that vary in size and will be used for 3rd-8th grade students in schools across all three counties.

During the fall of 2022, there were 10 educators who attended the Walk! Bike! Fun! Curriculum held by BikeMN. This will allow those who participated to use the bike fleet with their classrooms. Hutchinson Middle School was able to do a pilot run this fall and it was a great success. The middle school staff said they really wanted to keep the bikes all to themselves.

The final steps of finishing the bike fleet so it's ready for Spring 2023 include: installing bike hooks for inside the trailer, storage bins inside the trailer, installing helmet rack, setting up a calendar for schools to pick one or two week period of time, and any other rental agreement documents/surveys needed for each school during the rental period. Keep an eye out for the 'can't miss' colorful bike fleet to be driving around Meeker, McLeod, and Sibley Counties this year!





## Adaptive Bikes

In 2022, Sibley County School Districts were granted three new adaptive bikes for children with special needs through the MMS CHS SHIP Grant. Since receiving the bikes at the end of last school year, they have helped multiple students with disabilities. One school, in particular, is extremely thankful for this opportunity. Not only are the bikes important for improving overall strength and endurance, but for one student, they have improved his independence, increased his confidence, and given him a new way to express himself and do something he loves in school while being physically active with his peers. Initially, the student needed assistance with getting the bike moving and steering. Today, he is able to initiate the bike independently, steer, back up to park, and do a “Y turn” all on his own! All staff involved with this student can not say enough gratitude and express the happiness it has brought him and the other students that utilize them. The students all look forward to riding them and having so much fun. The smiles on their faces say it all. We, as physical therapists, are so grateful and thankful for the opportunity given to these districts to be able to spark light and create joy and happiness in children who need it. We can help them be successful, confident, and independent both physically and emotionally. Thank you SHIP!

-River Bend Education District, Physical Therapy Department

**"The smiles  
on their  
faces say it  
all"**

-RIVER BEND PHYSICAL  
THERAPIST



RIVER BEND  
EDUCATION DISTRICT







**"Residents are excited to see opportunities the community garden brings for years to come"**

## Brownton Community Garden

In January 2022, McLeod SHIP staff was connected with an avid gardener from Brownton with “hopes and dreams” of starting a community garden. Brownton is a small city in McLeod County with a population of 722. It is located right off of highway 212 on the west side of McLeod County. Brownton has no access to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables within city limits and residents must travel over 10 miles to have access to a grocery store. The community was seeing a need and the avid gardener stepped up to make things happen. A small community group was formed with the desire to start a community garden and meetings with local city staff and SHIP staff took place. In February 2022, the Brownton Community Garden committee presented the idea to the Brownton City Council. The City Council was immediately engaged and loved the idea of creating a community garden for residents to access. Residents would be able to rent a plot in the garden for a small fee and the city was willing to donate land and water for residents to use. This would provide residents who were not able to use their own property, or rented property, the opportunity to garden.

Plans came together quickly and development of the garden plots started in April of 2022. Commitment was secured from interested gardeners and policies were developed. By mid May, planting had begun. The Brownton Community Garden had a very successful first year. Not only did participating community members have access to grow their own produce, the abundance of fresh fruits and vegetables provided gardeners with the opportunity to donate fresh produce to the local food shelf. A “sharing stand” was also built on the garden property for extra produce to be shared with other community members. Plans are underway for the 2023 season including expansion to include raised garden beds for those residents who are not able to be on the ground as well as fruit trees. With improved access to fruits and vegetables, evidence shows increased consumption of fruits and vegetables benefiting diet. Community gardens also provide additional physical activity options for participants benefiting overall health. The Brownton Community Garden Committee, Public Health, Brownton elected officials and residents are excited to see the opportunities the community garden brings for years to come.







## OUR TEAM

## Building On Success

We are thankful for all of our previous and current partners as we would not be successful in providing opportunities for our community to live longer, healthier lives without their support. If you would like to know more information about SHIP, please contact either Pam Bagley or Brett Nelson. We have exciting, new projects already developing and can't wait to share our successes in the future.

**MN Moves**

**MN Eats**

**MN Commercial Tobacco Free**

**MN Well-being**

## Contact us

**Pam  
Bagley**



[pam.bagley@co.meeker.mn.us](mailto:pam.bagley@co.meeker.mn.us)

**Jayme  
Krauth**



[jayme.krauth@co.mcleod.mn.us](mailto:jayme.krauth@co.mcleod.mn.us)

**Vlada  
Gladis**



[vladagladis@co.sibley.mn.us](mailto:vladagladis@co.sibley.mn.us)

**Brett  
Nelson**



[brett.nelson@mmspublichealth.org](mailto:brett.nelson@mmspublichealth.org)