

Feeding Laramie Valley's Annual Report

to the Parks, Tree, and Recreation Advisory Board • Laramie, Wyoming

Annual Report, 2025

Feeding Laramie Valley's (FLV) collaborative partnership with the City of Laramie Parks and Recreation, featuring:

Fort Sanders Building Community Use in LaBonte Park
Community Gardens at Feeding Laramie Valley
Kiwanis Park Community Garden

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Fort Sanders Building in LaBonte Park — Community Use

General Overview

Founded in 2009, Feeding Laramie Valley (FLV) is a community-based and led food security program serving Albany County, Wyoming. A program of Action Resources International (ARI), (a grassroots, 501(c)(3) organization also based in Laramie), FLV in part produces, collects and shares high quality produce with community members living with food insecurity through its year-round, weekly Shares program, at no charge to program participants. It also provides made-from-scratch lunches at our Kids Out to Lunch program (KOTL), free to all children ages 0 – 18.

In 2013, Feeding Laramie Valley bid for and procured a lease on the historic Fort Sanders Building located in LaBonte Park, with an MOU between the City of Laramie and Action Resources for community-betterment use for five years. The MOU has been updated and renewed twice, with the current agreement in place through February 28, 2029.

The Fort Sanders Building is frequently used for public community events, and currently houses the ARI-sponsored programs including Feeding Laramie Valley, Foster Grandparents of the Wyoming Rockies, and an AmeriCorps VISTA Intermediary Program.

Over the 16 years since its inception, FLV has grown its programming in size as well as breadth, with long-term sustainability and a goal to work toward ending food insecurity altogether. In addition to the Shares and KOTL programs, FLV offers the following programs, each of which are described in detail on the [FLV website](#):

- Community Gardens Installed, Developed and Managed by Feeding Laramie Valley
 - LaBonte Park Community Garden (managed by FLV from 2010 – 2018)
 - First United Methodist Church Community Garden & FLV Production Garden (2011 – 2019)
 - Community and Production Gardens at FLV (Fort Sanders) Building (2014 - Present)
 - Community Garden Installed /Management Training, Unitarian/Universalist Fellowship (2019)

- Kiwanis Park Community Garden, (2019 – present)
- Additional FLV Programs/Annual Events
 - Food and Fun in the Park
 - Soup and Solstice
 - FLV Mobile Market
 - Satanka Food and Community Innovation Hub
 - Community Composting Program
 - Educational Workshops and Events; Apprenticeship and Intern Programs
 - VISTA Intermediary Program
 - National Award-Winning Participation in Community Based Participatory Research projects Food Dignity, Growing Resilience, Team G.R.O.W. (Gardener Researchers of Wyoming), Gardens for Health and Healing

Of Note in 2025

- The FLV weekly Shares program offering high quality fresh produce at no charge to people living with food insecurity in Albany County, continued to grow in 2025. Between 650 - nearly 800 individuals were served each week during our Thursday pick-up day and Wednesday delivery day (150 stops each week to accommodate homebound program participants), distributing a total of 56,275 pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables.
- FLV's Kids Out to Lunch received one of two gold medals awarded in Wyoming from the *National Turnip the Beet Awards* given by USDA to honor free children's lunch programs for outstanding quality and service.

Community Gardens at Feeding Laramie Valley

The Community Gardens at the FLV Building continue to be very popular and maintain a waiting list for most of the spring and summer. We offer four 4' x 8' beds, four 4' x 4' beds, one 2' x 8' bed, and one 5' x 5' bed. Our gardeners have been very successful over the years and provide a showcase for what can be grown in a small space. One of our gardeners built his own cold frame as a season extender and boasts both the earliest and latest harvests. These gardens are very helpful to Feeding Laramie Valley's educational tours and programs as examples of what grows well in Laramie, how to build different shapes and sizes of gardens, and showing the different age groups of people who enjoy gardening and do so successfully.

The waiting list issue points to two important pieces of information about community gardening in Laramie in general. 1. This waiting list exists because there are more community gardeners in the immediate area than there are garden plots at FLV's LaBonte site. 2. Because these plots are located on the grounds at our main headquarters, there are staff members with gardening experience present in the offices and often available for real-time consultation.

Kiwanis Park Community Garden

Overview

The Kiwanis Park Community Garden (KPCG) operates through a collaborative design guided by a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City of Laramie (City) and the Feeding Laramie Valley (FLV) program of the community-based, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization Action Resources International (ARI). The MOU was fully executed on September 4, 2018, was updated and renewed in 2024, and remains in effect through December 31, 2028, at which time it is subject to renewal.

Through this collaboration, the City of Laramie Parks and Recreation provides designated land use in Kiwanis Park for KPCG, above-ground water spigots to access the park's water system, and non-potable water for garden use. FLV provides garden infrastructure (i.e., perimeter fencing, in-ground and raised gardening beds, a portable storage shed), and infrastructure maintenance.

Programming design is overseen by FLV staff, with ongoing implementation conducted collaboratively between FLV and the community gardeners who are plot stewards at KPCG.

KPCG has 30 plots of different sizes. The large raised beds are 44 square feet, the medium sized and ADA accessible raised beds are 37 square feet, and the small raised beds are 34 square feet. KPCG offers 17 large beds, 3 medium-sized ADA accessible beds, and 9 small beds. There is in-ground gardening space where the Feeding Laramie (FLV) Shares Food Production team grows fruits and vegetables for distribution by the program to community members living with food insecurity.

Plots are available on a first-come, first served basis to anyone living or working in Laramie. We especially encourage community gardeners from West Laramie and Laramie neighborhoods that do not have convenient access to a community garden nearer their location.

Plot rental is requested of all plot stewards, priced according to size as follows: Small: \$10 per year; Medium/ADA accessible: \$15 per year; Large: \$20 per year. This payment is an annual contribution used to help maintain the gardens. No one is ever turned away from an inability to pay, with publicized sliding pay scale and fee waiver options available upon request.

Plot stewards in good standing (i.e. have continuously complied with KPCG guidelines and policies) have first right of acceptance or refusal for retaining their original plot(s) to garden in contiguous years.

Of Note in 2025

- With help from an Enhancement Grant from Laramie Rivers Conservation District, the pollinator garden at Kiwanis Park Community Garden was expanded; had additional plant varieties to increase pollinator variety and efficiency; received updates with several coats of staining and upgraded soil to all 30 raised beds; is still in line to freshen the walkways and between-bed areas with new Decomposed Granite.

- At the 2025 Kiwanis Park Community Garden, 15 of the 30 garden beds were reserved and used by community members, and 15 were used by Feeding Laramie Valley to grow additional produce for the weekly Shares distribution program. The garden and its gardeners were challenged by loss of assistance from its staff coordinator's sudden onset of a major, disabling disease halfway through the season. We have learned over the years that successful community gardens require regular support from experienced gardeners and facilitators of the complex as well as rewarding community gardening experience. At the same time, 2025 saw a major increase in community volunteering, a trend that continued throughout the entire year. With organizational support backing that increase, plans are in place to utilize volunteers more extensively in FLV's community gardens, providing backup assistance as needed.

The Challenges of and Responses to 2025

Feeding Laramie Valley began 2025 poised and prepared for advancing its decade and a half of efforts to create a model program for local food system sustainability. In addition to a stable annual revenue from private and corporate community-based donations and several private foundation grant awards, we were under contract with multiple Federal grant awards from USDA, DHHS and AmeriCorps, as well as pass-through grants from the Wyoming Department of Education and a State contract with the Wyoming Department of Agriculture.

This diversified funding was designed for FLV to have the opportunity to bring two of its pilot programs to scale. These programs include the FLV Mobile Market and the Satanka Food and Community Innovation Hub, both of which operate using renovated and upgraded rooms at the Fort Sanders Building for food preparation that enables food-safe distribution for community members and FLV's institutional partner, Iverson Memorial Hospital. The Mobile Market has expanded FLV's healthy food distribution for people living with food insecurity far into the rural and frontier areas of Albany County, and the Satanka Food Hub is creating new partnerships between local agriculture and institutions. Both programs generate nonprofit revenue aimed at building long-term support for aspects of our work that address food insecurity at its core.

As part of a nationwide action affecting community programs across the country, in April of 2025, FLV began receiving an unexpected and unexplained series of notices from the Federal government, announcing the termination of the majority of the Action Resources - Feeding Laramie Valley grants and contracts, including all of our direct USDA funding and the majority of our AmeriCorps funding, for a total of \$640,000 in immediately lost revenue.

In spite of this devastating blow, with extensive community support and creative pivoting in strategy, FLV continued to provide fresh produce to its thousands of people in Albany County struggling with food insecurity as the numbers each week continued to increase, and was the only free summer lunch program provided for children in Albany County.

In many respects, 2025 became a year focused on survival for ARI-FLV, as well as an opportunity to understand more than ever the need for community programs that can ultimately sustain themselves and address social challenges like the high rates of poverty and food insecurity in Albany County, with an approach that not only works for emergency need, but

simultaneously addresses these problems at their core and with the ultimate goal of ending them altogether.

Moving Forward

Feeding Laramie Valley has identified several new funding opportunities that fit our objectives, has received notice from a few of the grant sources terminated last year that they will be returning this year, and is receiving a steady increase in local corporate support as well as private donations. Our volunteer numbers have tripled in the past year, which also increases our ability to continue to serve the community through this time. The current programs continue to grow in regard to need, and the Satanka Food Hub and Mobile Market remain steady on their long-term vision.

Community gardeners have begun to sign up for plots this year, and volunteer assistance will ensure their maintenance as well as an increase in gardening support for new plot stewards. In spite of large funding losses for the commercial kitchen at the Fort Sanders building, we have been able to complete a number of major repairs, and of special note have fully upgraded and expanded the building's electrical system in readiness for the ultimate commercial kitchen needs.

The community continues to voice its appreciation and need for Feeding Laramie Valley, and provides the foundation of support to keep us going.

With much appreciation to the City of Laramie Parks, Tree, and Recreation Advisory Board for the land and facilities made available to the community through program services provided by Action Resources International, Feeding Laramie Valley, AmeriCorps VISTA and the Foster Grandparents of the Wyoming Rockies.