



MEDIA RELEASE

Miles Community College

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IMAGE: MCC Ag Students tour the facilities at Quality Meats of Montana in Miles City, MT

Montana Farm Bureau, MCC Develop Meat Processing Program

MILES CITY, MONTANA: Miles Community College and Montana Farm Bureau have teamed up to offer a meat processing certificate/degree. For the past several years, MCC has been working to develop plans for a certificate that can offer a journeyman certificate in meat cutting.

“The recent disruptions in the livestock product supply chain due to COVID-19 raised awareness of the American public to the importance of the local food supply chain,” said MFBF Executive Vice President, John Youngberg. “Montana Farm Bureau has been in discussions with the Montana Meat Processors Association and ascertained that there was no training available for meat cutters either through private programs or the university system. MFBF has been working with Miles Community College and the Board of Regents on a program that could be implemented to alleviate that situation.”

“A meat cutter program is ideal for a community college because it’s good career technical training. We knew there was a need and knew that a community college could fill that void.” noted Kim Gibbs, agricultural instructor at MCC. “We considered building a new

processing facility, but the cost of that was prohibitive. We visited with Brian Engle of Pioneer Meats in Big Timber and Jeremy Plummer of Lower Valley Processing in Kalispell who noted they already have the facilities to do the training; MCC would provide the core curriculum of math, communications, science and English as well as leveled internships for students to grow their skills.”

Gibbs explained that students could complete their core classes—either online or classroom—as well as do rotating internships by traveling to three or four different processing plants. Among the subjects taught will be meat cutting, sausage making, and recipe development.

“Not many Career Technical programs are set up so a student gets paid to do an internship while completing their training; these students will,” noted Gibbs. “When a student completes this certificate, they will have a one-year general certificate.”

“Montana Farm Bureau has played such a big role in helping get this program to the next level and building momentum,” added Gibbs. “Having an industry-driven organization like Farm Bureau helping with this is critical to making this program become a reality.”

The next step to the MCC one-year program is to gauge student interest and solicit funding for the program. MCC hopes for long-term goals of offering the course as a two-year program, focusing on the business end of running a small processing facility and learning about regulations and economics.

For more information about the course, contact Kim Gibbs, Ag Instructor, at gibbsk@milesc.edu or call 406-874-6100.