



Annual Report 2021



United Way
of Missoula County

2021 Letter to the Community

We are proud to present United Way of Missoula County's 2021 annual report, recapping the significant activities of our organization's 90th year of service to western Montana.

Despite the ongoing uncertainties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, United Way programs continued to strengthen our community through collaborative work in education, financial stability and health: addressing homelessness, improving the lives and health of children and families, preventing suicide, stemming the tide of substance use, strengthening the nonprofit sector, and making homes in the wildland-urban interface more wildfire-resilient.

The work described in these pages reflects United Way's commitment to creating more equitable systems that provide every child and family access to education, financial stability, a healthy life, and opportunities to succeed. Embodied in this commitment is our opposition to racism in all forms and our dedication to being a strong ally in ongoing work to ensure equity and justice for all.

Our 90th anniversary celebration provided us with the opportunity to reflect on United Way's accomplishments over the last century, and look to the future. We are proud of our historic role in improving lives and strengthening our community, even as we acknowledge that much work is yet to be done.

No single organization can solve complex community problems alone; it is too heavy a lift for just one sector. Real change requires the collective-impact approach long championed by our United Way: that lasting solutions come when everyone—businesses, government, nonprofits, educators, philanthropists, individuals, the faith community—works together to craft creative, practical, sustainable solutions that address problems and change systems. United Way is honored to play a leading role in this important, collaborative, and life-changing work. Thank you for joining us.



Mike Nugent
PRESIDENT



Susan Hay Patrick
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



United Way
of Missoula County

At a renaming ceremony in June 2021, during United Way of Missoula County's 90th year, we renamed our building the Bill & Rosemary Gallagher Center, after our visionary founders. The Gallagher Foundation has generously helped us pay off our building's mortgage, ensuring a strong future in our historic home. This generosity allows us to free up more resources to support the many programs housed in our building that help make Missoula a better, stronger, healthier community for everyone – just as the Gallaghers envisioned.



In September, we celebrated our 90th anniversary with an outdoor barbecue at the Missoula PaddleHeads stadium. This fun event was sponsored by First Security Bank, Clearwater Credit Union, Jones Brothers Trucking, First Interstate Bank, Missoulain, Anderson ZurMuehlen, D.A. Davidson, Flanagan Motors Mazda, Hammond, Inc., Missoula PaddleHeads Professional Baseball, and Title Services, Inc.



University United Food Friday

The 90th celebration continued in October when, in partnership with the University of Montana, 300 volunteers packaged 90,000 shelf-stable meals for our neighbors in need. The packaged meals were delivered to the Missoula Food Bank and Community Center to be distributed through their EmPower Pack program—food that kids take home from school so that they don't go hungry on weekends or over school vacations. Our University United Food Friday effort ensures that families can enjoy a nutritious meal together. Thanks to these sponsors for helping thousands of our neighbors: Wells Fargo, Scheels Missoula, Providence Montana, ALPS, Clearwater Credit Union, and Stockman Bank.



While the COVID-19 pandemic continued to require innovative strategies, our programs in education, financial stability, and health continued to thrive in 2021, strengthening our community.

EDUCATION

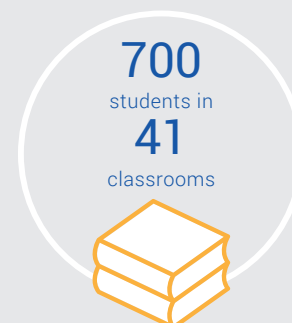
ZERO TO FIVE MISSOULA COUNTY

Zero to Five launched two new programs, and expanded a third.

700 students in 41 classrooms across the county participated in the **Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA)**, almost triple the number from 2020. About half of Missoula County children are not fully ready on day one. The KEA identified engagement with community resources and services as a significant predictor of readiness.

Zero to Five's Parent Leadership Training Institute taught its first cohort of seven parents to increase their civic awareness and leadership skills, advancing our vision of parents from diverse backgrounds empowered to advocate for children and youth. Each parent developed a community project to put their learning into practice and effect change.

We also launched the Early Learning Fellows, with a cohort of early childhood professionals from K12, social services, preschool, and community learning settings. During their quarterly half-day professional development sessions, the 16 Fellows built relationships and cross-sector understanding, while also developing and implementing action plans to improve practices in their own workplaces.



BACKPACK PROGRAM



825
local
students

Our annual back-to-school backpack program again provided new backpacks filled with required school supplies for more than 825 local students. Partnering with several organizations, we make sure the backpacks reach the students who need them the most. We work closely with family resource centers in Missoula County Public Schools and other school districts in Missoula County, and with local nonprofits, including the Salvation Army, Youth Homes, Soft Landing Missoula and Missoula Food Bank and Community Center. This life-changing program helps kids in need show up ready to learn. Generous donors make this program possible—thank you!

DOLLY PARTON'S IMAGINATION LIBRARY

Our Imagination Library continues to give our youngest neighbors new books each month, encouraging a love of reading. About 3,000 children 0-5 in Missoula and Mineral counties are enrolled in our Imagination Library. Over the past seven years, 4,563 children have graduated, completing the program and going on to Kindergarten better prepared for lifelong learning. In 2021, we partnered with Reach Out and Read, managed by Partnership Health Center and Community Medical Center, Western Montana Clinic, CASA of Missoula, Missoula Food Bank and Community Center, and various childcare centers, to distribute 2,000 Imagination Library books that were undeliverable due to family moves. We partner with the local Postmaster General to receive those undeliverable books, and our team contacts the families, getting books to the intended children whenever possible. When we can't reunite a child with a book, we find a home with another local child—ensuring the books have their intended impact in our community. During 2022, we will deliver our 250,000th Imagination Library book!



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PROJECT TOMORROW MONTANA

Our Project Tomorrow Montana suicide-prevention initiative continued to spread help and hope during 2021, creating a multi-disciplinary Psychological Autopsy Support Team that helps to identify prevention gaps in Missoula County and address them through community action/awareness. Through this work, Project Tomorrow was able to create more support for mothers and families, who were particularly struggling during the first year of the pandemic. Project Tomorrow also helped create the “Give Us A Minute” firearm safety campaign, in response to the unusually high rate of suicide by firearm in our county during 2021.

Also in 2021, Project Tomorrow Montana conducted four Projected Hope remembrance art experiences, focusing on first responders and veterans, indigenous people, the LGBTQ+ community, and caregivers. Projected Hope is produced in partnership with Tamarack Grief Resource Center and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Montana chapter, with downtown Missoula projection made possible through the generosity of

Murphy-Jubb Fine Art and First Montana Bank. The Project Tomorrow Montana team continues to push forward with creativity and hope, increasing suicide prevention and intervention for all segments of our community.



MISSOULA SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER CONNECT

In 2021, Missoula Substance Use Disorder Connect (MSUDC) completed its first year, growing to nearly 100 affiliated members. The year was spent identifying the landscape, building and strengthening relationships with community organizations and partners, and completing a comprehensive needs assessment regarding substance use in Missoula County.

Following a well-attended Stakeholder Retreat in the fall, the coalition identified three priority areas of interest and established Action Committees for each area (Peer Support, Harm Reduction and Recovery Residences) to move our work forward. The success of this collaboration looks promising.



5-2-1-0 LET'S MOVE! MISSOULA

In 2021, the program was revitalized by hiring a new coordinator and engaging a revived Steering Committee, with plans to improve and relaunch active recess and community outreach and education in 2022, encouraging kids and families to eat 5 servings of fruit and veggies, have 2 hours or less of recreational screen time, play hard for 1 hour, and drink 0 sugar-sweetened beverages every day.



REACHING HOME: MISSOULA'S 10-YEAR-PLAN TO END HOMELESSNESS

As the COVID-19 pandemic continued in 2021, so did innovative efforts to support those experiencing homelessness. The Temporary Safe Outdoor Space – a collaboration led by United Way of Missoula County, Hope Rescue Mission, and Missoula County – completed one year of service, supporting 78 people. About one-third (33.6%) moved into permanent housing, thanks to the services available on site. The TSOS provides a dignified, secure place for people today while helping them improve their situation for tomorrow. In 2021, United Way continued providing logistical and financial support to the TSOS, including sustainable canvas wall tents, and support during extreme weather events that affected the health and safety of residents and staff. In early 2022, Missoula County also opened an authorized camping site, providing a legal option for people with nowhere else to go. These innovative efforts are especially important as our community faces an unprecedented housing crisis, with more options needed.

Also in 2021, the Community Housing Solutions Fund, administered by United Way, helped dozens of individuals and families enter and/or stay in housing. The fund pays for rental deposits, utility bills in arrears, and other expenses that make the difference between keeping people housed and having them fall into homelessness.

United Way's Director of Impact visited several communities in the Pacific Northwest to determine what is working in other communities in our region that are facing the national problem of increased homelessness. This led to the County's purchase of 30 pallet shelters, which combine temporary housing solutions with case management. Once appropriate space is identified, the pallet shelters will be erected, providing an important new option for housing unhoused Missoulians.

As the original 10-year plan assesses progress and challenges, and efforts to end homelessness move into a new phase, Reaching Home Leadership Roundtable of business, nonprofit, faith and public-sector leaders stepped up efforts to amplify and communicate the work of frontline housing and social-service providers. A new quarterly newsletter, "Reaching Out," published by United Way, helps spread the message about ongoing efforts to address homelessness.

Major grants from Wells Fargo and the Otto Bremer Trust support our work to end homelessness.



WILDFIRE READY MISSOULA

Wildfire continues to be part of life in the west, and our community is no exception. Partnering with national fire scientists and Missoula County Office of Emergency Management, our Wildfire Ready Missoula helped 12 land owners prepare their properties in 2021, reducing fuels and creating a more wildfire-safe community. Grants for this innovative program mean that efforts in 2022 can scale up and benefit even more families.



MISSOULA NONPROFIT CENTER

Continuing its work to provide support for local nonprofits, the Missoula Nonprofit Center's weekly email shared opportunities and made connections among the 115 member nonprofits. Virtual trainings in storytelling, fundraising, and communications were well attended, and affinity groups were created to network nonprofit professionals in their areas of expertise. The Volunteer Missoula website connected more than 350 volunteers with volunteer opportunities, and thanks to a partnership between MNC and the University of Montana's Information Systems program, the Poverello Center received a new, user-friendly website.



connected
more than
350
volunteers

INCREASING JUSTICE AND EQUITY

In keeping with our tradition of fighting for those most vulnerable and marginalized members of our community, we continued to provide staff and board members with regular antiracism training, and supported efforts to reduce barriers. We helped sponsor the Zootown Arts Community Center's "Resiliency of Montana: Indigenous Art Exposure," a two-day contemporary indigenous arts showcase that incorporated many Montana tribal artists in new and exciting ways.

We also became the fiscal sponsor of the **Montana Black Collective Missoula**.

In 2020 a passionate group came together to empower community members of African American descent to address racism and create a more equitable community for everyone. Our United Way is proud to serve as Montana Black Collective Missoula's fiscal sponsor, starting in 2021. We are excited to see, support and champion their work toward a more just community.



FINANCIALS

Please visit MissoulaUnitedWay.org for our most recent financials. We are grateful for the trust our supporters place in us, as we continue to work to improve our community for all residents.

**United Way also supported the following programs and projects this year,
through fundraising events and other opportunities:**

4th D Club	Human Resource Council / 2-1-1	Soft Landing Missoula
All Nations Health Center	Missoula Aging Services	St. Paul Lutheran Church Clothing Bank
Big Brothers Big Sisters of NW Montana	Missoula Food Bank	Tamarack Grief Resource Center
Boys & Girls Club of Missoula County	Mountain Home Montana	University of Montana Food Pantry
CASA of Missoula	Open Aid Alliance	Youth Homes
The Center-Western Montana LGBTQ Center	Opportunity Resources	YWCA of Missoula
Homeword	The Parenting Place	Zootown Arts Community Center
	Poverello Center	

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Together, there's a way.



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