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2025



FAILURE CAN BE A GOOD TEACHER, IF YOU ALLOW IT

We ask the same questions of each of the 40 Under Forty winners each year, and one of those questions has turned out to be far more insightful than we initially imagined.

“What failure have you learned the most from?”

Our assumption was that failure is a somewhat regrettable or unwelcome part of the process, even if some good can come from learning from each other's mistakes.

Not true with 40 Under Forty winners. Most view failures as an essential part of the growing and learning process. Nearly every good development throughout human history has been informed and advanced by what's been learned from failures, one winner said. Another winner acknowledged making bad decisions but never regretting that a decision was made.

Laura Keogh, the office manager at BARE Chiropractic, views failure “as a stepping stone to growth.” It as an opportunity to learn, adapt and improve, she said.

Kayleen Masters, the tax department head at Eide Bailly LLP, said she had a mentor who helped her understand the word “fail” could be understood as an acronym.

“FAIL stands for First Attempt In Learning and I could not agree more with it,” Master said. “If you aren't failing, are you even trying?”

For Aaron Waller, with Graphic Finesse LLC, a “colossal failure,” was just life pushing him in a different, more suitable direction. He reflects no a string of mistakes in high school that put him in the position of having to take learning into his own hands.

“So, from that time forward I started educating myself rather than waiting for a teacher to educate me, he said. “By the time I finished college I managed to graduate magna cum laude with portfolio par excellence in both digital and flat art.”

Examples of failing upward are everywhere around us. The developers of YouTube, which now has 2.5 billion active users, originally imagined the site as a video

dating service. It failed miserably and the company almost collapsed. After several other failed attempts to rescue the company, they opened the platform to all videos. In just one quarter in 2022, the company earned \$7.3 billion.

Bubble Wrap was originally intended to be a textured wallpaper. The lubricant WD40 got its name from the formula finally working on the 40th attempt. And, ever heard of the Famicom Console, or the NES Console? There were Nintendo's first two crushing failures. With nothing left to lose, the creatives at Nintendo poured their hearts into two tiny characters named Mario and Luigi. That sure worked out.

Editor's note: Because of space limitations, many of the insightful and informative responses from the winners were shortened for our print edition. The honorees' full responses appear with their profiles online at billingsgazette.com.

**“GOOD DECISIONS REQUIRE SACRIFICE
AND POSTPONING REWARD.
SUCCESS IS GETTING
TO SPEND THAT
REWARD”**

CHRIS JORGENSEN



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Celebrating our very own 40 Under Forty

Elizabeth Connor, MD
Gynecologic Oncology

Kellie Depuydt, NP
Family Medicine

Riley Fitzgerald
Finance Director

Kristine Newell
Practice Administrator

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DO SOMETHING THAT TERRIFIES YOU



ASHLEY ALLINSON

Age: 33

Company and Title: Stahly Engineering & Associates

Hometown: Sheridan, Montana

Education and/or Background: B.S. Civil Engineering

If you couldn't do this, what would you

do instead? I would likely pursue a career more directly involved with sustainable energy or design. I truly believe that humanity can work harmoniously with our planet and the ecosystem by adopting a more holistic approach to energy use and production. Whether it's designing energy-efficient buildings, exploring renewable energy sources, or finding innovative ways to reduce our environmental impact, I would love to contribute to a more sustainable future where we meet our needs without compromising the well-being of future generations.

What other passions/callings are part of your life? Outside of work, I deeply cherish my role as a mom and love spending quality time with my wonderful husband. I also enjoy exploring Montana's natural beauty, especially through kayaking.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? "Stick to what you know." While specialization has value, this mindset limits growth and creativity. Some of my most rewarding projects have come from stepping outside my comfort zone.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? Don't waste energy comparing your behind-the-scenes to

someone else's highlight reel — it's not a fair comparison and only steals your happiness. The sooner you free yourself from the weight of others' opinions, the more confident and joyful your life will become.

What's your guilty pleasure? Cheesy romantic comedies and chocolate anything. Sometimes you just need to check your brain at the door and enjoy a sweet treat!

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? I aspire to design and oversee a landmark project that becomes a cornerstone of my community.

How do you measure your own success? By the positive impact my work has on others and by achieving a healthy balance between my professional goals and family life.

What failure have you learned the most from? Early in my career, I underestimated the importance of clear communication on a project. It led to delays and misaligned expectations. Since then, I've made it a priority to ensure every part of the team is aligned and supported.

What is the hardest part of your job? Convincing clients of the importance of stormwater mitigation, especially because its benefits aren't immediately realized.

Stormwater systems are a proactive measure — designed to prevent flooding, erosion, and water quality issues during large storm events. However, because these problems only become apparent during major storms, it can be challenging to get people to see the value in investing in solutions before the crisis happens.

What was the last show you binge-watched? I have a toddler and another on the way so I'm not bingeing anything, but we just went through Black Doves pretty quickly. Keira Knightley in a British spy thriller? Yes please!

What is your favorite book? "The Book Thief" by Markus Zusak. The way the book explores themes of loss, resilience and the power of words and kindness in difficult times is incredibly compelling.

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? Seeing my designs come to life and knowing they'll serve the community for years. It's deeply fulfilling to create something tangible and lasting.

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? My mom, who was an engineer in Silicon Valley in the '80s, played a huge role in shaping my love for science.

NEVER COMPLAIN, NEVER EXPLAIN



MARISSA AMEN

Age: 32

Company and Title: REALTOR at Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Floberg Real Estate

Hometown: Billings, Montana

Education and/or Background: Bachelor of Science in Business Finance,

Bachelor of Arts Modern in Languages Hispanic Studies from Montana State University

Do you have a motto that you live by? Never complain and never explain. My dad repeated this to my brother and me over and over throughout our lives and it is such a simple concept about life.

What other passions/callings are part of your life? My family, especially my two kids. I love being a mom first and foremost, which is why I love my career so much. Aside from family, I love going to concerts, traveling, trying out different coffee shops, and my journey in my faith has grown exponentially in the last few years.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? Keep doing things the way they are because that's how it's always been done. Regardless of the caliber of change, businesses must recognize that change is crucial for growth, improvement and maintaining relevance in ever-evolving industries. I try to allow for change in my own business continually. Even if a strategy has worked in the past, it's worthwhile to invest in new, innovative ideas.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? You don't need to have your whole life planned out at high school graduation. I entered college as a pre-med student and graduated five years later with a degree in Business and Spanish. Try out as many avenues as necessary until you find your niche and what you are passionate about. Also, don't ever stop trying to learn from others in your profession. Take every opportunity you can to soak up the knowledge of your peers because, chances are, you can take something valuable away from most situations.

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? I still want to go back to graduate school and obtain my MBA. I also plan to get my Broker's License to further my real estate career at Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Floberg Real Estate.

How do you measure your own success? In real estate, I measure my success on how many clients and families refer me to others or come back to me as forever clients. I love being able to see my clients through the biggest purchase

(usually) of their adult lives and seeing them grow throughout the process. It is so rewarding to know my services as their REALTOR went above and beyond expectations, and that they would recommend me to others. In my personal life, my success is measured by seeing my two little ones grow up in a loving, nurturing environment and that my career allows me to do that alongside of them.

What failure have you learned the most from? Staying at a job when it was no longer serving me just because it was comfortable. When that job ended, it forced me to get out of my comfort zone and invest in myself as a business owner.

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? My kids, Easton and Mari. I did not know what unconditional, unwavering love was until I had kids. They are the greatest blessings I have been given. I never take for granted each day I have with them, and the responsibility I have being their mom.

FOCUS ON THE PRESENT



LIZ ARLIAN

Age: 28

Company and Title: Marketing Coordinator at MetraPark

Hometown: Big Timber

Education and/or Background: Sweet Grass County High School, Montana State University Bozeman

If you couldn't do this, what would you do instead? I would still find a way to stay connected to marketing, brand management and social media. It's truly

a passion and I'd go to great lengths to continue pursuing that career path.

What other passions/callings are part of your life? Outside of my professional life, I'm deeply passionate about mental health advocacy. It's something I care about on both a personal and societal level, and I feel drawn to finding ways to create awareness and support for those in need. I also value creativity and connection — whether it's through helping out on my family's ranch, traveling or being involved in my community.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? "Stick to one path and not explore other interests." While there's value in focus, this advice felt limiting and dismissive of the natural evolution of passions and skills.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? Embrace curiosity and try new things. Get involved in activities that spark your interest, even if they seem outside your comfort zone — that's where growth happens!

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? One professional accomplishment I still want to achieve is continuing to grow and make a lasting impact in my role at

MetraPark. I'm passionate about building on the work we do to create meaningful connections with the community, elevate our events and strengthen our brand presence. I'm eager to keep developing my skills, taking on new challenges and contributing to MetraPark's success in even bigger ways as I grow professionally.

How do you measure your own success? By how aligned I feel with my purpose and values. It's less about external achievements and more about personal growth, the impact I'm making on others and the fulfillment I find in my work and relationships.

What failure have you learned the most from? One of the failures I've learned the most from was a time when I overcommitted myself, thinking I could juggle everything perfectly. It led to burnout and a realization that I wasn't giving my best to any area of my life. That experience taught me the importance of setting boundaries, prioritizing what truly matters and knowing when to say no. It showed me that failure isn't the end — it's a way to refine how I approach things moving forward.

What is the hardest part of your job? The hardest part of my job is balancing creativity with strategy. It's important to

stay innovative and inspired while ensuring that every idea aligns with goals and delivers tangible results. Another challenge is managing multiple priorities and deadlines simultaneously without sacrificing quality. However, these challenges push me to grow, adapt and continuously improve, which is ultimately rewarding.

What is your favorite book? That's a tough one — "Tuesdays with Morrie" or "Where the Crawdads Sing" "The Untethered Soul" is up there as well. Did I mention that's a tough question?

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? As someone who is still relatively new to this position, one of the most rewarding aspects has been seeing the impact my work has on the community. Whether it's creating campaigns that bring people together or promoting events that leave lasting memories, knowing my efforts contribute to something bigger is incredibly fulfilling. What makes it even more special is being part of the amazing team at MetraPark.

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? My parents. They've been my biggest supporters, continually pushing me to reach my potential and helping me succeed in so many ways.

CONGRATULATIONS

CONGRATULATIONS

MATT

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FROM

all of us
at Family Service



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KYLA BAUER

Age: 38

Company and Title: Altana Federal Credit Union, Loan Processing Manager

Hometown: Broadus, Montana

Education and/or Background: Bachelor of Science in Business Administration – Marketing & Management, MSU Billings

What other passions/callings are part of your life? Coaching, mentoring, and my faith. Through the Upward sports

program, I coach various sports while sharing about Jesus. I'm also a mentor through Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch. It's rewarding to see kids develop, and I believe being a positive role model can significantly impact their lives.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? I'm pretty careful about who I let give me advice. If I've been given bad advice, I probably ignored it.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? Read Dave Ramsey's book "The Total Money Makeover," make a budget and stick to it!

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? Become part of the senior management team to help lead and guide the credit union in the years to come.

How do you measure your own success? Success for me is doing something I enjoy while helping others.

What failure have you learned the most from? When I first had kids and was working full time I felt like I was failing at both. Fortunately, my employers have understood work-life balance. I've learned that I can't do it all. Saying "Yes" to something, means

saying "No" to something else. We have to choose wisely.

What is the hardest part of your job? Our job is to work in the best interest of our members. Sometimes that means we have to have to say "not right now" to a loan or a purchase. The flip side is that we can help members get back on track so eventually we can say yes!

What is your favorite book? The Bible. Another good one I read recently was "Enter Wild" by Carlos Whittaker.

What was the last show you binge-watched? I'm not a big binge-watcher, but I do enjoy an episode of "Hot Mess House" once a week while I'm folding laundry.

If you couldn't do this, what would you do instead? Growing up I wanted to be a school secretary. They kept everything running smoothly and interacted with the kids, but didn't have to teach them in the classroom.

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? I love helping people. Whether it's helping simplify procedures, assisting members during the construction process of their dream home, or being there for my co-workers.

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? My parents. They've always guided and encouraged me and I'm forever grateful!

Do you have a motto that you live by? Work hard, and always stay humble and kind.

What advice would you give to anyone wanting to start a new business or excel in a business or field? Surround yourself with people who will help and encourage you. Count the cost and do your planning before you jump in. Work hard, play hard.

How do you view failure and success? I think the only true failure is when you give-up. Success is when you continue to push through even when the outcome might not look exactly like you were hoping it would.

What do you do for fun/relax/hobby? I enjoy traveling with my family, specifically to National Park in our camper.

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? Jesus. I'm so thankful that he would come to this Earth to save me, so I can spend eternity with him in heaven!



GABE BLOMQUIST

Age: 39

Company and Title: Billings Clinic, Chief of Advanced Practice, and Physician Assistant in Diabetes and Endocrinology.

Hometown: Ryegate, Montana

Education and/or Background: Bachelor's degree, Biology/Pre-Med; Master of Physician Assistant Studies at

Rocky Mountain College

If you couldn't do this, what would you do instead? Doing something to support critical access health care in rural areas or being a handyman/carpenter.

What other passions/callings are part of your life? Volunteering at our annual Montana youth diabetes camp has been a passion of mine for the last 10+ years. I also have a passion for serving in my faith community, most recently the Walk to Emmaus.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? "You can't do this job without doing it this way." If we get stuck in doing things the same way, ingenuity and innovation are lost, along with positive progress.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? Pursue your passions in life, with dedication and perseverance. It will take you further than you could ever imagine. But also make sure to enjoy and reflect on the ride getting there, both the difficulties and achievements.

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? Help develop a continuing educational program for rural and primary care clinicians, with the most up-to-date

diabetes management and technology support; and connect the various diabetes programs throughout our region to bring unified support for those living with diabetes.

How do you measure your own success? Through the positive relationships I have gained over the years, and the feeling that I am helping to support others, either in need or encouraging another's success.

What failure have you learned the most from? Failing to get into graduate school twice was, at the time, incredibly difficult and confusing. Although I thought it would be the end for my aspirations in health care, it taught me resilience to keep pursuing my dream, and what it feels like to not give up. I would not change the journey it took to get here.

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? It is my time I get to spend with my patients, building relationships and seeing their improvements as they gain empowerment toward managing their lifelong battle with diabetes.

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? Jim Hardwick. He mentored me during my years at Carroll College, and helped me to believe in myself, while giving

lifelong advice about being a professional, a colleague, and a friend. He likely doesn't even know the impact he had on me, but he changed my life.

What advice would you give to anyone wanting to start a new business or excel in a business or field? Be kind to others, and always give your best effort while understanding that you will experience difficulties, failures, and hard times. Yet through perseverance and hard work, you can truly accomplish anything you set your mind to. Your strongest asset is your mind, and having the right mindset is key. Lean into others, both the veterans and the up and comers, everyone can provide meaningful insight and perspectives.

How do you view failure and success? I try not to think of things as failures anymore, and more about opportunities for growth, although this is much easier said than done, especially in the moment of "failure."

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? Cliché but real, my greatest gifts are my 2 children, McLain and RoriMae, and my wife, Cassie. I feel blessed by God that I get to enjoy this life with them in our amazing state of Montana.

SHARE WHAT BRINGS YOU JOY



NICK BOWERS

Age: 37

Company and title: Cushing Terrell

Hometown: Billings

Education and/or background:

Bachelor's in environmental design and Master's of architecture from Montana State University

If you couldn't do this, what would you do instead? I would love to start a non-profit dedicated to introducing the sport of hunting to our youth. As part of the non-profit, I would create a media arm to provide lessons learned, and tips and tricks for other families exploring my favorite form of outdoor recreation.

What other passions/callings are part of your life? Coaching my oldest son has become one of my favorite pastimes. Though currently focused on his age group (11 years old), I am excited to apply the lessons learned to my younger son and daughter. I don't really know how to dip my toe into volunteering. If I'm going to help, I'm all in. I coach a travel baseball team for the 406 Flyers, little league through Boulder Arrowhead, and football with Yellowstone Youth Football.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? "It is what it is." Though there are scenarios where this may be true for temporary issues, more often there are long term opportunities to correct or massage the process or situation you are in. What you're not changing, you're choosing.

What advice would you give

a teenager about success? Find something you are passionate about and lean into it. Success can be attained through hard work regardless of your end goal. Most people don't fail, they typically stop pushing themselves to break through the barriers in their path to success.

What's your guilty pleasure? Cleaning my garage... Whenever the household duties are wrapped up, you will find me in my garage organizing gear, debating future creations with shed antlers, and staring at memories hanging on the wall.

How do you measure your own success? Attitude and Effort. Something we push with young athletes, but also something I try to live by.

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? I have always aspired to be a principal of our firm. We are a big ship to navigate, but creating opportunities for my teammates to grow and succeed has been a passion. I've had the privilege of being part of some amazing projects from the design perspective, but the 'design' of a firm has always intrigued me.

What failure have you learned the

most from? Relationships take work. Personally, and professionally, you must continuously invest in people to maintain positive relationships.

What is the hardest part of your job? Personality management. Navigating large teams with varying backgrounds, experiences and personalities is one of the more challenging aspects of being an architect. Seeing intentional efforts turn into great team chemistry has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my career.

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? My father. He is a friend to many and is always willing to help without expectation. He has taught me how to navigate situations with confidence, to listen and seek ways to help.

Do you have a motto that you live by? Find what brings you joy and share it.

What do you do for fun/relax/hobby? My mental reset button is putting tires on a dirt road or dipping a boat into any body of water with my family.

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? My wife. God put her in my life at 15 years old and I wouldn't be where I am today without her.

CONGRATULATIONS KASEY CROWNOVER!

RESPIRATORY FAILURE
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Kasey Crownover,
Chief Nursing Officer

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GRATITUDE IS A DAILY PRACTICE



LIZ CONNOR

Age: 38

Company and title: Intermountain Health Gynecologic Oncologist (I am a surgeon and medical doctor that treats gynecologic cancers)

Hometown: No hometown for me! I grew up in a military family.

Education and/or background: Medical Doctor (Undergraduate and Medical Education at the University of Virginia, Residency at

Brown University, Fellowship at Cleveland Clinic)

What is the worst advice you've received and why? "Don't become a doctor, especially if you want a family." I love my job. It is a difficult job, but highly engaging and rewarding. I have an amazing husband and two children, and while I work very hard to maintain balance, I would not have it any other way.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? Be wise about how you define success. There are as many definitions as there are humans AND your definition is allowed to change over your lifetime.

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? I would love to build a program for OB/Gyn resident physicians to spend time training in Montana and Wyoming. It is important that we recruit excellent providers to our region that will be dedicated to women's health for generations to come.

How do you measure your own success? It's measured in growth. Success as a surgeon is bringing new surgical approaches to our patients such as intraoperative chemotherapy. Success as an oncologist is

growing new services to help patients like our new complex menopause clinic. Success as a parent is fostering new hobbies and skills. Success on a personal level is learning a new language or training for my first marathon.

What failure have you learned the most from? I applied for my dream job out of fellowship and despite positive interviews, I did not get the job. When another position opened just a few months later, I was offered the job that day. Remember, a closed door may not stay closed for long.

What is the hardest part of your job? As an oncologist, I am often meeting people in one of the most stressful moments in their life. They may have just learned that they have cancer or that they need a major surgery. It is critical to be just as attentive to their emotional state as their physical state, and this can be challenging.

What is your favorite book? "North to the Night" by Alvah Simon. My entire family discovered this book in a rental home bookshelf several years ago and we've all read this book in three days or less. It is a fascinating true story of adventure, personal reflection, and the gravity of (un)preparedness.

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? I am lucky to have several! My parents are incredibly inspiring. They modeled how impactful a career can be (and they have very different careers). My grandmother modeled kindness, patience, and empathy. Dr. Susan Modesitt introduced me to gynecologic oncology and how to excel at being a surgeon, teacher, and a parent.

Do you have a motto that you live by? Gratitude is a daily practice. I keep a box of thank-you notes in my locker at the hospital, at my office desk, and my home office. When you appreciate someone, tell them. When someone helps you, or makes a great catch, thank them. It costs nothing, it means everything.

What do you do for fun/relax/hobby? Movement is medicine - exercise has always been my outlet. I play ice hockey (Go Buckaroos!), I run, I do yoga regularly, I snowboard and ski with my family, and I am outside as often as I can be.

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? My family. I have two wonderful daughters and I love seeing them grow and try new things. My husband is endlessly supportive and I am so grateful to be married to my best friend.

PERFECT IS ENEMY OF GOOD



DILLON DEFFINBAUGH

Age: 34

Company and Title: Montana State University Billings Center for Engagement, Director

Hometown: Belfry, Montana

Education and/or Background: Master of Arts in Student Affairs

Administration in Higher Education, Ball State University; Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies, University of Montana; AAS in Business, Northwest College

What is the worst advice you've received and why? Fake it till you make it. Authenticity is key to long-term success. Acknowledging mistakes and seeking input should be celebrated, not viewed as weakness. I prefer the Face It 'til You Ace It approach.

If you couldn't do this, what would you do instead? I've always had an entrepreneurial mindset, so I might start a service business dedicated to solving a challenge for the Billings area community.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? Take risks and don't fear mistakes - they're invaluable opportunities to learn and grow. As Ralph Nader said, "Your best teacher is your last mistake."

How do you measure your own success? I strive to be better today than I was yesterday. This involves setting goals, gathering feedback, and making continuous improvements.

What's your guilty pleasure? Big

Dipper black licorice ice cream.

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? As a college administrator, I would like to be involved in developing and implementing a sustainable strategic plan that positively transforms campus culture.

What failure have you learned the most from? Nearly dropping out of college was a pivotal moment. I excelled in student leadership but neglected academics, almost derailing my dream of working as an educator. That experience taught me the value of focus and self-discipline.

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? I love managing spaces, programs and services on a college campus. It's such a vibrant, collaborative environment where I can make a positive impact on students' lives. There's never a dull moment at MSUB!

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? I have been fortunate to work with several top-tier leaders and mentors who have contributed to my personal and professional journey. Dr.

Beverly Lahlum Taylor encouraged me to complete my degree and inspired me to pursue a meaningful career. My supervisor, Kathy Kotecki, exemplifies servant leadership, and my parents instilled a strong work ethic that continues to guide me.

Do you have a motto that you live by? "Perfect is the enemy of good."

How do you view failure and success? Success is a deeply personal concept, shaped by our unique values and goals. Failure, on the other hand, offers an opportunity to learn and grow, ultimately paving the way toward achieving our own definition of success.

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? The greatest gift I ever received was a hand-painted swather sickle section from my grandmother, who was an artist. Before she passed away, despite facing physical limitations, she adapted and persevered to create these meaningful pieces for my siblings and me. This gift serves as a powerful reminder to honor my roots, embrace resilience and strive to overcome challenges in order to make a positive impact on the people and the world around me.



KELLIE DEPUYDT

Age: 35

Company and Title: Intermountain Health - Laurel Family Medicine (Nurse Practitioner) Purdue University Global (Adjunct Faculty)

Hometown: Malta, Montana

Education and/or Background: Doctorate of Nursing Practice/Nursing Education Certificate from MSU-

Bozeman

If you couldn't do this, what would you do instead? If I couldn't continue in my current role, I would love to return to emergency medicine. I truly enjoy the dynamic nature of both the clinical and academic worlds, but there's something about the fast-paced, complex environment of emergency medicine that I loved.

What other passions/callings are part of your life? I believe in community and serving those communities we live in to make them better for everyone. I currently serve as the chairperson for the Stillwater Board of Health and also am active in 4-H in Stillwater County with my boys.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? "Good things come to those who wait." Waiting around for good things to happen will never lead to success, you have to be dedicated/work hard/and seek out your successes and achievements.

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? Mentoring is a big part of my career, and I want to help new NP/PA's start in their careers and improve

retention of new advanced practice providers.

How do you measure your own success? Success is feeling content and happy, feeling that I've accomplished my goals, and feeling satisfied with the outcomes.

What is the hardest part of your job? Delivering bad news; telling someone that there is likely to be a bad diagnosis, outcome. It never gets easier no matter how many times you do it.

What was the last show you binge-watched? The Chicagos - Chicago Med, PD, Fire —all my personal favorites.

What is your favorite book? I can't say that I have a favorite book, but I do love historical fiction books of any kind.

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? Becoming friends with my patients. I've been honored to see entire families and care for them through birth, death, and everything in-between.

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? My family. My parents have worked hard to provide for my family and have always supported me in my career and life journey.

Do you have a motto that you live by? Maya Angelou: "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

What advice would you give to anyone wanting to start a new business or excel in a business or field? Stay focused on the goal that you want and stay dedicated to those goals. Surround yourself with people who support you, encourage you, and want to mentor you along the way.

How do you view failure and success? Failure and success are both crucial to long-term success in any career, or life in general. Without failure, you can't adapt and grow as a person and ultimately can't achieve success.

What do you do for fun/relax/hobby? I love to travel! As a family, we go on 1-3 trips a year and have been to many places. This year we did Arizona, Hawaii, and Mexico.

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? My sons. They have taught me so much already and have brought so much happiness and joy to my life.



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RILEY FITZGERALD

Age: 36

Company and Title: Finance Director, Intermountain Health

Hometown: Gig Harbor, Washington

Education and/or Background: I graduated from Brigham Young University in 2012 with both a Bachelor's and Master's

LEAVE EVERY PLACE BETTER

degree in Accounting. Prior to joining Intermountain Health five years ago, I spent six years in Phoenix with Ernst & Young as an audit manager.

What other passions/callings are part of your life? I am fortunate to be married to a loving wife and father to four young children. My family is what brings me the most joy and I love spending time with them, especially in the outdoors. This past year I took my daughter (7) on her first overnight backpacking trip to Mystic Lake, introduced my son (5) to mountain biking up on the Rim and took our twin boys (4) fishing in the Beartooths.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? Advice is always subjective and I am sure I have received some bad advice in the past, though I can't recall anything specific. I have always tried to surround myself with friends and mentors that both care about me and have unique perspectives. I know any advice they provide is sincere and even if it's not "right" advice for me, it is often still good advice.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? Learn to be comfortable being uncomfortable. You will miss so many opportunities if you shy away

from things that initially appear unrealistic, unfamiliar or just too hard. This advice has been so valuable to me and has led me to do so many things I otherwise wouldn't. Be confident and courageous and you'll be surprised what all you can accomplish and where it will take you.

What's your guilty pleasure? Street Tacos. I spent two years in Mexico serving a mission for my church where I developed a deep love of Mexican food.

What failure have you learned the most from? Several years ago I completed a 5-day backpacking trip on a section of the Pacific Crest Trail in the Cascade Mountains. My preparation for the 75-mile hike was inadequate and included not training enough, poor shoe selection, and insufficient food. What was supposed to be a fun hike through a beautiful mountain landscape turned into a miserable experience that I barely finished. I learned tactical things I would do differently on future hikes, but the most valuable thing I learned is that I can push myself mentally much further than I ever thought possible.

What was the last show you binge-watched? We love watching "Survivor." We haven't missed a season over the last 12 years.

What is the most rewarding/

important aspect of your occupation?

I am fortunate in my role that I get to work with so many different teams across the hospital and organization as a whole. The friendships and connections I have made are one of the most rewarding aspects of what I do. I feel blessed to work in health care, an industry where you can see the positive impact we have on those in our community daily.

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? My greatest mentors would definitely be my parents. They have taught me by example to be service-oriented, ambitious, and balanced between my different roles in life.

Do you have a motto that you live by? "Leave every place better than you found it."

What advice would you give to anyone wanting to start a new business or excel in a business or field? Nothing can replace treating people with kindness. Being kind is key to building strong relationships and forming effective teams.

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? My family. I am so blessed to have them in my life and they are my greatest source of motivation and fulfillment.



JAMIE FONTAINE

Age: 37

Company and title: Billings Clinic-Practice Manager-Neurosciences

Hometown: Billings, Montana

Education and/or background: MBA/MSN

If you couldn't do this, what would you do instead? I would likely pursue a career as

either a librarian or a greenhouse owner.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? The worst was to "just power through" difficult situations without pausing to take care of myself. While resilience is important, I've learned that ignoring my own needs can lead to burnout and make challenges even harder to overcome. Instead, I believe in finding balance, acknowledging when it's OK to rest, ask for help, or take a step back to approach things with a clearer mind. Taking care of yourself isn't a sign of weakness; it's a way to stay strong for the long haul.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? Success is not about meeting everyone else's definition. It's about figuring out what truly matters to you and working toward it with dedication and integrity.

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? One professional accomplishment I still want to achieve is expanding access to specialized neurological care in underserved areas. I'm passionate about building programs that make a lasting impact, like developing a comprehensive epilepsy center or advancing the EEG apprentice program to provide 24-hour coverage. Helping create these opportunities would not only improve patient outcomes, but also inspire and support the next generation of healthcare

professionals.

How do you measure your own success?

By the positive impact I have on others and the advancements I contribute to in healthcare. When I see my students grow into confident, skilled nurses, it brings me immense joy and fulfillment.

Success isn't just about personal achievements; it's about making a meaningful difference in people's lives.

What failure have you learned the most from? It came from a time early in my career when I tried to do everything on my own. I thought asking for help might make me seem less capable, so I took on too much and ended up feeling overwhelmed and burned out. That experience taught me the importance of collaboration and knowing when to lean on others.

What is the hardest part of your job? Balancing the emotional demands of supporting patients, students, and team members while managing the logistical challenges of running programs and meeting deadlines. It can be overwhelming at times to navigate the needs of so many people, especially when faced with staff shortages or when someone is struggling and looking to me for guidance. That said, these challenges also motivate me.

Who is your greatest mentor/

inspiration? My parents have always been a strong source of guidance and support, teaching me the value of hard work and kindness. My spouse inspires me daily with his unwavering encouragement and partnership, helping me stay grounded and motivated.

Do you have a motto that you live by? "Leave things better than you found them."

What advice would you give to anyone wanting to start a new business or excel in a business or field? Stay curious, adaptable, and patient. Success rarely happens overnight, so take the time to learn as much as you can about your craft, seek out mentors, and embrace setbacks as opportunities to grow.

What do you do for fun/relax/hobby? I enjoy spending time outdoors hiking, fishing, camping, and exploring new adventures. I also love gardening, crocheting, and sewing, as they give me a creative outlet and a chance to unwind. Reading is another favorite pastime, allowing me to escape into different worlds and learn something new.

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? The time I spent with my grandmother. In her garden, she showed me how to care for plants and appreciate the beauty of nature. In her kitchen, we baked and cooked together, creating family recipes and cherished memories.

I AM SECOND, GOD FIRST



MEGHAN FORAN

Age: 37

Company and title: Nutra-Lix, Inc - Marketing Director

Hometown: Shepherd, Montana

Education and/or background: North Dakota State University

If you couldn't do this, what would you do instead? I am so fortunate to have a

career based in agriculture. It is the first of my two great loves, the other being music. I was on track to be an opera singer.

What other passions/callings are part of your life? Before landing at Nutra-Lix, I spent a little time swimming around in the wine and spirits industry. I enjoy learning about wines, the different regions, appellations, wine makers, what's new and what isn't. The industry is always evolving. So, it is impossible to know it all. Drinking the wine might be the best part! Back to my agricultural roots, I am passionate about purebred livestock. Most importantly American Quarter Horses, Shorthorn & Hereford cattle and with the addition of my husband to my life, Limousin cattle.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? I am sure I was given poor advice, but none that sticks out in my memory. That is probably because of how my parents raised me. Both my brother and I were taught to have a strong sense of conviction and to be confident in our own minds and beliefs. When offered that bad advice, I was able to trust my gut instead. Sometimes you just have to nod your head, say thank you, then do what you want!

What advice would you give a teenager about success? Give those

around you and yourself grace. In my lessons learned, showing grace includes showing grace to yourself.

Also, say yes as often as you can to every opportunity you are presented. Education is a precious gift that should not be taken for granted, but networking and building relationships will serve you greatly on your way to success.

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? My job with Nutra-Lix is extremely fulfilling. I am meant to be working in agriculture. I enjoy working with our dealers and find marketing solutions for them and their businesses. It is especially fun to be working in an industry I love when it is currently cool to be a cowboy again. However, it's my 5-9 life where I have goals I have not quite reached. I am working hard to get that part right where I want it before I share it. Stay tuned!

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? I often have the opportunity to go out to our customer's ranches with our dealers to film their cattle that are fed our supplements, or interview rodeo athletes that supplement their horses with Nutra-Lix Plus and Joint-Rite. Seeing first-hand the good these

products do for livestock is such a joy for me. If I could spend every bluebird day walking amongst quality livestock, I would be thrilled. Those are my best days at Nutra-Lix.

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? My parents, both in different ways. My dad instilled in me my deep love for the land and livestock. He also always urged me to look at the big picture. My mom inspires me constantly. She puts her all in everything she does and harnesses her natural talent to work towards her goals.

Do you have a motto that you live by? "I am second." I keep my faith in God over anything else.

What advice would you give to anyone wanting to start a new business or excel in a business or field? Foster good relationships with people by following through, being kind, and valuing integrity. Burning bridges is a dangerous game, you never know when you will need to cross that bridge that you turned to ash.

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? My husband is the greatest gift I have ever received, no question. To have a life partner in him and to be able to share with him our dreams and goals is my greatest blessing. I thank God everyday for him.

- A true Cowgirl -

We are proud of you, Meg... Always Making the Best Better!

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Meg Foran

40 UNDER FORTY

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DO WHAT YOU SAY



CHRISTOPHER GRANT

Age: 37

Company and Title: Midway Auto & RV, Partner/General Manager

Hometown: Powell, Wyoming

Education and/or Background: Bachelor's degree from BYU-Idaho; Associate's degree, North West College.

What other passions/callings are part of your life? My family is my passion! Every moment I'm not at work I try to spend time with my wife and six kids. There is nothing more rewarding than watching my kids learn and grow!

What is the worst advice you've received and why? "Play it safe, don't take too much risk." Anyone who has ever achieved greatness has put it all on the line. If you don't think big, nothing big will ever happen for you.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? Work hard at whatever you are doing, and keep your eyes open for opportunity.

What's your guilty pleasure? I love watching sports! I love everything about them. I really love watching post-game interviews to see how the great players' minds work, win or lose. To me sports are a great arena where you can see hard work, talent, and mindset in real time.

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? My goal is to take Midway Auto & RV and our principles of doing business all across the country. We will achieve this.

How do you measure your own success? By analyzing myself compared to our core values: Integrity, Initiative, Ingenuity, Positivity, Professionalism, Kindness, Ownership, Teamwork, Consistency, Self-evaluation. We teach this in our business, as well as encourage our employees to live this way outside of work. I measure everything by this, including my own success.

What is the hardest part of your job? Moving forward into the unknown. Scaling to new heights that haven't been done before. It's hard but it's exciting and invigorating. I can't imagine not living life like this.

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? There are two things. The first rewarding aspect of my occupation is the people I work with. I love having a team who is all focused on the same goal. I love watching them grow in their roles. The second is tearing down people's perceptions of what it's like to buy a vehicle, a camper, or a boat. I love to hear them say, that's it? That was so fun and easy!

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? My business partner and uncle, Keith Grant. He has taught me a lot about business and working hard. He has taught me a lot about thinking big and doing the right thing not only in business, but with my family and in my community.

My greatest inspiration is my Savior Jesus Christ. Through Him anything is possible.

Do you have a motto that you live by? Do what you say you're going to do.

What advice would you give to anyone wanting to start a new business or excel in a business or field? Work as hard as you can, keep your eyes open for opportunity, and ALWAYS do the right thing.

What do you do for fun/relax/hobby? I enjoy spending time with my family and exercising.

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? The greatest gift I've ever received is my family. They are everything to me.

CHOOSE KINDNESS



MICHELLE HARKINS

Age: 38

Company and Title: BIRD - Director

Hometown: Ellwood City, Pennsylvania

Education and/or Background: Bachelor of Arts, Seton Hill University; Master of Accountancy, University of Montana

What other passions/callings are part of your life? I enjoy spending time with my family, traveling and hanging out with our dog, Cricket. Climbing and hiking are big parts of my life, with hiking Kilimanjaro in 2022 being a standout experience. I also prioritize self-care to stay balanced and recharge.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? "Dedicate yourself to one career instead of trying multiple ones." While there's value in specializing, I've found that my experience in finance, community development, procurement, strategic development, and collaborating with governments and nonprofits helps me approach problems from different angles and find creative solutions. It's given me flexibility to make a bigger impact, especially in roles that require collaboration.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? That success isn't about having everything figured out right away. It's about finding something you're passionate about, working hard, and being open to learning from everything around you.

What is one professional accomplishment you still want

to achieve? Leading a large-scale, community-driven project that combines sustainability, cultural preservation, and economic growth. I've worked on impactful projects, but I'd love to lead one that brings together all these elements on a larger scale, fostering both environmental responsibility and economic opportunity.

How do you measure your own success? By the impact I am a part of in both my career and personal life. It's about making a difference in the community, being present for our family, and maintaining balance. Success means seeing progress in my work, building strong relationships, and spending time with my loved ones, whether we're at home or elsewhere.

What failure have you learned the most from? Not taking the time to learn from those around me when I had the chance.

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? Seeing the positive impact on the community — whether through improved spaces, new opportunities, or bringing people together. It's about collaboration leading to lasting change that benefits those around us.

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? An inspiration for me, being from Pittsburgh, PA, has been Mr. Rogers. His ability to connect with others through kindness, empathy, and community has always resonated with me. He showed that making a difference doesn't require grand gestures — it's about showing up with compassion and a genuine desire to help.

Do you have a motto that you live by? "Choose kindness, it's just as easy as choosing negativity." It's a simple reminder that we have the power to control how we respond, and how we make others feel, or the environment around us.

How do you view failure and success? I see failure as something that stings but is a necessary part of growth. It's tough, and everyone goes through it, but it makes the successes feel more meaningful. Success isn't just about hitting a goal; it's about learning from the setbacks and making progress along the way.

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? A one-way ticket to Nashville in 2007 to help a friend move. While I was there, I met my husband, Justin, at a dueling piano bar called The Big Bang.



BRYANT JOHNSON

Age: 38
Company and Title: HDR INC.
Hometown: Glendive, Montana
Education and/or Background:
Bachelors of Civil Engineering From
Montana State, Masters of Engineering
Management From Montana State

WHATEVER GOOD THINGS WE BUILD...

If you couldn't do this, what would you do instead? Working in heavy construction or some other industrial type of job. I have always been drawn to and fascinated by large projects and large machinery, and the incredible things that humans can create.

What other passions/callings are part of your life? Farming was my first job and is something I will always enjoy and luckily, I have a couple good friends that are always willing to let me come help them out to scratch my itch for it. Thanks Zach and Guy!

What is the worst advice you've received and why? Nothing comes to mind, but as an engineer the phrase "Give it 110%" I think is improper and scientifically ludicrous. :)

What advice would you give a teenager about success? First, be certain of what success means to you! It can be easy in today's hyper-connected world to let others' apparent success or their expectations on us influence what we define as success for ourselves. If you chase someone else's dream, you may be successful, but chances are high you won't be fulfilled.

Second, learn what it means to be a leader and then study and practice leadership diligently. Your own success will always depend on the help of others and your ability to lead.

What's your guilty pleasure? 90's Pop Music

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? My career goal is always to continue to learn and become a more valuable resource for my coworkers and company. My long-term goal is to work three-quarter time in 10-15 years and slowly shift into a role that allows me to focus more on training the next generation of engineers, and then slowly phase out of engineering and possibly find myself farming part time to keep myself busy.

What failure have you learned the most from? The failure to say "no" when I should have at work. I've learned that it is important to take time for myself and that burnout is real. This is especially important now, as I raise my two young sons, and I want to be present for them as much as I can.

What is the hardest part of your job? Civil engineering almost always

involves a lot of stakeholders, finding solutions that satisfy all parties is the most challenging part of the work. It takes lots of good communication and being able to swallow your pride occasionally.

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? My stepfather, Joe Leal, is my greatest inspiration. His steady support and kindness is something I will always aspire to and appreciate. My first and greatest professional mentor is a farmer and rancher, Guy Kolberg, in Glendive. A lot of my early success in construction and mining stemmed from the confidence he had in me and the lessons he taught me.

Do you have a motto that you live by? "Whatever good things we build end up building us."

What do you do for fun/relax/hobby? Fly fishing. I'm not very good, but I could spend an entire day peacefully on a river, catch nothing, and still fill my cup. For fun and excitement, mountain biking is my favorite. Since a large portion of my job is office work, I also enjoy getting outside and working with my hands when I can, to provide a sense of fulfillment that working at a computer can't.






Congratulations, Kayleen!

Eide Bailly congratulates Kayleen Masters, CPA, on being named one of Billings' 40 Under 40! We appreciate everything you do for our clients and community.

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Performance
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Jamie Fontaine, MBA, MSN, PMGT-BC, CCS
Practice Manager
Neurosciences



SEEK OUT EXPERTISE



ASHLEY KAVANAGH

Age: 31

Company and Title: Big Sky Economic Development, Senior Director of Recruitment and Community Development

Hometown: I spent most of my childhood in the Traverse City, Michigan, area before my family moved to Billings when I was 15.

Education and/or Background: Billings Central Catholic High School and Carroll College, double major in Communications and Public Relations, minor in psychology and marketing. My now husband and I were co-editors of Carroll's student newspaper "The Prospector."

If you couldn't do this, what would you do instead? My childhood heroes were two pilots — Amelia Earhart and Harriet Quimby — and I've reflected on how fun it is that I get to work with our local airport and our airline partners, but not worry about navigating the air. It worked out for the best.

What other passions/callings are part of your life? I'll be a first-time mom to a son in March of 2025. I can't wait to be a parent and raise a family.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? Professionally, I had well-meaning advice not to get a communications degree or start a business. My degree has been foundational to my career and starting a business was a rewarding and "hard-knocks" experience in accountability, building relationships, and supporting and giving back to my community.

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to

achieve? As the saying goes, "a society grows when we plant trees in whose shade we shall never sit."

I consider it a privilege to work at Big Sky Economic Development and help "plant trees" — businesses, workforce, support for our veterans, entrepreneurs, and small businesses, etc. to accomplish their goals and support their families.

How do you measure your own success? I've defined success by finding meaning in my work, building personal and professional relationships I'm grateful for, and continuing to learn something new or interesting each day. I care deeply about my family, making my parents proud, and simply put, that I can feel proud of the work I do or know that tomorrow, I'll try and do better.

What failure have you learned the most from? I really like the saying "sometimes your greatest disappointments are your mercies in disguise." I've certainly stumbled or felt like I failed, but can now look back and be grateful for the lessons and redirection.

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? I've always been able to look at my work and see a greater purpose — the generational

impact of building a new school when I worked at an architecture firm, creating a community gathering space in rural communities, or making economic development progress for a county and region. Especially in Montana, it's been fun to build relationships that began in college or early in my career that are still meaningful today. Together, we get to work on projects and ideas that move our communities and state forward.

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? My parents, Scott and Lisa Smith. I lost them both in my early 20s.

Do you have a motto that you live by? To whom much is given, much is expected.

How do you view failure and success? My husband and I have a phrase — "brick by boring brick" — that we use as an endearing term for getting the details right. Failure and success are often measured by the big swings, but not losing sight of the present and day-to-day habits like prioritizing our health, growing together, continuing to learn professionally, building new traditions, are all small successes that build over time, brick by boring brick.

What do you do for fun/relax/hobby? Exercise, read, work outside in the summertime.



LAURA KEOGH

Age: 35

Company and title: BARE Chiropractic - Office Manager

Hometown: Savoy, Illinois

Education and/or background: Bachelor of Arts in Psychology

What other passions/callings are part of your life? In addition to

cooking/baking, working out, and being a mother and wife, I also feel a calling in promoting wellness, exploring sustainable living, and continuing personal growth.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? The worst advice I've received is that medications can help with health concerns. Medications come with side effects and only mask the issue. You still have the health concerns plus the side effects of taking the drug(s).

What advice would you give a teenager about success? Don't worry about what other people think. Success is found within yourself and not measured by what others think. You realize that most people are worried about what others think; even when they seem like they have it all together, everyone has their problems and issues. What is important is finding peace, purpose, and faith in God.

What's your guilty pleasure? Food — I love Mexican food! I always crave it, especially when I go back to visit my hometown.

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? I would love to get more comfortable using a camera and taking

photos. I am completely self taught so taking a class would be helpful.

What failure have you learned the most from? I don't think there is one failure that I have learned from the most. I think it is a combination of all of the failures I have endured that taught me you have to go through those failures to grow and become successful.

What is the hardest part of your job? Balancing multiple responsibilities at once, such as managing schedules, overseeing office operations, handling staff needs and making sure they are happy, and ensuring smooth communication. The pressure to stay organized while dealing with unexpected challenges, tight deadlines, and maintaining a positive office atmosphere can be difficult.

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? Helping create a positive and healing environment for both patients and team members. I have the opportunity to play a key role in improving patients' well-being, seeing their progress, and contributing to a healthy, supportive workplace. Additionally, building strong relationships with patients and being an integral part of their care journey can

be deeply fulfilling. Seeing patients feel and function better is very rewarding, as is seeing them finally getting answers, instead of going down the path of medications and surgery for life.

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? My mom because of the love, strength and wisdom she has shared with me throughout my life. She taught me important life lessons, modeled resilience and kindness, and supported me through challenges.

Do you have a motto that you live by? No regrets. You will make mistakes and you have to learn from them. It is a part of life. God has a plan.

How do you view failure and success? I view failure as a stepping stone to growth.

What do you do for fun/relax/hobby? I like to spend time with my family, go on walks, run, workout; be in nature hiking and fishing.

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? My family. Having a husband and a son has been the most amazing adventure. Also, can't forget about our wonderful dog!



MATT MACROW

Age: 34

Company and Title: Yellowstone Ice Cream (Food Truck Owner) – Valley Credit Union (Marketing Officer)

Hometown: Billings

Education and/or Background:
Bachelor of Business Administration-
Management Option, Montana State University

Billings

If you couldn't do this, what would you do instead? I would love to coach a youth basketball team. I love investing in the children of our community and teaching them not just about the game, but also about sportsmanship and being a good person.

What other passions/callings are part of your life? When I'm not working my day job or running the food truck, I believe we should all be celebrating Christmas year-round! That's why, two years ago, when I saw my friend Ryan Cox had an opening on the board of the nonprofit he created, Project Christmas Miracle, I reached out immediately to join. Our mission is to spread Christmas joy to as many families as possible in our community.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? Some of the worst advice can come from yourself when you overthink a situation and talk yourself out of taking a leap to do something amazing.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? Everyone's view of success is different, as it should be, but my advice is to get involved in as many different sports, activities, clubs or organizations as you can. can take you a long way in life.

What's your guilty pleasure? A bowl of cereal right before bed.

BE NICE

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? I would love to open a brick-and-mortar location in the coming years to pair with our ice cream trailer. It would be amazing to serve locally made ice cream year-round while still owning the trailer so we can stay involved in community events and bring joy to people wherever we go.

How do you measure your own success? By the impact I'm able to have on my kids' lives and the people around me. To me, success is about treating everyone with kindness and respect, working hard, and giving back to the community.

What is the hardest part of your job? Balancing a full-time career with running our ice cream truck during the busy summer months. For about six months, from April through September, I didn't have a single day off. We were doing events every Saturday and Sunday and often went out a few evenings during the week after I got off work. While I love what I do, it was challenging to find any time for myself. I think it's important to prioritize mental health and have moments to relax and recharge, not just for yourself but so you can bring your best self to everything you do.

What is your favorite book? Lately, I've been reading "The Wonky Donkey" a lot. My 2-year-old really loves it – mainly because there's

a button to press on each page that makes a donkey sound.

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? I would say my kids. They've taught me more about life, love, and perseverance than anyone else could. Every decision I make is driven by wanting to create a better world and future for them.

Do you have a motto that you live by? Just be nice!

What advice would you give to anyone wanting to start a new business or excel in a business or field? Network with people in similar positions or lines of work. The majority of the food truck community, for example, will bend over backward to help out another food truck. One of the best connections I made in my first year with my ice cream truck was with Brandon Miller, owner of Dax's Wingz N Thingz. Having someone like him as a resource for questions, advice, and guidance can make all the difference in whether your business succeeds or struggles.

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? My kids. They are my biggest motivation in life, inspiring me to work hard, stay kind, and give back to the community. Knowing that everything I do is for them is the best gift I could ever ask for. I'm so lucky to be able to share this journey and build our life together with my amazing wife by my side.



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KAYLEEN MASTERS

Age: 38

Company and title: Eide Bailly LLP, Tax Partner - Tax Department Head

Hometown: Sheridan, Wyoming

Education and/or background: Bachelor of science, accounting - Montana State University Billings and Associates of Science, Accounting - Sheridan College

HANDLE THE HARD THINGS FIRST

What other passions/callings are part of your life? Helping women and children. I have served on the YWCA Board, YWCA Endowment Board, and the 100 Strong Billings Visionary Tea, which all have missions to support and empower women and children. Being able to give back to organizations in our community is a top priority for me.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? Some of the worst advice I have ever received was centered around how leaders should not be vulnerable or show their emotions. I completely disagree with this because I think to be an effective leader you need to be open and vulnerable; and to be vulnerable you are going to have to let your emotions show.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? Throughout my journey one characteristic I believe has served me well is to always be coachable. To me being coachable means knowing how to take constructive criticism and feedback and being open to learning and improving.

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? I would love to be a part of a large training conference in the trust and estate area or on developing the next generation of leaders in the accounting profession.

How do you measure your own success?

By how I feel at the end of the day, week, month, etc. There are bound to be ups and downs throughout each day/week/month, however I try to reflect and ask myself am I genuinely happy with what I am doing and how things are going. If the answer is yes, great. If the answer is no, then it is time to look deeper and examine where the joy is slipping away. Enjoying my life, my work, and the people around me is how I measure success, because life is too short and goes by too fast.

What failure have you learned the most from? When I was younger and still in high school I quit playing basketball for a couple reasons; one, because I had gotten into some trouble and was going to have to work extra hard to prove myself again, and two, someone encouraged me because they wanted me around more. I have learned to not turn away from the hard things, but instead learned to tackle the hard things first.

What is the hardest part of your job? The hardest part of my job is saying goodbye to great people. A public accounting firm is often a launching pad for many young accountants to go on to work in private industry, government, nonprofit, etc. It is common for recent graduates to come to work in a public accounting firm for two to three years while they work on obtaining their CPA license. Public accounting firms play a vital role in

developing the accountants who are needed in all areas of business, and I am proud to play my part in training these accountants. However, it never gets easier watching them leave.

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? My greatest mentor is also now one of my best friends, Debbie Potter. She was my very first career adviser when I started my career at Eide Bailly, and has been there every step of the way over the past 16 years. She loaned me a book on boundaries many years ago and to say this made a difference is an understatement. I discovered how to put myself first, how to speak up for myself, and how to support others without losing myself in the process. One thing she always said to me was "I want to pass along the things I learned, so you learn them ten years sooner."

Do you have a motto that you live by? I learned in Al-Anon, the Serenity Prayer. I repeat this prayer regularly and try to embrace it each day. It goes "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference." This also goes together with handling the hard things first.

What advice would you give to anyone wanting to start a new business or excel in a business or field? Connect your business or career to your purpose.



KELSEY MEYER

Age: 37

Company and Title: Advanced Care Hospital of Montana Director of Compliance

Hometown: Billings

Education and/or Background: Bachelor of Science in Nursing

HAVE A GROWTH MINDSET

If you couldn't do this, what would you do instead? Teach

What other passions/callings are part of your life? Raising good humans and attending their extracurricular activities. Helping people learn and grow through teaching and coaching.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? "Fake it till you make it." I have learned it's better to admit you don't know something, but you will find out; or take the time to research and ask questions.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? Have a growth mindset. Be teachable and always learn from your mistakes and failures. It's not always just about outcomes or the destination - it's about the journey and what you learn along the way. Surround yourself with positive influences and stay disciplined. Nothing good in life comes easy.

How do you measure your own success? I consider myself successful if I am continually growing and learning. It is one of the reasons I chose nursing as a profession. I knew in order for me to remain happy in my career, there had to

be options and opportunities.

What failure have you learned the most from? In my very first interview, for my very first nursing role, I was asked about a conflict I encountered at work or in my clinicals. Without thinking, I immediately said challenging patients. I knew instantly that was not what I intended nor meant. The interview continued and toward the end, I rounded back to that question and stated I made a mistake when answering and would like to clarify.

I left the interview knowing I bombed it. To my surprise, they offered me the job. I learned the impact of personal accountability. If you make a mistake, own up to it and grow from it.

What advice would you give to anyone wanting to start a new business or excel in a business or field? Remember your why! Nursing and health care is very challenging but very rewarding. During those horrible shifts or heartbreaking moments, it is important to remember why you decided to go into the profession in the first place.

What was the last show you binge-watched? "Outerbanks."

What is the hardest part of your job? Being in compliance. I am tasked with ensuring policies and procedures are being followed.

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? The ultimate reward is knowing I have played an indirect role in providing high quality care for our patients during their most vulnerable times.

Do you have a motto that you live by? "What you permit, you promote."

How do you view failure and success? Failure is an essential part of success. Without failure, there would be no need to confront your weaknesses, to readjust, adapt, and re-strategize to be successful.

And what I love about success - it's individualized and personal.

What do you do for fun/relax/hobby? Reading and trying to keep my houseplants alive.

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? My greatest gift is my family. I was very fortunate to have been raised in a supportive, loving, and caring family.

BE PATIENT, BE DILIGENT



A.J. MILLER

Age: 39

Company and title: Miller Tourlotte Law, PLLC - Partner

Hometown: Billings

Education and/or background: B.A. in English Literature and Creative Writing, University of Montana; J.D. from University of Montana School of Law.

If you couldn't do this, what would you do instead? Music has been a big part of my life since I picked up the bass at 13, and

even more so since I joined my band, The Clintons, in 2006. So if I weren't a lawyer, I'd either be a studio/touring musician or a Rick Rubin-level record producer (minus the Rick Rubin-level talent, fame, and success).

What is the worst advice you've received and why? There is a classic episode of "The Simpsons" where a Mary Poppins-like character named Shary Bobbins sings to the kids as they complain about their chores, "If you cut every corner, there is more time for play. It's the American way." There is an important message to glean from this intentionally satirical statement. You can't clean your room by stuffing your garbage and dirty clothes under the bed, just as you can't hope to get ahead by doing the bare minimum for appearances. If you are all form and no substance, it won't take long for others to find out.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? Everything worth doing, and doing well, takes time and discipline. Despite what society has come to believe, there are no hacks, shortcuts, or YouTube tutorials to being good at something. You can either do something quickly, or you can do it right, and rarely do the two overlap.

How do you measure your own success? Ultimately, I aim to achieve a balance where my clients feel heard and well-served, my team feels valued and fulfilled, and the firm continues to thrive. That's the most meaningful indicator of success for me.

What failure have you learned the most from? Whether it's being disappointed by a verdict, losing a battle on the briefs, or just generally having a bad day at the office, I am not immune to missing the mark. It happens to everyone. I try to think of my misfires not necessarily as "failures" per se, but instead as lessons in how not to do something. After every sub-optimal result, I always go back and take a hard look to see exactly where I went wrong, what I could have done differently, and what I can do better next time.

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? Helping people through challenging times. More often than not, the folks calling our firm asking for our help are in a bad spot. They have either been injured in a wreck, hurt at work, or wronged in some other way. I am always grateful for and humbled by the trust and confidence these folks place in

me to help them through their low points. The opportunity to solve their problems meaningfully and make a genuine difference in their lives never gets old.

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? Professionally, I had the good fortune of clerking for Judge Gregory R. Todd after graduating from law school. I regularly tell anyone willing to listen that that job was the single best position I could have had as a young lawyer. He taught me a lot about what separates the great attorneys from the good, the good from the decent, the decent from the not-so-good, and so on, all of which have proven invaluable to me over the last 12 years.

Do you have a motto that you live by? I have two, and neither should be taken seriously. The first is "Can't somebody else do it?" by Homer J. Simpson. The second is, "There's no time...like later." I'm pretty sure I came up with that one. Procrastination is real and we're all guilty of it from time to time.

What do you do for fun/relax/hobby?: I like rocking out to the same bands I listened to in high school, cooking, traveling, and watching my daughter grow up before my very eyes.



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Kyla Bauer, Loan Processing Manager

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KRISTINE NEWELL

Age: 36

Company and Title: Intermountain Health, Practice Director – Hospital Based Providers, Specialty

Hometown: Billings

Education and/or Background: Master of Health Administration, Montana State University Billings

IT'S ALL ABOUT ACCOUNTABILITY

What other passions/callings are part of your life? I find true purpose in my family. I have three beautiful daughters, Arianna, Addysen, and Avrie; and a wonderfully supportive husband, Alex. While I think that my girls are pretty special just as they are, my primary goal is to foster an environment that encourages them to grow and develop into well-rounded, productive members of society some day!

What is the worst advice you've received and why? I should not place value in pursuing an advanced degree. Although completing my master's degree with two young kids at the time required sacrifices for the family, the opportunities that have since come to me because of that choice far outweigh the short-term strain.

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? To serve our community in a more philanthropic capacity. There are many vulnerable populations in our community, especially women and children, that are underserved and face a scarcity of resources.

How do you measure your own success? Do I have a positive impact on those that I support? I think that if I am making the environment or circumstances better for the

people I have the pleasure of serving, I have achieved something!

What failure have you learned the most from? I am not fond of the word failure. Sure, there are times when the outcome was not what was intended. However, those circumstances also bring with them an opportunity for learning and growth. Resilience is built upon one's ability to adapt and adjust amidst difficult situations.

What is the hardest part of your job? Balancing competing priorities is the most difficult part of my role as a leader in healthcare. Aiming to provide the highest quality of care, maintain caregiver engagement, all while focusing on operational efficiency in the current state of healthcare can be challenging.

What is your favorite book? Compliments of my youngest daughter's efforts, Dr. Suess' "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" is a favorite. The Grinch books and movies are a staple in our house year-round!

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? Building relationships! I have the opportunity to engage with a dynamic group of individuals on a daily basis who all bring their own unique perspectives and experiences to the

table. Most of whom value good humor!

Do you have a motto that you live by? My father always says, "It's amazing the choices we make for ourselves." And to me this is all about ultimate accountability and taking responsibility for all that I can influence or control. There isn't a time when I make a decision or choice that doesn't work in my favor that I don't repeat this phrase to myself.

What advice would you give to anyone wanting to start a new business or excel in a business or field? Not everyone is a fan of Tom Brady, but a quote on success comes to mind. He said, "To be successful at anything, the truth is, you don't have to be special. You just have to be what most people aren't: consistent, determined and willing to work for it. No shortcuts." Too often, people are looking for a quick fix or an "easy button," but the truth is that you'd better be prepared to work hard to set yourself apart from others.

How do you view failure and success? Success opens doors and failure teaches lessons.

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? My daughters! No explanation necessary.



PETER O'BRIEN

Age: 38

Company and Title: Spitz Billings, Owner

Hometown: Grand Rapids, Michigan

Education and/or Background: University of Montana

If you couldn't do this, what would you do instead? Ski, bike, hike, sleep, hunt, fish, surf, camp, skateboard, sleep, raft, learn to weld, travel,

snorkel, eat and sleep again.

What other passions/callings are part of your life? Sport has always been a significant part of my life. From my career in ski coaching to my current work with the Billings Skatepark Committee, I enjoy participating in and sharing my passion for sports with others.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? "You can't do that." It's both great and terrible advice at the same time because I think that sometimes, a little spite can actually push you to do better.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? Be vocal. Don't hesitate to ask for clarification, seek help, or request a raise; you need to advocate for yourself. Looking back, I realize there were times in my life when I should have asked for more. The ability to problem-solve is highly underrated, and I have a great deal of respect for those who take on challenges without needing to be asked.

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? I'm in the process of revamping the Billings Skatepark and can't wait to see it all come together. Fundraising isn't really my thing, but I'm having a blast learning as I go. I'm super excited about making the community safer and more fun.

How do you measure your own success? Having happy employees and satisfied customers is

what it's all about for me. When my team feels good about their work and our customers are enjoying our food and service, I know I'm doing something right. It's really important that everyone around me has a positive vibe. That not only makes for a great workplace but also keeps our customers coming back for more. Their happiness is a sign that we're all in this together and doing a great job!

What failure have you learned the most from? The most important lesson I've learned is the value of earning trust before giving it. Early on, I made the mistake of trusting too quickly, but those challenges helped me understand the importance of getting to know people first. Despite the bumps along the way, we were able to build an amazing team here at Spitz, and I'm truly grateful for their dedication and positive energy, day in and day out!

What is the hardest part of your job? Time management is a challenge for me. I want to fully support all aspects of the restaurant, work toward our big-picture goals, contribute to the skatepark project, and make time for family. However, there are only so many hours in a day. Someone once told me that if you look hard enough, you can find a couple of extra hours out there. I'll let you know if I manage to find them!

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? The connections made in the community, especially in Downtown

Billings, have been incredibly rewarding. We have been fortunate to be a part of the Downtown scene, and getting to know other business owners and community members has truly been a blessing.

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? In all honesty, my greatest inspiration is my wife. We have been together for over 18 years, and her unrelenting can-do attitude is infectious. She continues to mentor me on Excel spreadsheets, a skill that I am still working to master.

Do you have a motto that you live by? Never Ever Say Never Ever

What advice would you give to anyone wanting to start a new business or excel in a business or field? Be present, be hands-on, and actively engage. If time is money, this is the most affordable way to add value to your new or growing business.

How do you view failure and success? Like everyone else, I have faced significant failures in various aspects of life at some point. I believe that by being open to learning new things and communicating effectively with others, you can shift the balance toward what makes you feel successful.

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? My two sons are the greatest gifts ever. They make every day better, sometimes worse, but at the end of the day, everything I do is for them. Love you, Jack and Henry.

LEAD WITH PURPOSE



KELSIE OPHUS

Age: 34

Company and title: Billings Clinic,
executive director of Performance
Improvement

Hometown: Billings

Education and/or background: PharmD

If you couldn't do this, what would

you do instead? I would own a greenhouse or floral shop. I love being able to grow something from the dirt and a seed. We recently started a large garden and it has been a source of solitude and a new way to bond with my kids.

What other passions/callings are part of your life? My children provide me so much joy. They each have different personalities and quirks that allow me to celebrate life each day and they remind me to slow down and enjoy small moments.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? "There is only so much you can do." Working in healthcare, especially in change management, is very difficult, but with innovative thinking, teamwork and collaboration, and a little bit of grit, I believe that you can solve even the most difficult of problems. It only fuels my fire when people tell me something can't be done.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? Learn to be uncomfortable. As humans, it can be challenging to be in a state of difficulty or hard, but these are the areas where you will grow the most.

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? Within the healthcare field, I have always admired organizations that

have reached zero preventable harm. When I think about what it takes for healthcare to get to that, it drives me everyday to focus on leadership development, building safety culture, and creating strong foundational operations.

What failure have you learned the most from? Something is only a failure if you don't take the time to self assess and understand what you might do differently the next time. In my younger years, I didn't take enough time to assess my actions or the people I surrounded myself with to truly understand the impact that it was having on my life. I was grateful for people who helped to focus me on these things early on in my career.

What is the hardest part of your job? One of the hardest parts of my work is navigating resistance to change by attempting to shift mindsets, embrace new ways of thinking, and modeling optimism. Being able to balance the technical aspects with the human element - building trust, fostering communication, and influencing behaviors - is also very demanding.

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? The ability to create meaningful, reliable change for our patients and organization is one of

the most rewarding pieces of my role. Doing this while building up leaders and creating capability is the cherry on top!

Do you have a motto that you live by? "Lead with purpose, excel with grace, spread kindness, and leave every path brighter than you found it."

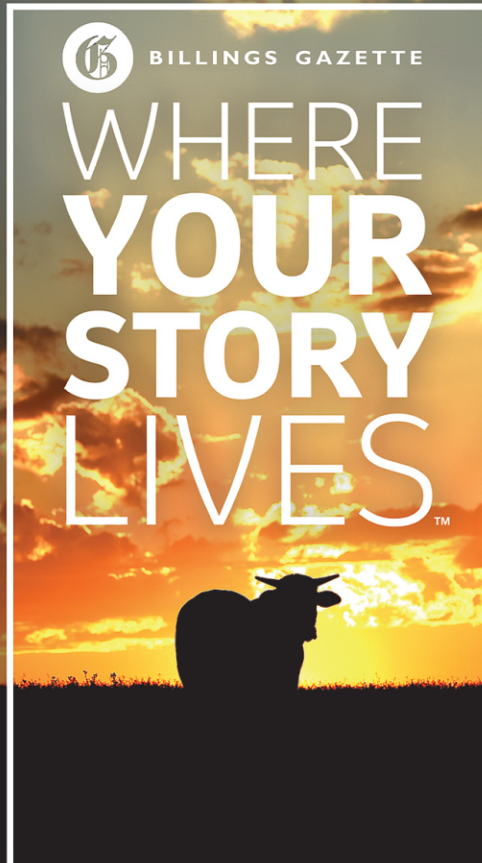
What advice would you give to anyone wanting to start a new business or excel in a business or field? It's going to be hard, but you can and will do it. Having been a small business owner with my husband for the past 11 years while growing in my own professional career in healthcare, I would suggest starting with a vision and a commitment to excellence, embrace learning and challenge, find mentors, build meaningful connections, and focus on creating value in the field that you enter.

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? My husband. He is very much the opposite of me and I don't know what I would do without his balance in my life. He has taught me about taking risks, how to take care of myself (physically and mentally), and encourages me to take time to rest and recover. He truly is my biggest cheerleader in life. In addition to all the above, he is a great dad and I am grateful for his partnership in raising our children.

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IMPROVE YOUR FOXHOLE



JACOB PANCHEAU

The views and opinions presented herein are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of DoD or the Army.

Age: 33

Company and Title: I work for the Montana Army National Guard as the Assistant Professor of Military Science at Montana State

University Billings and Rocky Mountain College.

Hometown: Billings

Education and/or Background:

Bachelor of Arts in English Education, Montana State University; Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration, University of Louisville. I have been in the Army – both Active Duty and Montana Army National Guard – for nearly 14 years. I also spent time as a teacher at Lockwood High School.

What other passions/callings are part of your life? My faith in Christ is at the center of my life and guides my decisions and priorities. I enjoy serving in the worship and men's ministries at my church. I have a wonderful family and cherish my roles as a son, brother, and uncle. Prior to my current role, I taught at Lockwood High School and still enjoy teaching and mentoring young people. Additionally, I own and operate a side business that provides stump grinding services to the Billings area and I find that extremely rewarding as well.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? I would advise a young person to 1) Intentionally do something difficult or uncomfortable every day, because growth seldom occurs in the soil of ease and comfort, 2) Don't be afraid of learning and trying new things because there is tremendous value in

being agile and adaptable in your skillset, 3) Find someone you look up to who is willing to mentor you, and 4) Learn to genuinely care for and get along with others, because few skills have wider application and greater value.

What's your guilty pleasure? I have a weak spot for my mom's lasagna recipe.

What failure have you learned the most from? I have learned most from the failure of overcommitment. There have been several times that I've convinced myself that I can "do it all" and have faced professional, relational, and personal consequences as a result. As I grow, I'm learning more and more about the importance of prioritization and balance.

What is the hardest part of your job? In my current role training aspiring military leaders, one of the greatest challenges is striking the balance between stepping in to guide situations that are faltering and allowing cadets to navigate hardships independently. It's a constant judgment call – deciding when intervention will teach valuable lessons and when stepping back will foster resilience and growth.

What was the last show you binge-watched? Season two of "The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power"

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? My parents, Scott and Denise,

are my greatest inspiration. Their faith, love, work ethic, and generosity have significantly shaped me.

Do you have a motto that you live by? "Improve your foxhole." It's a common phrase in the military community that refers to consistently and incrementally striving to make yourself and your situation better than they were.

What advice would you give to anyone wanting to start a new business or excel in a business or field? I think that the ability to work well with people is the most universally valuable skill to learn for any endeavor. If that is combined with humility, teachability, discipline, and reliability, success becomes extremely likely.

How do you view failure and success? In many ways, they are mutually dependent. Most of my most significant successes have had a lot of failures along the way. It seems achieving success in the things that matter most requires taking risks, making mistakes, assessing where things went wrong, and incrementally improving.

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? Without a doubt, the greatest gift I've received is my salvation which was purchased by Christ on the cross. It shapes every aspect of my life.

NEVER STOP LEARNING



JESSIE PERIUS

Age: 36

Company and Title: Montana State University Billings, Assistant Professor of Management

Hometown: Billings

Education and/or Background:

Bachelor of Science in Business Administration – Management,

Montana State University Billings; MBA, University of Montana; PhD – Marketing, Northcentral University.

What other passions/callings are part of your life? For me, a good life includes learning and travel. Being in academia, I have been fortunate to combine them. In 2021 I went to France for work with the intent to bring my international insights back to the classroom. While I achieved this, I also felt compelled to help my students have their own experiences abroad. This past year I led a group of students to Portugal and the outcome was so rewarding as I watched them gain global perspectives I could not have given them otherwise.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? The nail that sticks out gets hammered down. While I do feel this is a good reminder to leave opportunities for others, I also know if I hadn't said "yes" to continuing my education or "yes" to serving in different leadership roles, I wouldn't have gained the experiences and insights I value now.

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? I would love to spend a semester abroad as a visiting professor and would be

honored to be named a Fulbright Scholar before the end of my academic career.

What failure have you learned the most from? I have been incredibly fortunate to achieve most everything I have set out to do. When I come up against a limit or realize I won't be able to accomplish a goal, I see it as an opportunity to pivot. In my first few years of college, I was studying to be a nurse. I had a clinical experience that made me realize nursing was not for me. I finished the semester and pivoted to business and have been here since.

What is the hardest part of your job? As an academic, I have three responsibilities: teaching, research, and service. I sit on a three-legged stool with mismatched legs and each day can be a challenge. The job is often never done. There is always one more student email to answer, one more meeting to attend, and one more grant proposal to write. Finding balance is an art form and I'm still learning.

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? As the internship coordinator for our college, I feel like a translator some days. When students secure their internships, I help them bridge the gaps between theory

and practice. They often know more than they realize and when it clicks for them, that's a good moment for me.

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? I grew up with three strong-willed bonus grandmas who showed me the importance of women supporting women. I am fortunate to work with many women who support one another even when we have our disagreements. Being part of this community has been valuable in my career, and I have formed deep friendships because of it.

Do you have a motto that you live by? Never stop learning.

What advice would you give to anyone wanting to start a new business or excel in a business or field? In my Introduction to Business class, I offer students the following bits of practical advice. First, do your research into consumer interest. Make sure there are enough customers who will buy enough of your product for you to make a reasonable profit. Second, have more cash on hand than you think you will need. Your bills will be due faster than you are ready to pay them.

What do you do for fun/relax/hobby? Traveling is at the top of the list.



KATELYN REAY

Age: 31

Company and Title: Stockman Bank,
AVP Teller Manager/Operations Officer

Hometown: Billings, Montana

Education and/or Background:
High School Diploma

If you couldn't do this, what would

you do instead? I can't imagine myself doing anything else as a career, but I would likely be living in the middle of nowhere and spending more time with my family.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? "Just put in your time and eventually you'll be recognized for your hard work." This downplays the importance of being your best self and it could potentially lead to burnout and missed opportunities.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? Surround yourself with supportive people and set achievable goals that you can work toward. Don't be afraid to make mistakes, learn from them.

What's your guilty pleasure?
Anything coconut and iced coffee!

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? Overcoming the fear of public speaking. I am actively pursuing this goal and will continue to find ways to help me overcome my fear.

How do you measure your own success? I measure my own success by setting SMART goals, tracking my

progress and celebrating all wins even if they are small.

What failure have you learned the most from? Every failure has an opportunity to learn. I have learned to communicate effectively, delegate tasks, seek feedback and focus on the lesson learned for a better outcome in the future.

What is the hardest part of your job? The most difficult part of my job is also one of my favorite parts of my job. Our company is constantly evolving and changing. It is essential to find a way to stay organized and adjust to the changes.

What was the last show you binge-watched? I have been going back and forth between "Yellowstone" and "One Tree Hill."

What is your favorite book? I can't decide on a favorite book; however, Ellen Hopkins is my favorite author.

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? Hearing success stories from the teller line and watching employees grow their banking careers.

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? My parents, husband, and best friend. They are always there

for me when I need advice, support me in everything I do and have helped me become the person I am today.

Do you have a motto that you live by? "Be the change you want to see."

What advice would you give to anyone wanting to start a new business or excel in a business or field? Focus on developing strong analytical skills, effective communication skills and willingness to learn. Continue to adapt to change and find a support system that will help you achieve success.

How do you view failure and success? Failure is a learning opportunity; use it as a steppingstone to growth and improvement. Utilize success to keep your drive going. Actively seek challenges to push yourself to the next level.

What do you do for fun/relax/hobby? I enjoy doing puzzles and paint by numbers. I may not be an artist, but I do feel like one after finishing a painting!

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? Having a supportive spouse and creating a family together. We are both able to provide for our children and maintain a healthy work/life balance.

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- SHARLEEN R.

PROGRESS, NOT PERFECTION



BECKY SALYER

Age: 39

Company and title: Owner of Bumps N Bundles

Hometown: Billings, (born and raised in Belgrade, MT)

Education and/or background: Went to school for photography at MSU in

Bozeman, but have worked retail most of my career.

If you couldn't do this, what would you do instead? I would probably be continuing my career in retail management.

What other passions/callings are part of your life? I love photography, traveling and strategizing, but my biggest passion is being a mom.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? "Take the leap and figure it out later." In my opinion you should make a plan, then take the leap and figure it out on the way.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? Your value is not in your successes. You are wonderful whether you are feeling like a success or a failure.

What's your guilty pleasure? Booking my next trip while I'm still on vacation.

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? There are so many things, but I would say opening a second store in another state.

How do you measure your own

success? This is a tough question, as a business owner it is so easy to tie my worth to my success, but I really try to look at how I've grown as an individual and the positive impact I've made in people's lives year over year.

What failure have you learned the most from? In the past nine years I not only moved locations, but expanded. And, I wish from the beginning I would have just had the square footage that we have in our current location.

What is the hardest part of your job? Figuring out the balance of being a mom and an entrepreneur. There are just times you have to make a sacrifice.

What was the last show you binge-watched? "Only Murders in the Building."

What is your favorite book? "Strength Finders 2.0"

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? Getting to know amazing people. Starting with my team, they are simply the best, and our customers have become friends. The community of people I have gotten to know is hands down the best part.

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? My answer to this changes

often, but I am really loving Mel Robbins right now.

Do you have a motto that you live by? Progress, not perfection.

What advice would you give to anyone wanting to start a new business or excel in a business or field? I remember being really worried that I wouldn't succeed in the beginning stages of starting my business. I asked a good friend of mine "What if this is a huge failure?" and she answered, "Then you would have had a life experience." Somehow that was all I needed to feel confident again. So, my advice? Go have an awesome experience.

How do you view failure and success? You cannot be paralyzed by your fear of failure or you will never have success.

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? I love experience gifts and a few years ago my sister-in-law booked a trip for all of us to go to Disney. A magical place with my favorite people. Yes, please.

What do you do for fun/relax/hobby? I love to read. But, my favorite thing to do is travel to go see my friends and family who don't live close.



DEVIN SCOTT

Age: 34

Company and Title: First Interstate Bank, Wealth Advisor

Hometown: Billings, Montana

Education and/or Background: Bachelor of Science in Business Management

What other passions/callings are part of your life? Philanthropy is something I am very passionate about

and it's a huge part of my life. I love being able to support local organizations that do amazing work in our community and give back to this community we live in. As for hobbies, I started golfing several years ago and really enjoy getting out for a round when I am able. My wife and I also were blessed with our beautiful daughter in November 2024, so I am looking forward to being a father and watching her grow up.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? I think the worst advice I've been given is, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." I understand if everything is working well it can make sense to stay the course. However, I think we should always continue to look for opportunities to grow and improve.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? Don't worry about other people and comparing yourself to them. Everyone has different goals, so focus on what you can control — improving yourself every day and putting yourself in position to make your goals and dreams a reality.

What's your guilty pleasure? My wife says I like "old people candy," but I love to get a few Nut Rolls and Twin Bings

every time I go to Ace Hardware.

What is the hardest part of your job? Helping clients deal with the loss of a loved one. In my career, I have worked with many clients who have lost a loved one and are dealing with grief. I try to be as supportive as possible and help them in any way that I can. It's especially difficult when I have developed a really strong relationship and friendship with the person who has passed.

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? The relationships with my clients and building their trust in me. I get to meet and work with so many amazing people and learn about them and their goals and dreams. It's a lot of fun and inspiring for me.

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? My greatest mentor was my dad, who passed away unexpectedly in November 2019. He was a larger than life person and was so involved in the community and philanthropy.

Do you have a motto that you live by? Do your best and do the right thing and good things will happen.

How do you view failure and

success? Everyone is going to experience failure. How you respond to failures and learn and grow from them is the most important part. I believe success is a great learning experience as well. When you achieve success you look at what behaviors lead to that success and how you can continue to build on them.

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? My wife and my daughter. My wife is the most amazing and supportive person I know and she helps push me to be my best every day. I wouldn't be who I am without her. My daughter is the greatest blessing I have ever experienced. It was a long journey to get her here and from the first time I held her, I knew being a father is the greatest gift I could have ever asked for.

What do you do for fun/relax/hobby? I really enjoy golfing whenever and wherever I can, even though I would like to be much better! I am also in a bowling league with my family, which is a lot of fun. My wife and I love being able to spend time together with our new daughter and watch her grow and develop. She definitely has me wrapped around her little finger!

LIVE AN AUTHENTIC LIFE



DOROTHY SIZEMORE

Age: 38

Company and title: Montana Family Medicine Residency, Director of Osteopathic Education and core faculty

Hometown: Whitehall

Education and/or Background: BS - Montana State University; MS - Montana State

University; DO - Rocky Vista University COM, Colorado

What other passions/callings are part of your life? I have been both directly and indirectly involved in advocacy work at the local, state, and occasionally national levels for a long time. Medicine inherently involves many forms of advocacy. For me, this includes being a voice for women in medicine and people in medicine from disadvantaged backgrounds. It also includes advocating for patients, staff, and colleagues. I'd like to continue this work and increase my direct involvement while also helping others become active advocates.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? "Make yourself less smart, less opinionated, less introverted, less [insert quality here] to make others more comfortable." There are certainly skills to develop to work effectively with different teams and develop needed relationships. However, I no longer believe we need to change who we are to be successful or to find belonging.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? Success (or lack of) doesn't define your self-worth. Learn how to separate the two, if needed. Pay attention to topics,

activities, people, etc. that are energizing and spark happiness.

What's your guilty pleasure? Happy Meals for hard days.

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? In my current role as Director of Osteopathic Education, I'm working to create a curriculum that teaches efficient and sustainable Osteopathic principles and practice. I want residents to be confident in their Osteopathic skills and knowledge when they enter the world as attending physicians.

What failure have you learned the most from? Burnout. I learned it is often a result of system failure, not personal failure. The experience really taught me the value of support from colleagues, early signs/symptoms to pay attention to, and ways to intervene for myself and others. It also taught me the importance of looking for joy in both work and life and how to cultivate that.

What is the hardest part of your job? Adapting teaching and communication methods to effectively reach each individual learner while also providing safe, quality patient care. There are so many differing communication styles, learning styles, and personalities to teach and learn from every day!

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? It is so rewarding to help medical learners find their joy in medicine! This looks different for everyone but is often overlooked due to the sheer volume of knowledge and skills they need to develop.

Finding and developing joy in any career is so important for longevity and success.

Do you have a motto that you live by? I don't have a motto, per se. My goal is to live an authentic life.

What advice would you give to anyone wanting to start a new business or excel in a business or field? Find a mentor, formal or informal. For a long time, I thought mentorship was just for people in other careers. However, now I realize Institutional knowledge and lived wisdom of others, no matter the field, are invaluable. These relationships often develop naturally. Be open to the experience.

How do you view failure and success? This is a tough one. I have been doing a lot of work to try to uncouple success and failure from self-worth. I think many people may struggle with this, too. Reaching success or having a failure aren't isolated events. Success and failure really can be learning experiences to help us move forward rather than outcomes that define our person.

Congratulations to

A.J. Miller

for being named in this year's 40 Under 40!

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Ashley Allinson, PE

Site Development/Subdivisions Project Engineer

Ashley plays a pivotal role in Stahly's success and is a passionate advocate for STEM. She thrives in her technical role as a project engineer while empowering youth through workshops and mentoring, demonstrating that their dreams in science, technology, engineering, and math are achievable. Ashley's commitment makes her an indispensable asset to our team and community!



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LOVE GOD, LOVE OTHERS



RUSSELL SWAN

Age: 39

Company and Title: Vance Thompson Vision, Surgeon

Hometown: Grant, Nebraska

Education and/or Background: Bachelor of Science Business Administration University of Nebraska-

Lincoln Medical Doctorate, University of Nebraska Medical Center Residency in Ophthalmology University of Utah Fellowship in Cornea, Refractive, Advanced Anterior Segment and Glaucoma at Vance Thompson Vision

If you couldn't do this, what would you do instead? I would be an expedition medical director.

What other passions/callings are part of your life? I love doing anything outdoor in God's creation. I have been blessed to be able to explore a lot of the MT wilderness with my wife and kids and am always amazed by the beauty we have around us.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? Nothing that comes to mind on this. Evidently, I erased that wrinkle in my brain for something more important. :-)

What advice would you give a teenager about success? I think no bigger joy can be found in life than serving those around you. If you can find a career where you get to serve and help others you will find success.

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to

achieve? Perform surgery on outreach trips on 6 continents (not much to be done in Antarctica).

How do you measure your own success? I find success when I am engaged in activities serving humanity. My wife and close friends help hold me accountable to this very well.

What is the hardest part of your job? The hardest part of my job is seeing people who have irreversible vision loss. There are many eye conditions we can provide meaningful improvement for, but occasionally we run across situations where this is not the case.

What was the last show you binge-watched? "Silo"

What is your favorite book? The Bible

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? Giving people vision back through LASIK and cataract surgery that they have missed for years. It is amazing to take someone who has been legally blind without glasses or contact lenses and give them clear vision for the first time in their adult life.

Who is your greatest mentor/

inspiration? Professionally, my greatest mentor was Alan Crandal, who was an amazing teacher and mentor. He dedicated countless hours and years of his life to international global outreach and education in the eyecare space.

Do you have a motto that you live by? Love God, Love Others

What advice would you give to anyone wanting to start a new business or excel in a business or field? Find something you are passionate about, surround yourself with an amazing team, and get ready to work hard.

How do you view failure and success? I view failures as a learning opportunity to evaluate what went wrong. With regards to success, I view success as the reward of doing what you love and doing it well.

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? The greatest gift I ever received was the ongoing love and support of my lovely wife, Monica.

What do you do for fun/relax/hobby? I love hanging out with my wife and 5 kiddos. We love all outdoor adventure activities and watching the MSU Bobcats beat the Griz!



MARISSA JONES

Age: 30

Company and Title: RBC Wealth Management / Financial Advisor Associate Vice President

Hometown: Billings

Education and/or Background: Bachelor of Science in Business

Administration with a concentration in Small Business Management and Marketing.

If you couldn't do this, what would you do instead? As a dreamer, I'd be a professional equestrian. I love competing and riding horses. I could easily live at horse shows and the barn all year.

What other passions/callings are part of your life? Ranching and volunteering. On the side of our professional careers, my husband and I have been building our ranch, Montana's Finest Cattle Company, from the ground-up over the past 5 years. I consider my calling to be helping people. From a young age I have always put the needs of others ahead of my own, and found the gift of giving my time extremely rewarding.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? Set what may seem like unattainable goals and visualize yourself accomplishing those goals. Your mind is a powerful tool and you'll be amazed at what comes true.

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? Continue to learn and never settle.

How do you measure your own success? Checking off goals, whether big or small, each one is a step in the right direction. I also like to reflect to see how far I've come and what dreams are now a reality. It's a rewarding feeling, seeing your hopes and dreams come true.

What failure have you learned the most from? When I was seven, I competed with my horse in show jumping at Big Sky State Games. My horse refused to jump a few of the obstacles during our rounds, so we were excused from participating. I was completely devastated and humiliated, but I learned the power of resiliency, work-ethic, and determination. Over the next year, I put in the time, learned from the struggles I faced, and worked hard to overcome the challenges with training. That next year we showed up and won every single one of our classes.

Do you have a motto that you live by? Live by faith, grow in grace and walk in love.

How do you view failure and success?

Failure is the steppingstone to success. I have learned the most from my failures because those setbacks are what stoke and

fuel the fire for future growth and success. It's much like athletic training, 'pain is weakness leaving the body,' failure is the pain that accompanies you along the path to success. Without the uncomfortableness that is failure, we never improve or grow.

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? A second chance at life. Unbeknownst to me at the time over seven years ago I was given less than one week to live with stage 4 Acute Myeloid Leukemia. As of March, I will be seven years cancer-free! Life is the most precious gift that we often overlook. With this second chance, I have been blessed with a wonderful husband and marriage, the amazing opportunity to work in the career path I'm on now, continue to do the things I love, and experience life from a whole new perspective. Hands down the best gift ever!

What do you do for fun/relax/hobby? I love riding my horses, and occasionally going to equestrian jumping competitions. When not riding, I like to work around the ranch, travel, play basketball, go camping, explore the mountains and Montana, watch TV shows/movies, or read. I also enjoy visiting and hanging out with family and friends.



AARON WALLER

Age: 40

Company and Title: Graphic Finesse LLC

Hometown: Lewistown, Montana

Education and/or Background: Bachelor of Arts in Media Arts and Animation

If you couldn't do this, what would you do instead? There really isn't anything I'd rather do for a living. For me graphic design and developing

websites are excellent creative outlets, plus I love solving problems through creativity and code. Working with people to create something that's both fantastic and functional excites me and I can't wait to see it in the wild. The fact is that I knew that I wanted to produce artwork for people from an early age. The only question was in what capacity. When I was 12 years old, I got a Tyco Video Camera for my birthday. Within a few days, I scrounged together a couple of VCRs, a tape deck with a microphone and a few old black and white TV's and built an awesome edit bay for stop motion animations. I chased the dream of being an animator until my early 20's when I was in an accident that hospitalized me for about three weeks. That experience helped me identify what was important to me and when I came back to Montana, I smelled fresh air and looked at the big sky and I knew that this was where I wanted to be.

What other passions/callings are part of your life? I've thoroughly enjoyed being a dad and getting to see the world through fresh eyes while my son experiences and learns about it. As a bonus, indulging in some of my childhood passions like building Lego and forts is a lot of fun.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? Early in my career I was told that I shouldn't call myself awesome and was told that someone else has to call me awesome for it to be true. I still laugh when I think of that because if you

can't see a quality in yourself then it's a lot harder to aspire to be anything greater than you are. It's engrained in me to see how awesome people are at their current state while at the same time, being excited and supportive while watching their talent continue to make them awesome in the future.

How do you measure your own success?

My success was put to the test about ten years ago, I was feeling down and started writing my woes in an old blank book. As I was reading what I'd written I realized that I had accomplished all the goals I had set out to achieve and because of that I was suddenly successful. I'd been working toward it feverishly for about 15 years at that point and it was a great relief to know that I had done it. From there it was time to focus on the next stage, where my success is based on being a good husband and father while still accomplishing business goals related to our creative agency, Graphic Finesse, and in the meantime leaving a little time for adventure.

What failure have you learned the most from? Failure, like success is relative and with time what seemed to be a colossal failure was simply life pushing me in a different direction.

What is the hardest part of your job?

There's nothing easy about running a business, sometimes you're mopping the floors and other times you're rubbing elbows with highly successful people but for me one of the most challenging aspects is turning it off and just living in the

moment.

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration?

There are quite a few people who I've looked up to and modeled different parts of my lifestyle after, but the one I quote the most is my dad. He has always had a way with words and has helped hone my understanding of the world through support and examples. One of my favorite quotes is, "Every project has to be finished at some point whether you like it or not." This one stuck with me and rings true every day because I rarely like my work while I'm producing it, but if I step away and give it room to breathe, I usually like it when I look at it again, and if I don't, I fix it.

Do you have a motto that you live by?

"Proper preparation prevents piss-poor performance."

What's the greatest gift you ever received?

Why? That's a hard one. On an existential level I would say my wife and son are the greatest gift I could ever ask for. My wife keeps me grounded and my son keeps me on my toes, they are the perfect match to my individual needs and life goals. On an artistic level my family's support of my creative endeavors has had the greatest impact on my career, especially my mom's contributions toward my ever-changing creative fascinations. On an individual level I'm thankful for all the experiences I've had and the people I've been able to get to know.

CONGRATULATIONS, DILLON, JACOB, AND JESSIE, and all 40 Under Forty recipients!



Dillon Deffinbaugh
Director, Center for Engagement



CPT Jacob Panchneau
Director, MSUB ROTC Program



Jessie Perius, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, College of Business

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COLE WHITMOYER

Age: 37

Company and Title: Flex Family Health Direct Primary Care

Hometown: Laurel

Education and/or Background: Doctor of Nursing Practice

PRESENCE, THOUGHTFULNESS, KINDNESS, PASSION

If you couldn't do this, what would you do instead? I'd probably own a brewery and brew beer, and then do ski patrol on the side.

What other passions/callings are part of your life? I'm passionate about connecting with people. I love to converse, I love to laugh.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? Experience is king. 'Hear' before you are 'heard'. Think about other people.

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? That's a hard question. Healthcare is hard, and to continue to do great things for your people, you have to continually improve, continually learn, and continually evolve. Everyday you reach for new achievements and take the best possible care of the people you serve. I will continue to try to accomplish this for the rest of my career.

What failure have you learned the most from? There are several things that have happened to me in my healthcare career that have led me to learn hard lessons. Mistakes with giving

the wrong medication, mistakes with properly finishing a procedure, mistakes communicating with the people around me. I wish I were infallible, but that's not the case. However, I have learned some of the most valuable lessons from these experiences and without these experiences, I would not be near the provider or person that I am today.

What is the hardest part of your job? Finding answers to complex health problems and then working to resolve them within our current healthcare system. Our healthcare system is incredibly complex, expensive and often inaccessible.

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? Keeping 'Care' in healthcare.

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? Just like an artist or musician, I feel like I have drawn inspiration from a multitude of great people and their unique qualities: 1. My mom's ability to care for others. 2. My dad's ability to talk to others. 3. My wife's capacity for love and her get-it-done attitude. 4. Dr. Jennifer Fowler's experience and professionalism. 5. My father-in-law's patience. 6. My mother-

in-law is always thinking about her family. 7. Finally, my brother who always lets me know there's time to be a clown.

Do you have a motto that you live by? I don't live by a motto, but more so by values. Presence, Thoughtfulness, Kindness, Passion.

How do you view failure and success? Obviously, you can never have one without the other. However, this is something I feel we as humans presently struggle with. With such advanced technology and a lack of true connectivity, it feels as though the expectation is perfection, and success without failure. Yet, that is not the reality. Success, and failure, to me, are measured in personal relationships, character, values, and the service that I have provided. I don't believe a man can ever be measured by dollars and cents.

What do you do for fun/relax/hobby? Skiing, golfing, playing guitar, vacation.

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? That would have to be my undergraduate education - my parents paid for me to go to nursing school. I did get 2 scholarships to help out though ;)



AIM SMALL, MISS SMALL

If you couldn't do this, what would you do instead? If I couldn't do this, I'd still look for ways to help people reach their goals. Working in real estate showed me that good relationships can lead to great chances for growth and success.

What other passions/callings are part of your life? I'm passionate about spending quality time with family and friends, building strong relationships, and creating lasting memories.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? The worst advice I ever received was, "Don't rock the boat." Avoiding challenges might feel easier at the time, but standing up for what's right and pushing for positive change is where real growth happens. It taught me that staying silent can lead to missed opportunities, and that true progress often comes from stepping outside my comfort zone.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? Don't be afraid to fail. Every mistake is a chance to learn, grow, and find what truly matters to you. Focus on what you love, work hard, and give yourself time to improve. Success isn't a race.

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? I want to keep pushing my career

to new heights by taking on more complex projects and making a real impact on the communities I serve.

How do you measure your own success? I measure my success by the positive impact I have on others. It's not just about reaching personal goals, it's about helping people achieve their own dreams, improving my community, and creating opportunities for others to thrive.

What failure have you learned the most from? I took on a property project without learning enough first or asking the right people for help, and it didn't work out. Even though I failed, I learned how important it is to prepare, be honest with others, and have the right team around me. This experience made me more careful and ready for future challenges.

What is the hardest part of your job? The hardest part of my job is balancing different needs and expectations. No individual is the same, so sometimes it's challenging to make everyone happy, but I work hard to find positive solutions that help my clients feel heard and valued.

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? Helping people enter into home ownership is the most rewarding part of my job. There's nothing better than seeing someone find the right

property, feel secure in their choices, and know that I played a part in making that happen.

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? My grandfather, David DeVries, is my greatest mentor and inspiration.

It's nearly impossible to measure his achievements, but it's the selflessness and humility he showed in everything he did that truly stands out. I carry those lessons with me every day, and I still miss him deeply.

Do you have a motto that you live by? "Aim small, miss small" reminds me that by focusing on a clear, specific target, I can ensure that even if I fall short, I won't be too far off.

How do you view failure and success? I see failure and success as two sides of the same coin. Every setback is a chance to learn and grow, while each success is a result of hard work and persistence. Embracing both helps me become stronger, smarter, and better prepared for whatever comes my way.

What do you do for fun/relax/hobby? I love getting out and exploring this great state we call home.

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? The greatest gift I ever received was growing up in such a great state with supportive communities. It's been invaluable to who I am today.



JOSEPH GARRISON

Age: 37

Company and Title: Sibanye-Stillwater, Miner 1

Hometown: Three Forks

Education and/or Background: Powell County High School, University of Montana (Bachelor's Degree)

If you couldn't do this, what would you do instead? I would probably go back to medical sales, preferably in orthopedic surgical implants or orthobiologics.

What other passions/callings are part of your life? My family, number one. After that, I love fly fishing and archery elk hunting -- almost anything that gets me outdoors. I also really enjoy detailing vehicles.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? I had someone tell me I should stay in a very poor work environment because, "if nothing else, you'll learn what not to do." I thought it was the most ridiculous concept I'd ever heard.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? I would tell them hard work pays off, but it can go unnoticed for periods in life. Never sacrifice your integrity, and keep your moral compass pointed in the right direction. You will end up where you are meant to be.

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? I still want to step into a more

crucial role within the organization, when the time is right for myself and my family.

How do you measure your own success? I measure my own success by looking at my family's happiness, my own happiness, and by my reputation amongst my friends, family, and colleagues.

What failure have you learned the most from? Honestly, I'm not sure. I've always believed that failures are only failures if you learn nothing from them. I try very hard to find the lesson in every single one, because I despise the idea of labeling any outcome a "failure."

What is the hardest part of your job? The hardest part of my job is understanding that you will never be able to please 100% of people 100% of the time. You just have to choose what does the most good for the most people, and proceed accordingly.

What is your favorite book? "12 Rules for Life" by Jordan Peterson

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? Tying in rounds at the end of shift, and any time I hear a "thank

you" from any of my brothers and sisters at work.

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? Jordan Peterson. The man is one of the most enlightened and intelligent people to ever live.

Do you have a motto that you live by? "Amor Fati" or "Love of Fate." Nietzsche described it as the eternal return of all things in one's life. Basically, if you can look back at the end of your life and say that you would live it exactly the same and change nothing, then that would be the ultimate affirmation of a life well-lived. I try to always keep that concept in mind.

How do you view failure and success? They are relative concepts. Every person has their own definition of each.

What do you do for fun/relax/hobby? Fly fishing is probably number one.

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? The values instilled in me by my upbringing. Everything I have, and everything I aspire to have, I owe to that.

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Kelsey Meyer,

Compliance Director



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ALLEN RICE

Age: 38

Company and Title: Rent Is Due, Owner

Hometown: Lewistown

Education and/or Background:

Montana State University MSU - Bozeman

If you couldn't do this, what would you do instead? I would start up another new Business or Startup.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? I think it was 1996, my teacher told

me "Don't rely on this calculator." "You won't always have a calculator in your pocket!" she said. Well that turned out to be wrong.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? Be an entrepreneur. Yes it's harder and riskier, and it's the path less travelled, and you have to think for yourself harder... but the world is a changing place, and the rate of that change is accelerating. Only entrepreneurs can embrace it and lead it. Conventional old thinking will be unable to keep up.

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? To know what I want to be when I grow up.

How do you measure your own success? Health, Wealth and Knowledge. Hopefully, I will always be increasing in at least one of those things.

What failure have you learned the most from? Being too nice.

What is the hardest part of your job? Evictions and Lawsuits. Hauling truckloads of children's toys to the landfill. Dealing with people (tenants) who are lying directly to your face deliberately. Unfortunately, there are many people that do not have good intentions.

What was the last show you binge-watched? Vikings.

IF IT'S NOT A HELL YES, IT'S A NO

What is your favorite book? Permutation City - by Greg Egan.

Snow Crash - by Neil Stephenson.

The Age of Em - by Robin Hanson.

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? The freedom of time.

Having no set schedule. I do what I want, when I want, for the most part. No boss above, no employees below.

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? Eliezer Yudkowsky.

Do you have a motto that you live by? If it's not a Hell Yes, it's a No.

What advice would you give to anyone wanting to start a new business or excel in a business or field? Results speak for themselves, much louder than words. Ignore the words, just look with your eyes and SEE for yourself, is the person giving you their views successful? What results have they achieved with this advice, and where has it gotten them now? Focus on giving first, and you'll get back what you give.

How do you view failure and success? One measure of success is how many peoples' lives can you positively impact? Basically everything good is because of its positive sum. And everything bad or evil is because that thing

is a negative-sum-game. If what you're doing creates positive value on the whole, for you and for others, then that is why it's good (i.e., trade, friendships, love).

Likewise, if a proposed activity destroys value on the whole (even if you selfishly come out ahead), then that is why it's bad. (i.e., war, theft, lawsuits etc). In the long run, on average, good will outcompete the evil. You don't need an external reason to be good. Good is already inherently good in and of itself. It's just a good idea.

Try to reduce and abstract everything down to basic game theory; is it a positive sum game?

Example 1: I buy a coffee at the gas station, and I hand over \$3 dollars, and they say "Thank you". And they hand over the coffee and I say "Thank you". We both said thank you, because we both just increased our utility in this positive sum game! We are both net better off and wealthier. Trade is a positive sum game, and therefore good.

Example 2: Everyone loses in war. Russia loses, Ukraine loses, the U.S. loses. There are no winners.

Lawsuits? Plaintiff and defendants both lose. Pyrrhic victory only. Warriors are losers.

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? My wife, Crystal.

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Liz Arlian

Marketing Coordinator at MetraPark

We applaud Liz for being named one of Billings' **40 Under Forty**.

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LIZ HANSEN

Age: 39

Company and Title: Hair Goddess Pro Source

Hometown: Plentywood, MT

Education and/or Background: UM Missoula Business, Modern Beauty School Cosmetology, Missoula

If you couldn't do this, what would you do instead? I would be a flower farmer. There's something magical about working with nature and growing

beautiful blooms all year long. Flowers, like hair, have the power to transform moods and brighten someone's day. I'd love to cultivate that kind of beauty in a different way.

What other passions/callings are part of your life? I have a deep passion for supporting children in education. I spent three years as a paraprofessional at my daughters' elementary school, working to improve their learning experiences and make school a positive place.

Additionally, I'm an advocate for protecting our outdoor wilderness spaces.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? The worst advice I've ever received was to "play it safe" and not take risks in pursuing my dreams. While it came from a place of concern, I've learned that stepping out of your comfort zone is where real growth and success happen.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? As an entrepreneur, I've learned that success doesn't look the same for everyone. My advice is to first decide what you want your life to include—your schedule, family lifestyle, and personal priorities. Then,

figure out how to make money while aligning with those values.

Living a balanced life is so important, and not everyone fits the classic mold society lays out for us at 18. Challenge that perspective, carve your own path, and focus on growing into a better version of yourself every year. Success is about creating a life that fulfills you, not living up to someone else's definition.

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? One professional goal I'm passionate about is creating a dedicated hair extension and wig salon. Since I specialize in installing extensions and wigs, I'd love to build a space that caters specifically to clients seeking these transformative services. My vision is to provide a luxurious, welcoming environment where clients can feel empowered and leave with renewed confidence.

What is your favorite book? "Daring Greatly" by Brené Brown.

What failure have you learned the most from? The biggest learning experience in my career came from owning my first salon for six years and

then having to close it. After COVID, business policies changed drastically, making it extremely difficult to navigate as both a business owner and a single mom.

What is your favorite book? My favorite book is Daring Greatly by Brené Brown. Her insights on vulnerability and courage truly resonated with me. It's a reminder that being brave doesn't mean never feeling scared—it means choosing to show up and be seen, even when we're uncomfortable or uncertain.

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? For me, the most rewarding part of being a cosmetologist is witnessing the transformative power of a fresh look. It goes beyond just "doing hair"—it's about helping people embrace their own beauty, supporting their self-esteem, and providing a safe space to explore who they want to be.

Do you have a motto that you live by? "Live boldly, learn constantly."

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? An all-expenses-paid trip to New York City, where I styled hair for three events over three days in a gorgeous hotel.



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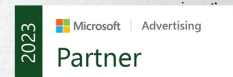
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KASEY CROWNOWER

Age: 40

Company and Title: Advanced Care Hospital of Montana

Hometown: Beech Bluff, Tennessee

Education and/or Background: Master of Science in Nursing Leadership

YOU CAN IF YOU BELIEVE YOU CAN

What other passions/callings are part of your life? First and foremost, always my family. I enjoy watching my kids learn and grow. I also enjoy horses, reading, and a great cup of coffee.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? We have always done it that way. I feel like this is the greatest barrier to positive change in healthcare or any other field.

What advice would you give a teenager about success? Talent without hard work is wasted. If you are passionate about something, it is worth also putting effort behind it to see it through.

What's your guilty pleasure? Tacos and margaritas! There is rarely a time I'll turn down good Mexican food!

What is one professional accomplishment you still want to achieve? I would like to publish an article or paper. I enjoy writing more than most and feel information in healthcare should be easier to access.

How do you measure your own success? I measure my career success through my team and their successes. In my experience, your team will show you your weaknesses as well as strengths.

What failure have you learned the most from? Allowing myself to be overwhelmed. If I ever become overwhelmed, I make decisions based on fear or frustration rather than critical thought or personal moral values.

What is the hardest part of your job? Nursing is difficult from the frontline to leadership because it is people managing people. Wild cards are difficult to predict. We have to be ready at every turn to react and try our best to be proactive and always a step ahead.

What was the last show you binge-watched? "Suits," "Lincoln Lawyer," and "Yellowstone."

What is your favorite book? It changes, but I just finished "Quicksilver" and it was magnificent.

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? I enjoy seeing others succeed, patient and employees. The success stories are what bring me through the hard days, and give me hope that the work I am doing is good and worthwhile.

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? My husband has always been my go-to. He has years of

management experience to draw on and can help me when I am backed in a corner. His rational and fair approach is what has helped me grow over the years.

Do you have a motto that you live by? You can if you believe you can. Believing you can accomplish something is half the battle of achieving the goal. If you don't believe you are capable, then you won't be.

What advice would you give to anyone wanting to start a new business or excel in a business or field? Be patient and give grace to yourself. Anything worth doing is worth doing right and that doesn't happen over night.

How do you view failure and success? Failures are generally merely learning opportunities. If you learn something from a perceived failure, then it is not a failure at all. You gained knowledge you can apply to another attempt at achieving your goal!

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? Love is the greatest gift I have ever received. It is the most vulnerable thing we can give or receive from another and should never be taken lightly.



JILL DAWSON

Age: 39

Company and Title: Thirsty Street Brewing Co, Co-Owner

Hometown: Farmington, NM

Education and/or Background: Bachelors of Consumer Science with experience in retail.

ALWAYS STAY CRAZY AND WEIRD

If you couldn't do this, what would you do instead? Before living in Billings I started a wardrobe styling business in New Orleans. It was a lot of fun, and a rewarding experience helping people look and feel their best.

What is the worst advice you've received and why? To try the "best" sushi from a gas station. No thanks!

What advice would you give a teenager about success? Don't worry if you don't have it all figured out. Most adults are still winging it too. Don't worry so much about being 'successful.' Focus on learning, being kind, and taking chances. Success will sneak up on you when you're busy doing what you love.

What's your guilty pleasure? Going on really long bike rides in the middle of the week when there's loads of laundry to do, dozens of emails awaiting response in my inbox, and thirsty customers to serve.

How do you measure your own success? If I'm doing what I love, staying true to my values, and learning from the ups and downs, I know I'm on the right path. Also, if the bills are being paid, that's good too.

What failure have you learned the most from? In high school I was on a state

champion winning dance team that I was very proud of being a part of. But my junior year I went to a party with alcohol, and that was against the rules. So I got kicked off the team. I was embarrassed and humbled, and it's stuck with me all these years. The good news, I made the team again my senior year where we won the state championship again.

What is the hardest part of your job? Probably keeping the beer cold on the hottest days or making sure the sound system doesn't turn into an impromptu dance party when the band is just setting up. But more seriously, the hardest part has been figuring out how to stay in business the years following the pandemic.

What was the last show you binge-watched? "The Great British Baking Show" season 15, and "Arcane."

What is your favorite book? "Guns, Germs, and Steel" by Jared Diamond. And "A Short History of Nearly Everything" by Bill Bryson.

What is the most rewarding/important aspect of your occupation? The most rewarding part of owning a brewery and music venue is seeing people relax, have fun, and connect over good beer that we made.

Who is your greatest mentor/inspiration? Shea, my co-owner and husband, has been both a great mentor and inspiration. Whether it's manufacturing the beer itself, or running the business side of things, he has an ability for identifying the big picture while managing small details. Shea also has a witty sense of humor and gregarious personality that is an energizing force for me and others.

Do you have a motto that you live by? "Always stay crazy and be weird" by Skela. Skela is the artist who painted the fabulous mural on our building. It's a good reminder for me.

What advice would you give to anyone wanting to start a new business or excel in a business or field? Make sure you have a good business plan written out and vetted with others. Whether you need a bank loan or not, you need a business plan. It'll ensure you've thought about every aspect from the market analysis, marketing, and financial projections and everything in-between.

What's the greatest gift you ever received? Why? The gift of life, and the ability and privilege to seek the good in it.

CONGRATULATIONS

TO THIS YEAR'S 40 UNDER FORTY

WINNERS!

Always stay crazy and weird *You can if you believe you can* *Success is a relative term*

If it's not a hell yes, it's a no *Live boldly, learn constantly*

Amor fati

Presence, thoughtfulness, kindness, passion

Aim small, miss small

Do something that terrifies you

Live by faith, grow in grace

Focus on the present

Love god, love others

Never complain, never explain

Do your best

Work hard, stay humble and kind

Live an authentic life

Think of others before yourself

Progress, not perfection

Share what brings you joy

Be the change you want to see

Leave things better

Never stop learning

Perfect is enemy of good

Improve your foxhole

Gratitude is a daily practice

It's all about accountability

Failure and success both crucial

Be patient, be diligent

I am second, god first

Whatever good things we build...

Never ever say never ever

Leave every piece better

Choose kindness

Seek out expertise

Have a growth mindset

Do what you say

Be nice

No regrets

Handle the hard things first

Lead with purpose



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Congratulations to all 40 Under Forty recipients!



Joseph Garrison

Joe Garrison is an experienced miner at Sibanye-Stillwater's East Boulder mine and has been an integral part of the team as we're navigating a challenging commodities market. As the only primary producer of platinum and palladium in the country, we are committed to responsibly mining and recycling these critical minerals in Montana for the USA for years to come. We are grateful to our employees and communities for supporting our efforts through these challenging times, and we are especially proud of Joe for being recognized for this year's 40 Under 40. Thank you, Joe and all Sibanye-Stillwater employees, past and present, for all of your hard work.



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