Independent Record

November 25, 2026

GIFTS FROM THE HEART



The information in this special insert was provided directly by individual organizations. Edits have only been made for layout consistency purposes. The views and information expressed here are solely those of the respective organizations



THE MYRNA LOY

The Myrna Loy stokes creative inspiration and well-being in and around Helena by presenting high-quality, culturally significant films and performances; by supporting local and regional artists in their work; and by nurturing a lifelong love of the arts through education and residencies.

Housed in the historic county jail, which was remodeled into a state-of-the-art performance and community gathering space, The Myrna Loy believes that art transforms everything. Today The Myrna Loy is known nationwide as one of the most remarkable small arts organizations in the rural West. We provide arts education experiences to thousands of students each year; host special community events and workshops; provide grants to working Montana artists; celebrate and support Montana film makers, artists, musicians, and performers; and present world-class performances that otherwise might not be seen outside a major metropolitan area. And we still show two first-run films a night— many of them Oscar and Golden Globe winners.

Give to The Myrna Loy this holiday season and help keep the arts alive!

UNITED WAY OF THE LEWIS AND CLARK AREA

United Way of the Lewis and Clark Area unites people, organizations, and resources to transform the community for good. After 85 years of work, we always have more to do and more ways to help Helena be the thriving community we know it can be!

With over 40 partner nonprofits, dozens of programs, and multiple community events, we have evolved beyond our role as a funding distributor. We are a community planner, a community organizer, and a community builder. We are the table that brings together everyone in Helena to work together and meet needs where they exist. We built the Helena Emergency Shelter Plan when we realized our community needed it. But now we need your help!

Current Needs:

- Adult winter clothing
- Food donations
- Sleeping bags and blankets
- Cots

Together, we continue United Way's legacy of resiliency, hope, and community-driven change by bringing everyone to the table.



INTERMOUNTAIN

Little Hearts, Big Dreams

Childhood should be filled with laughter, discovery, and the simple joys of being a kid. Bedtime stories, learning new things, and exploring the world with trusted adults help children feel safe, loved, and connected. For children who have experienced trauma or emotional challenges, these moments can also be important steps toward healing.

More and more young children are in need of the kind of specialized care Intermountain provides. To help meet this need, Intermountain is preparing to open a new Early Childhood Therapeutic Cottage in Helena, designed especially for children ages 4 to 8. Here, children will receive care in a nurturing home where they can build trusting relationships, gain confidence, and experience the joy of simply being a kid.

This Thanksgiving help little hearts feel safe, build confidence, and discover all the wonders of childhood.

Your financial gift will allow Intermountain to fill our new cottage with books, toys, cozy blankets, and opportunities for learning, creativity, and play. Gift certificates for local activities like Flying Giant, ExplorationWorks, Cinemark, and the Great Northern Carousel are also greatly appreciated.

Thank you for giving the gift of hope this holiday season. Together we help more children grow, heal, and thrive.

Make your donation online at www.intermountain.org/donate or mail to

Intermountain Development, 500 S. Lamborn St., Helena, MT 59601.

We hope to see you at the 39th annual Intermountain Festival of Trees, December 2–6 at the Helena Civic Center. For information, visit www.intermountain.org/fot.

QUEEN CITY BALLET

Give the Gift of Dance, Inspire a Lifetime of Possibilities

Queen City Ballet



The performing arts have the power to inspire, connect, and transform lives. For young dancers, ballet builds confidence, discipline, and perseverance. For audiences, it creates moments of beauty, wonder, and shared experience. At Queen City Ballet Company, we believe these opportunities should be available to everyone in our community.

Since becoming a nonprofit organization in 2008, Queen City Ballet Company has worked to enrich Helena's cultural life through professional-quality ballet performances, arts education, and community outreach. Through the generosity of local individuals, families, and businesses, we continue to bring the beauty of classical ballet to our community while creating meaningful opportunities for the next generation.

One of the most important ways we fulfill our mission is through our Educational Outreach Performance, which welcomes students from Helena and surrounding communities to experience live ballet, often for the very first time. For many children, these performances provide an introduction to the performing arts that might otherwise be out of reach. These experiences spark curiosity, inspire creativity, and help foster an appreciation for the arts that can last a lifetime.

At Queen City Ballet Conservatory, students discover that ballet offers far more than technical training. Through dedication, hard work, and artistic expression, young dancers develop confidence, resilience, teamwork, and leadership skills that extend beyond the studio. Our National Honor Society for Dance Arts chapter further encourages students to become leaders and give back to their community.

Community support makes these opportunities possible. Donations to Queen City Ballet Company help provide scholarships that reduce financial barriers to dance education, bring distinguished guest artists and instructors to Helena, and support the production of high-quality ballet performances. Contributions also help expand educational outreach, introducing new audiences to the beauty and excitement of live dance.

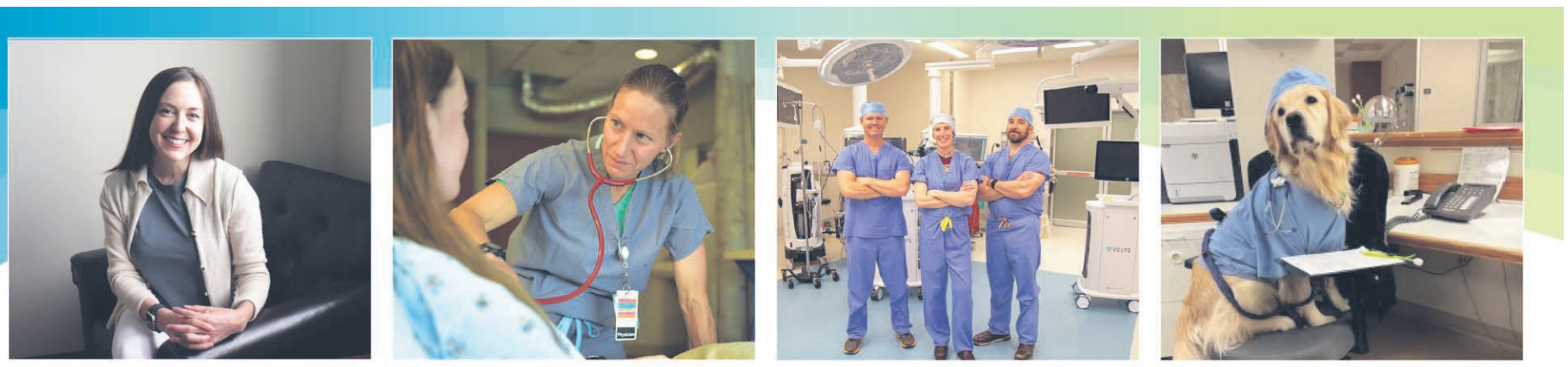


For many schools, transportation costs can be a barrier to experiencing live performances. A gift of just $120 can cover the cost of bus transportation for a Helena school to attend our Educational Outreach Performance, giving students the opportunity to experience the magic of live ballet. Your generosity helps make the performing arts more accessible to children throughout our community.

This giving season, we invite you to invest in more than a performance. Your gift supports a young dancer discovering their potential, a child experiencing the wonder of live ballet for the first time, and a community enriched by the performing arts.

Together, we can ensure that the beauty, discipline, and inspiration of ballet continue to be part of Helena's future for generations to come.

To make a tax-deductible donation to Queen City Ballet Company, visit queencityballet.com/company-support or scan the QR code.



WHEN OUR COMMUNITY GIVES, EVERYONE BENEFITS.

By giving to **St. Peter's Health Foundation**, you help ensure our **nonprofit, locally governed health system** delivers compassionate, high-quality care to more than **100,000 people** across Lewis and Clark, Broadwater, Jefferson, Powell, and Meagher Counties.

As one of the **Top 100 Community Hospitals in the nation**, we rely on donors to **invest in innovation, equipment, expanded facilities, healing spaces, and community health programs**, enhancing patient experiences and keeping exceptional care close to home.

There are many ways your gift can make an impact. Below are just a few of the funds that help make a difference in our community:

PATIENT ASSISTANCE FUND
Access to care and essential healing items like transportation, prescriptions, and medical supplies.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES FUND:
Gifts help provide compassionate inpatient and outpatient care for people experiencing mental health and behavioral health challenges.

EMERGENCY AND AMBULANCE SERVICES FUND
Ensures lifesaving care through equipment, technology, and patient support.

COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES FUND
Addresses critical social determinants like housing, mental health, and mobile crisis support.

HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
Scholarships and the Olson Institute support education and growth for health care teams.

Gifts can be made through cash, stock, donor-advised funds, IRA rollovers, bequests, named funds, or endowments.

Together, we keep care close to home and build a healthier future.

St. Peter's Health FOUNDATION

406-444-2370 | foundation.sphealth.org

Scan to give now!



GIRLS THRIVE

Girls Thrive (GT) is a Helena-based, nonprofit dedicated to helping girls THRIVE. We are on a mission to inspire girls to empower themselves through a variety of physical activities and educational lessons designed to promote self-confidence, self-esteem, and positive body image.

Girls Thrive offers Community Programs for girls in grades 6-12 through 8-week fall, winter, and spring sessions along with a multi-day Summer Confidence Clinic. Core activities include mountain biking, running, hiking, rock climbing, cross-training, yoga, and more. Alongside physical activities, girls participate in educational lessons on body image, confidence, leadership, communication, resilience, self-esteem, mental health, and goal-setting.

Recognizing the importance of building confidence at a young age, GT also offers two, 10-week School Program Sessions for girls in grades 4-5 at three Title 1 elementary schools: Smith, Broadwater, and Bryant. Now in its third year, this program has served 149 girls, many of whom receive scholarships. By bringing coaches directly to the schools, GT also helps eliminate transportation barriers for families.

The need for this work is significant. Research shows that by age 14, girls drop out of sports at two times the rate of boys for reasons including: lack of access, changing bodies, and lack of positive role models. Additionally, 70% of girls nationally believe they are not good enough or do not measure up in some way, including their appearance, academics, and relationships with family and friends. Girls Thrive creates a supportive environment where girls of diverse abilities can challenge themselves, celebrate progress, and develop the confidence to keep trying even when things get hard.

Since 2015, GT has served 769 girls and provided 210 scholarships to help ensure financial barriers do not prevent participation. This giving season, community members can give the gift of self-empowerment and confidence to Helena-area girls through a tax-deductible, year-end donation.

Two ways to make an impact are:

- **Fund a scholarship**. Donations help cover program costs for girls who need financial assistance. Scholarships cost $150 for a Fall, Spring, or Winter Community Program Session, or $60 for the School Program Sessions.
- **Provide healthy snacks.** Participants need access to nutritious food during practices. 54% of School Program and 38% of Community Program girls qualify for free or reduced-price school meals. A $20 donation provides snacks for one Girls Thrive practice.



Please join us in improving the lives of girls and contributing to a stronger future for all!

Gifts can be made through our website: www.girlsthrive.com or checks made payable to Girls Thrive can be mailed to: Girls Thrive, PO Box 1771, Helena, MT 59624.

Thank you for helping our girls THRIVE!

HEF for the Holidays!

Help educators spark joy in students year-round!

Honor a special educator or student with a gift in their name to the Helena Education Foundation. Gifts are acknowledged on Facebook and in the annual Foundation donor roll featured in the *Independent Record* in May.

Gift Certificate download available

★

Tax deductible secure website

HELENA EDUCATION FOUNDATION

hefmt.org



HELENA INDIAN ALLIANCE

The Helena Indian Alliance advocates for and serves the mental, physical, spiritual, and social wellness of the American Indian/Alaska Native population and the Helena community. How do we do that? By providing community education and classes, engaging our community with events and outreach, providing a higher level of healthcare, and being a safe and trusted place for everyone in the community.

We achieved our AAAHC accreditation in 2025 and we have worked to ensure our standards of care meet the metrics established. We have done ongoing training and development of our policies and of our staff and it has been wonderful to see the growth.

Awarded in 2026 through the Lewis and Clark Job Service, 2026 Workplace of Choice. Helena Indian Alliance was selected for the mid-size company category for our outstanding employee care for the 2nd year in a row!

We hosted many community events throughout the year such as our Back to School Bash, Community BBQ, Community Health Fair, a student showcase and fashion show, our annual Rounddance, and our holiday events. These events are possible thanks to donations and volunteers. We were so proud of the classes and groups we had in 2026.

Traditional games, regalia making, moccasin making, ribbon skirt and shirt making, powwow dance practice, Family Nights, Talking Circles, Wellbriety, Elders Council, MMIP Awareness Walk, blood drives, and our tribal assistance program and food pantry were some of the groups and classes we did in 2026. Hosting trainings such as Youth Mental Health First Aid, GONA, Addressing Family Violence and Abuse Facilitator Training helped us ensure that we provided culturally centered resources to the area.

Indian Education for All through the OPI Office, the Last Chance Community Powwow Committee, and organizations such as the Montana Heritage Center and Lewis and Clark Public Library were amazing community partners. We strengthened those partnerships and look forward to continuing and growing our work in 2027.

We cannot continue the programs and events we do without your generosity. We welcome you to volunteer with us, and you can find sign-up information on our website. We welcome your generous monetary donations, and we want you to know that when you give, you support the diverse landscape of the Helena community.

FAMILY OUTREACH

Help Make the Holidays Brighter for Local Families

For 50 years, **Family Outreach** has supported children and adults with disabilities, developmental delays, and autism, along with the families who care for them. Through early intervention services, family support, education, advocacy, and community-based programs, we help individuals build skills, increase independence, and connect with their communities. Our mission is simple: to build communities where abilities are celebrated and every individual can reach their fullest potential.

Each holiday season, Family Outreach's **Giving Tree** helps ensure the families we serve experience the joy and magic of the holidays. Many families face financial challenges while balancing the everyday costs of therapies, medical needs, specialized equipment, and caregiving responsibilities. Through the generosity of our community, holiday wishes become reality for children and adults across Montana.

This year, **Align + Well** is hosting a Family Outreach Giving Tree at their 1434 N Roberts St location in Helena and **Capital City Health Club** is also hosting a Family Outreach Giving Tree at their 1280 N Montana Ave location. Choose tags from the tree to purchase holiday gifts for a local family in need. The Family Outreach Giving Tree will be available beginning November 27th, with gifts due on December 18th. Whether you choose a gift from the Giving Tree or make a financial contribution through our holiday campaign, your support helps ease financial stress and creates meaningful moments for local families.

Together, we can create a season filled with joy, inclusion, and hope.

Thank you for giving from the heart.

Scan to share joy through the Family Outreach Giving Tree.



SPRING MEADOW RESOURCES

For more than 50 years, Spring Meadow Resources has proudly supported people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in living meaningful, connected lives. Since opening our doors in 1975, we have grown to include seven group homes, supported living services, and a day program. Today, we support more than 80 people and employ over 100 staff members who live, work, and enjoy life right here in the Helena community.

The generosity of our community partners, families, and friends helps make this work possible. Your donations create opportunities for the people we support to explore their interests, pursue their passions, and enjoy activities that bring them joy.

We are grateful to be part of such a caring community and look forward to continuing our mission of "Discovering Abilities and Improving Lives"—together!





HELENA FOOD SHARE

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

As the holiday season approaches, we naturally think of warmth, cherished gatherings, and delightful moments with those we hold dear. However, for one in seven of our neighbors, the challenges posed by rising costs—whether for food, gas, utilities, or healthcare—can cast a shadow over this joyful time.

Take, for example, Joyce, who has been keeping an eye on her neighbor Tom. After Tom's recent fall, Joyce was concerned about his access to adequate nutrition, especially knowing he relies on a limited income from Social Security and a small pension, along with facing uncertainties about his healthcare and overwhelming medical bills. With a nurturing spirit, Joyce encouraged Tom to visit Helena Food Share, where he could gather essential groceries each week. She even rallied other neighbors to lend a hand with transportation.

Thanks to caring neighbors like Joyce and all of you, Tom discovered the warmth of a community that genuinely cares. Tonight, he'll be able to savor a nutritious meal, and he'll face tomorrow with one less worry, all because of the kindness extended by those around him.

Helena Food Share programs offer seniors like Tom and families of every size something they can count on—nutritious food, a welcoming place to shop, and a caring community ready to help. For neighbors navigating an uncertain future, your support can make all the difference. Your support ensures:

- Families can sit down to a warm, nourishing meal
- Kids won't go hungry over the weekend
- Seniors can receive healthy food to stretch fixed incomes
- People facing a crisis can count on emergency food packs

Will you help provide food for those in need? Your donations of food or funds can help shift this season's narrative away from struggle and toward a celebration of community, comfort, and shared experiences.

Donate food: Canned food items, especially cans with pull-top lids, boxed cereal in family and single-serve sizes, flour, and sugar are always needed and appreciated. Our donation door is open Mon & Thu 8:30–6:00 • Tue/ Wed/Fri 8:30–3:30

Donate funds: Online at helenafoodshare.org/donate; mail to PO Box 943, Helena, MT 59624; or call us at 406-443-3663.

Thank you for being the reason no one in Helena faces hunger alone.

FLORENCE CRITTENTION FAMILY SERVICES

Giving Families a Chance

When Anna arrived at Florence Crittenton, she carried her baby in one arm and everything they owned in the other.

She was exhausted. The months behind her had been filled with uncertainty and trauma, and she had spent so much time simply trying to survive that imagining a different future felt almost impossible. More than anything, she wanted her baby to be safe. But she also needed someone to remind her that she deserved safety, too.

At Florence Crittenton, Anna found more than a place to stay. She found people who saw her not for what had happened to her, but for who she could become.

Slowly, life began to change.

With support, Anna began addressing her own trauma and building the skills she needed to create stability for herself and her child. She learned more about her baby's development and needs, strengthened her parenting skills, and began thinking about education, employment, housing, and the future.

And while Anna worked on healing, her baby was growing and learning in our nurturing Child Enrichment Center.



That is what makes Florence Crittenton unique. We recognize that helping a child means supporting the parent who is raising them and helping a parent heal can change the trajectory of a child's life.

Today, Florence Crittenton provides a continuum of services designed to meet families whatever their needs are. Our programs include residential care for young mothers and women in recovery, transitional living apartments, community-based behavioral health and family services, parenting education, home visiting, supported visitation, and high-quality early childhood education.

For a family like Anna's, those services are more than programs. They are opportunities to feel safe, strengthen relationships, build confidence, and begin again.

And none of it happens alone.

It happens because people in our community believe that families experiencing difficult circumstances deserve compassion, opportunity, and someone willing to walk beside them.

Our Programs

- Youth Maternity Home: A safe, supportive residential environment for teen mothers and their children.
- Recovery Home: Residential substance use and mental health treatment that allows mothers to keep their young children with them during treatment.
- Transitional Living Apartments: Supportive housing that helps mothers build stability, employment, financial security, and sustained recovery.
- Family Healing Center: Community services including therapy, addictions counseling, parenting education, home visiting, supported visitation, and family connection events.
- Child Enrichment Center: A nurturing early learning environment serving up to 48 children aged 0-5 including our residential clients' children and children from the community.

Ways You Can Help:

- Make a gift to support Florence Crittenton's programs and families
- Become a Believer's Circle member through monthly or quarterly giving.
- Include Florence Crittenton in your will or make a planned gift
- Volunteer your time and talents
- Spread the word about services available to families
- Advocate for children and families in our community

Your generosity gives young families more than help for today. It gives them a safe place to heal, grow, and provides opportunities for generations to come.

Florencecrittenton.org
inquiries@florencecrittenton.org

3404 Cooney Drive, Helena, MT 59602

Queen City BALLET COMPANY

CAMPBELL MIDGLEY ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Inspire the Next Generation of Dancers



For more than 25 years, Queen City Ballet has provided exceptional classical ballet and dance education in Helena, MT.

Your support helps provide quality arts education and training for young dancers, accessible live performances opportunities for students and families, and educational outreach performances for schools throughout our region.



GIVE TODAY

Queen City Ballet is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and all donations are tax deductible. All contributors receive a tax donation receipt.

MONTANA LEARNING CENTER

Help a Child Discover What's Possible

Help a Child Discover What's Possible

Montana Learning Center at Canyon Ferry Lake

Dear Friend,

Sometimes, one extraordinary moment can change the way a child sees the world—and their place in it.

Imagine a child launching a rocket they built with their own hands. The excitement of watching a robot come to life. The wonder of looking through a telescope and seeing Saturn's rings for the very first time. In moments like these, something remarkable happens. Curiosity becomes confidence. Wonder becomes possibility. And a child begins to believe, *"I can do things I never thought possible."*

For more than 42 years, Montana Learning Center at Canyon Ferry Lake has been creating these life-changing moments for Montana children through hands-on science camps and educational outreach programs. But for too many children, these opportunities remain out of reach.

For families struggling to make ends meet, the cost of summer camp can be an impossible hurdle. For students in rural and underserved communities, distance and limited school resources can mean



missing out on enriching educational experiences that spark a lifelong love of learning. You can help change that. With your generosity, we can open doors to discovery through two important programs:

Give a Child the Gift of Summer Camp

Imagine the child who has never been away to camp, never built a rocket, or never imagined themselves becoming a scientist, engineer, or explorer. Through our **Camper Scholarship Program**, your gift helps remove financial barriers so children can experience the excitement of hands-on science, outdoor adventure, new friendships, and the confidence that comes from trying something new. A week at camp is more than a summer experience. It can be the beginning of a new dream.

Bring the Wonders of the Universe to Montana Classrooms

Imagine walking into your school gymnasium and suddenly finding yourself surrounded by thousands of stars, distant planets, and breathtaking galaxies. Our Mobile Planetarium Program makes that experience possible, bringing the wonder of space directly to schools across Montana, including rural communities where students may never have the opportunity to visit a planetarium. For a child who has never seen the rings of Saturn or traveled beyond their hometown, a journey through the universe can open their imagination to possibilities they never knew existed.

Your gift helps us bring these unforgettable moments to more students, right where they live and learn. Every child deserves the opportunity to discover their potential—regardless of their family's income or their ZIP code. Yet the need continues to grow. Rising costs and uncertain funding make it increasingly difficult to provide these experiences to every child who could benefit from them. That is why your support matters so much.

When you give to Montana Learning Center, you do more than fund a camp scholarship or a school program. You invest in a child's future. You help a young girl discover that she loves engineering. You give a young boy the confidence to tackle a difficult challenge. You introduce a classroom of students to a universe of possibilities beyond what they have ever known. And perhaps most importantly, you help children discover something extraordinary about themselves: They are capable of more than they ever imagined.

Will You Help Us Inspire the Next Generation of Montana Dreamers, Thinkers, and Explorers?

Please consider making a meaningful gift today to support our Camper Scholarship Program or Mobile Planetarium school outreach. Whether your gift is large or small, your generosity helps bring the joy of discovery to children who might otherwise miss these opportunities.

Make your gift today:

Give online: montanalearning.org/donate

Or mail your gift to:

Montana Learning Center
7653 Canyon Ferry Road
Helena, MT 59602

Thank you for believing in Montana's children. Thank you for recognizing that curiosity deserves to be nurtured, potential deserves to be encouraged, and opportunity should never depend on a family's financial circumstances or where a child lives. Because somewhere in Montana, there's a child waiting for that one extraordinary moment that could change everything. Together, we can make that moment possible.

With heartfelt gratitude,

The Montana Learning Center Team
Montana Learning Center at Canyon Ferry Lake

Inspiring curiosity. Building confidence. Opening a world of possibilities.

FAMILY PROMISE OF GREATER HELENA

Family Promise of Greater Helena provides shelter and support to children and their families experiencing homelessness. Our comprehensive programs are designed to build essential life skills, including parenting education, financial literacy, household management, and employment readiness. While families are in our care, we meet their immediate needs, allowing them to save money and prepare for a stable future in safe, permanent housing. In addition to our core shelter services, we offer prevention, diversion, and stabilization programs, as well as parental training for those who may need support to avoid CPS (Child Protective Services) intervention. Our services also extend to Townsend and Broadwater County, helping us reach families in rural areas who face unique challenges. After more than four years of planning, we are excited to be complete with our brand-new 16-room shelter as of October of 2026. Through our budding partnership with the Friendship Center, we have invited them to share our space with their staff and clients while they complete their urgent repairs for their own shelter following a devastating flood in the summer of 2026. We are grateful to be able to help them in sheltering their vulnerable clientele and strengthening our community in the process. We anticipate transitioning our sheltering operations to the new Family Promise Shelter in early 2027.

The Hidden Crisis of Family Homelessness

Family homelessness is a growing but often invisible crisis in Helena. Unlike the individuals we may see on street corners, families, especially those with young children—often hide their homelessness due to shame, stigma, and fear of CPS intervention. This makes the issue less visible but no less urgent. The need for shelter and supportive services surged during the COVID-19 pandemic and has continued to rise. Since 2023, we have maintained a waitlist of 28 families, limited only by our capacity. In reality, the list should be twice that size. Once we have transitioned to the new Family Promise Shelter, we aim to increase our capacity to provide services to a larger number of families in need. The high cost of housing in Montana and the severe shortage of affordable options have created a perfect storm, making it increasingly difficult for vulnerable families to find and maintain housing. Today, families remain in shelter much longer than they did prior to 2022.

Community Collaboration & Support

Helena is fortunate to have a strong network of agencies working together to support those in need. Family Promise proudly partners with these organizations, each of which plays a vital role in our community's response to homelessness. Together, we make a greater impact. We invite you to be part of the solution. Please consider supporting Family Promise of Greater Helena and our new shelter project in your giving this year. Your generosity helps families regain stability, rebuild hope, and move forward with dignity.





ANGEL FUND

"Your kindness will change someone's world."

Angel Fund is a nonprofit 501©(3) Corporation making a difference for children in need. Angel Fund began 37 years ago at one school, helping a few students with school supplies, winter coats, and field trip fees.

This fall, we project that 1,400 students will need help with school clothes, shoes, winter outerwear, supplies, and other items needed to succeed in the classroom. We are honored to be a part of their "success story" each year, changing lives for the better. Because of your generosity and belief in Angels' work, the human spirit remains healthy and strong among our families facing uncertainty and hardship.

The Angel Fund

Together, we are helping kids have a better life!

Angel Fund also awards Montana post-secondary need-based scholarships to qualifying seniors at CHS, HHS, EHHS, and PAL based on financial need, academic success, and a commitment to "pay it forward." With our generous sponsors, Angel Fund awarded 4 graduates a Montana Scholarship this past fall and renewed 7 others, totaling $23,500, helping them work toward a brighter future!

"Stuff the Bus," our annual school supply drive coordinated by Angel Fund, was again reinvented this summer. In the past, local churches, businesses, state agencies, and Helena citizens generously donated new backpacks filled with supplies for local children. Yes, we help not only Helena children, but students in the smaller school districts surrounding Helena. We continued to ask the Helena community to donate money instead of supplies for our 1,400 students who needed school supplies this fall. We met our goal of distributing $52,500 to all our schools so they could purchase specific school supplies in bulk for their students.

Thank you, Helena! Angel Fund and the Helena Police Department partner for the "Running for Montana's Future Program." Resource Officers deliver athletic shoes to students in need. Since it began in 2010, we've purchased over 1,700 pairs of shoes! This "win-win" project promotes a healthy lifestyle!

How to Donate: Please visit our website at ***angelfundhelena.org*** or mail donations to: Angel Fund, P.O. Box 7436, Helena, MT 59604. Thank you for your continued financial support! Your "Gifts from the Heart" monetary donations are needed and highly appreciated. We believe in human kindness; we are better when we work together! Thank you for helping kids live the life they imagine!

Thank you and Merry Christmas, Helena!







HELENA EDUCATION FOUNDATION

The Helena Education Foundation (HEF) supports enrichment programs for every Helena Public Schools' kid on your list.

Watching kids' faces light up with excitement is the ultimate reward for holiday gift-givers and educators alike. The Helena Education Foundation supports teachers in their effort to spark that joy in their students year-round. Join the fun by making a gift of your donation to HEF; download a certificate to present to a special teacher or student, and we will post honorary donations in their names in our annual Donor Roll that appears in the Independent Record in May.

Since our inception in 2001, HEF and our supporters have provided well over 1 million dollars for the range of Helena students. The Helena Education Foundation offers the gift of enrichment opportunities in every discipline so that all Helena kids see community support for their passions. We've enhanced the education of kids of all ages, abilities, and interests!

HELENA EDUCATION FOUNDATION

At our annual Carnival Classic, we kicked off the school-year with a city-wide celebration, offering parent councils, athletic teams, and school clubs an early chance to earn funds as they highlighted all the fun and opportunities that our public schools provide.

Because of our supporters' love of literacy and stories, HEF was able to give each of the district's 400+ Fabulous First graders our traditional gift of a brand-new, hard-cover picture book to launch them on their reading journeys. Each elementary school library as well as the Lewis & Clark Library also received full sets of this year's books. To top it off, first grade students across the district saw high school drama students bring some of the Fabulous First books to life in our Fabulous Firsts Act II: Storybook Theatre program.

Our belief in life-long learning led us to host nearly 280 guests for 35 Great Conversations in November. The audience joined together for a most important conversation—Let's Talk About Great Teachers—honoring 9 educators—1 middle school band teacher, 1 high school art teacher, 1 assistant superintendent, 1 high school culinary arts teacher, 1 middle school Positive Behavioral Support staff, 2 elementary classroom teachers, 1 elementary school counselor and 1 educator from the Helena Public Schools adult education program.

The generosity of the Helena community has meant 24 years of unique opportunities for Helena educators and students. Since HEF's inception, we've awarded 663 Great Ideas and Spark Grants to educators for a total of $1,041,510 in funding. Just last school year we gave over $55,000 in Great Ideas and Spark Grants, funding purchases that ranged from scooters for a Unified PE class to kid-friendly power tools for an elementary school. Through our Crosstown Robotics Coalition grant from Boeing, HEF secured classroom sets of Vex Robotics equipment for both Helena High School and Capital High School, as well as coding and robotics training for educators K-12.

Each spring we're proud to celebrate young writers and artists through the Harrison Writing Awards, Going to the Sun Awards, and *Pen and Ink* magazine. In 2026 we awarded $700 to two Harrison Writing Award winners and $1400 to four Going to the Sun Art award winners. The publication featured these talented students as well as the work of a team of student editors and 110 student writers and artists.

As is HEF tradition, last May we celebrated 56 Distinguished Scholars and Distinguished Achievers and the Distinguished Educators who inspired them at our spring Celebration of Excellence.

Please help us to continue spreading joy in Helena classrooms and build upon our successful programs by making a year-end donation or help sustain our programs by becoming an Education Enthusiast with a regular donation. Contributions can be sent to Helena Education Foundation/P.O. Box 792/Helena, MT 59624 or submitted safely online at hefmt.org/donate/. A donation to the Helena Education Foundation is a gift of inspiration and support for educators and of novel and foundational opportunities for students.

HOLTER MUSEUM OF ART

Nestled in the heart of downtown Helena, the Holter Museum of Art isn't just a museum full of beautiful and thought-provoking art; it's a warm, welcoming place that brings people together and enriches the community in countless ways. The Holter's mission goes beyond showcasing established, emerging or legacy artists – it's about creating connections, fostering creativity, inspiring both children and adults alike and transforming lives through the power of ART. Through its engaging exhibitions, hands-on classes, and outreach programs, the Holter makes art accessible to everyone.

Local and international artists alike find a platform to share their work, while the museum's dedicated team of educators offers free and affordable classes that ignite imaginations. From schoolchildren on their very first field trip to professional artists sharpening their skills, the Holter brings together people from all walks of like to explore, learn, and grow.

For families, the Holter's workshops provide opportunities to create memories and masterpieces side by side. For youth, our free after school programs o er a safe space to express, heal and find community. For older adults, art sessions bring a renewed sense of purpose, creativity, and joy. For veterans and patients at St. Pete's and the VA hospital, seniors at Rocky Mountain Development Center, and residents at the YWCA of Helena,



HOLTER MUSEUM of ART

Holter Healing Art programs provide inspiring art materials and projects to work on as healing, grief, and recovery take place for our most vulnerable citizens.

This holiday season, a donation to the Holter Museum is a gift to the entire Helena community. Every dollar helps keep these incredible programs going, ensuring that the Holter remains a vibrant, accessible hub where creativity flourishes. Join us in supporting the Holter's mission to enrich lives through the power of art- today and for generations to come.

To donate online, please visit www.holtermuseum.org or mail a donation to 12 E. Lawrence St., Helena, MT 59601.

Holiday Wish List

Spring Meadow RESOURCES
DISCOVERING ABILITIES

Please drop off donations at the Spring Meadow Resources Main Office | 2850 Broadwater
To Give Online, visit: springmeadowresources.org/donate

GAMES & CRAFTS
- Paints and Brushes
- Paper-colored, watercolor, multi-designs
- Board Games
- Crayons
- Markers
- Craft Kits
- Card Games
- DVDs
- CDs

GIFT CARDS
- Movie Passes
- Coffee
- Grocery
- Walmart
- Target
- Restaurants
- Gas Stations

HYGIENE ITEMS
- Shampoo & Conditioner
- Liquid Soap
- Hairbrushes, Hair Ties
- Deodorant
- Electric Razors
- Toothpaste & Tooth Brushes

GENERAL GIFTS
- Journals
- Pens
- Books
- Makeup

CLOTHING ITEMS
- Plain Socks (all sizes)
- T-Shirts (all sizes)
- Sweatpants (all sizes)
- Night Gowns and Pajama Sets (all sizes)

BAKING SUPPLIES
- Cake Mixes
- Cookie Mixes
- Baking Utensils
- Common Ingredients



MONTANA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Year-End Giving for the Montana You Cherish

MONTANA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

In 2013, when I put down roots in Montana, I found a place I cherish and communities I am proud to call home. There is so much to love here, but what moves me most is how people care for one another. That generosity makes me excited about what we can accomplish together.

After more than 30 years in philanthropy, I still find tremendous joy in helping people with their giving. Funding a scholarship can open a door for a student. Working together with their community members can make possibilities reality. Supporting their local foodbank can help carry a family through a difficult winter. These are examples of why I love this work.

As we approach the end of 2026, I invite you to think about what you cherish in your community and how you might help it flourish. Thoughtful planning can make that next step easier.

Begin with the community you love

What organization would you miss if it were no longer there? What opportunity do you wish more of your neighbors had? Your answers are a great place to start.

At the Montana Community Foundation (MCF), we connect those hopes with a giving plan that works for you. That might mean supporting a need today or contributing to an endowment, which ensure organizations you care about have perpetual support. I love knowing that a decision made today can continue helping a community long into the future.



Make the most of your giving options

There are useful tax benefits to explore this year. Beginning in 2026, taxpayers taking the standard deduction may also deduct qualifying cash gifts to eligible charities, up to $1,000 for individuals or $2,000 for married couples filing jointly.

The Montana Endowment Tax Credit offers another opportunity. Individuals making qualifying planned gifts to qualified endowments may receive a state income tax credit equal to 40% of the gift's federal charitable deduction value, up to $15,000 annually per individual or $30,000 for couples. A credit reduces the tax you owe, while a deduction reduces taxable income. Our team can explain which gifts qualify and work with your advisors to explore whether this option makes sense for you.

Consider giving through your IRA

If you are 70½ or older, your IRA may offer a way to give. In 2026, eligible IRA owners can direct up to $111,000 to eligible charities through a qualified charitable distribution, or QCD. The transfer must go directly from your IRA custodian to the charity.

A qualifying distribution is excluded from taxable income and can count toward your required minimum distribution, if you have one. You can't claim a charitable deduction for the same gift.

QCDs cannot go to donor-advised funds. Contributions to other funds at MCF may qualify, including designated funds supporting specific charities, field-of-interest funds for particular causes, and unrestricted funds responding to changing community needs. Please connect with MCF and your advisors to confirm eligibility before arranging your gift.

Start the conversation now

My most practical advice? Start early. Stock gifts take time to transfer, and donating appreciated stock directly may offer tax advantages. Real estate and business interests can require appraisals and additional review. Starting now allows you to coordinate with your advisors and complete your gift by December 31 if you want it to count for 2026.

You don't need to have every detail figured out before reaching out. We would love to hear what matters to you. Email giving@mtcf.org or visit mtcf.org, and let's explore how your generosity can strengthen the Montana you cherish.

By Mary K. Rutherford, President & CEO Montana Community Foundation

Will You Help Provide Food to Those in Need?







Creating a Hunger-Free Community

Please make a gift today!

YES! I can help.

Donate online:
HelenaFoodShare.org

Or call:
(406) 443-3663 ext. 104

Or mail checks to:
PO Box 943, Helena MT 59624

Enclosed is my tax-deductible gift of $_____

Name _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Thank You

PRICKLY PEAR LAND TRUST

Connecting land and people



Prickly Pear Land Trust connects people to the land, water, wildlife, and agricultural heritage of central Montana through conservation, recreation, and education. Please join us in creating a healthy future for all Montanans by protecting the places where we work, play, and learn outdoors.

Land Protection

We honor our heritage and strengthen our future by protecting land and water, forever.

Land conservation benefi ts our community by protecting the incredible outdoor resources, recreation opportunities, and agricultural heritage that defi ne Montana. Since 1995, we've protected more than 33,000 acres of private and public lands.

Trails & Parks

We are rooted in trails. We protected the land that became Mount Helena and Mount Ascension parks, built the South Hills trail system, and created three public parks in Helena and East Helena: Tenmile Creek Park, The Grove, and Prickly Pear Park.

Outdoor Education

Our year-round education program features hands-on fi eld experiences in ecology, biology, and natural history. From high school students studying water ecology to fi rst graders identifying wildfl owers, our Grow Outside program inspires joy and connection through outdoor education and experiences.

Brooklyn Bridge Trail Expansion

Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest has selected Prickly Pear Land Trust to lead the Brooklyn Bridge Trail Expansion. Imagine 10 miles of new, multi-use trails fl owing through granite rock gardens and old-growth forests with sweeping vistas of Red Mountain and the Elkhorns. Designed with trail building best practices, the new route will ensure a safe, high-quality, multi-use experience for hikers, runners, and mountain bikers alike and will create new opportunities for long-distance adventures in the South Hills.

Thanks to partnerships with public and private landowners, the Brooklyn Bridge Trail Project will make central Montana an even better place to live, work, and play. In addition to connecting communities and expanding outdoor recreation, the route will enhance public safety and community resilience by providing on-foot access in rugged terrain for wildfi re crews and emergency responders.

We need your sweat and your support to make this dream come true. PPLT aims to raise $2 million to complete Brooklyn Bridge, and we can't do it without you. Your support is an investment in the trails, open spaces, and quality of life that make Montana extraordinary. Join us in writing the next chapter in the South Hills story.

THE FRIENDSHIP CENTER

Thanks to our community, The Friendship Center has been able to provide support and safe haven to those affected by domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking in our tri-county area for over 50 years!

Many are aware of our shelter services for those impacted by sexual and domestic violence in our community, but that is just one of the many free, confidential services we offer survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Outside of safe shelter, our dedicated team of advocates work with our clients to connect them with the help they need—whether that's crisis intervention, safety planning, legal advocacy, help making a law enforcement report, material assistance, safety planning, or referrals to any of the organizations we work alongside to ensure everyone is supported with care and dignity.

We do all we can to help clients find their footing and provide our larger community with knowledge and resources to help everyone thrive in healthy relationships. While all our funding sources are vital, much of it is restricted to specific programming and services we offer, limiting how responsive we can be to client and community needs as they arise. By contrast, the continued generosity of individuals and businesses—both in the form of material items and monetary donations—gives us maximum flexibility to meet the day-to-day needs of both our residential and non-residential clients.

Shown is a list of current items from our needs and wish list, which you can always find at **thefriendshipcenter.org/needs**. You can also give by mail or online! Mail check donations to **The Friendship Center, 1430 N Sanders St, Helena, MT 59601** or visit **thefriendshipcenter.org/donate** to give online. Our website is also where you can go to learn more about our services for survivors and community-wide efforts to prevent abuse through education.

THE FRIENDSHIP CENTER NEEDS & WISH LIST

Food and everyday items

- Gifts cards for gas, groceries, and fast-food restaurants
- Motel food items (microwavable and/or ready to eat)
- Reusable tote bags

Toiletries, medicine, childcare products

- Deodorant (full + travel size)
- Lotion (small + travel size bottles)
- Shampoo and conditioner (12oz + travel size)
- Small bottles of Tylenol, ibuprofen, and cold medicines

Cleaning supplies and household items

- Laundry supplies – Baskets, detergent, fabric softener, bleach
- Toilet paper, paper towels, and facial tissue
- Trash cans and garbage bags (33 gal and 13 gal)
- Cleaning supplies – Multi-purpose cleaner, dishwasher tablets, dishwasher rinse aid, furniture polish, brooms, mops, wide floor dusters

Thank you from our entire team for supporting us, and for sharing our belief that nobody should have to walk alone on the journey to a life free from abuse. Our advocates remind our clients that we'll always be around when they need us, and you help us keep that promise!



For two decades, Helena's trail community has dreamt of the Brooklyn Bridge Trail. This will be **THE LARGEST TRAIL EXPANSION IN SOUTH HILLS HISTORY.**

YOUR SUPPORT is an investment in the trails, open spaces, and quality of life that make Montana extraordinary.

JOIN US in writing the next chapter in the South Hills story.

To learn more, contact Becca Dudek at becca@pricklypearlt.org or 406-442-0490.

PRICKLY PEAR LAND TRUST
connecting land and people



pricklypearlt.org

WHAT DO CHARITIES DO WITH DONATIONS?

People donate to charity with the expectation that their donations will be used to provide support to those in need or inspire social change. Donations can make a big impact, but many people question exactly what happens to those funds once they reach a nonprofit group. It makes sense to want to know how charities spend money, and the following are some ways that charities put donations to good use.

Fund programs

Charities, first and foremost, use donations as a way to spearhead specific programs and initiatives. These programs can involve funding health services, such as researching medical conditions and trying to find cures. Education-based charities may use funds to provide scholarships or purchase books and other educational materials for students. Charities addressing poverty may use funds to provide food, shelter and job training.

Operate the nonprofit organization

Although it would be preferential if all charitable donations went toward helping the people who need assistance, operating a nonprofit incurs many of the same costs as for-profit entities. Therefore, a portion of donations is often earmarked for the operational costs of running the charity. According to Benevity, a resource for running and funding nonprofits, charitable groups that say 100 percent of donations go to the charity are perpetuating a myth.



Operational expenses can include staff salaries; office expenses like rent, utilities and supplies; continuing education and training for volunteers; and also community outreach programs.

Marketing and advocacy

In order to do the greatest good, organizations have to raise awareness about their missions and programs. This can include investing time and money into campaigns to educate the public, attract new donors and mobilize volunteers. In addition, donations help support lobbying efforts to promote governmental policy changes.

Provide emergency relief

Charitable groups that step in when natural disasters, humanitarian crises or health emergencies arise will need to mobilize quickly to provide relief services. Donations to these groups often are directed to these efforts. Immediate help may come from food and medical supplies, while long-term intervention can include funding the efforts of rebuilding teams.

Charitable groups spend donations in many different ways with the goal of ensuring such contributions make a notable impact.

HOW TO FIND A CHARITY YOU CAN SUPPORT

Each year, millions of people across the globe donate their time and money to worthy causes. A desire to make the world a more equitable, safer and healthier place drives such endeavors and enables the efforts of countless nonprofit organizations as they seek to fulfill their missions.

Data from Giving USATM, a public service initiative of the The Giving Institute, indicates that Americans gave roughly $557 billion in 2023, earning the United States the distinction of being the sixth most generous country in the world according to the Charities Aid Foundations world Giving Index 2024's report. It's no secret that giving feels good, and those who want to give have a wealth of worthy causes that merit their generosity. Navigating ones way through those causes and organizations is no small task, but the following are some tips prospective donors can consider as they try to find charities worthy of their generosity.



■ Commit to some research. Serious donors recognize just how vital their donations are, and that recognition underscores the importance of researching before donating. Various organizations, such as the BBB Wise Giving Alliance and Charity Navigator, evaluate charitable organizations on a wide range of criteria. The resulting reports that stem from those evaluations do much of the researching legwork for prospective donors. However, as valuable as such reports can be, they can't make donation decisions for prospective donors. Such decisions rest entirely in the hands of donors, who can utilize reviews of a wide range of organizations (the BBB Wise Giving Alliance has free reviews of roughly 1,300 national charities) to make the most informed donation decisions possible.

■ Identify your own prospective role. Charitable donations are often discussed in the context of donating funds, but donors can do more than write checks. Before choosing a charity, identify the role you'd like to play in giving back. If you want to volunteer your time, a locally based nonprofit might have more accessible opportunities than one with a national presence that may not be sponsoring any initiatives close to your home. If you aspire to help children, consider a role as a volunteer instructor with a local park service or a coach with a youth sports league in your community.

■ Track current events. It's not uncommon for adults to indicate they don't watch the news because its all bad news. There's certainly no shortage of conflict in the world, but paying attention to current events can inspire generous individuals to do their part to make the world a better place. In addition, local news broadcasts and local newspapers often highlight individuals going above and beyond to help others. Such human interest stories can shed light on worthy causes in your own community that you might not hear about if you avoid local media stories and reports. By staying up-to-date on current events, you might discover local, national or international charitable endeavors that are trying to end conflicts or help those in need overcome challenges.

Generous individuals may need a little help finding worthy causes to support. Various strategies can help people clear such hurdles as they aspire to make the world a better place.

MONTANA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Helping you shape Montana's future through giving.

4 DECADES OF TRUSTED PARTNERSHIP

Together, our donors have reinvested more than $137.5 million across every Montana county.

You want your generosity to make a meaningful difference in Montana—but choosing the best path can feel overwhelming.

Since 1988, the Montana Community Foundation has helped individuals, families, businesses, and communities turn their charitable vision into lasting impact.

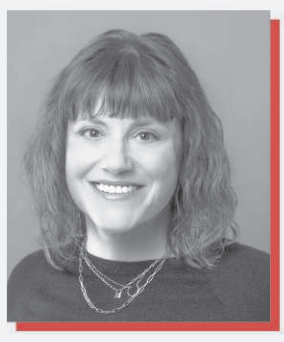
With trusted financial stewardship, deep local knowledge, and flexible giving tools, we make it easier to support the causes and communities you care about.

Connect with our team to learn how you can create a legacy while receiving a credit toward your Montana income tax.

MTCF.ORG | GIVING@MTCF.ORG



Mary Rutherford
President & Chief Executive Officer



Jessica Stewart
Chief Operating Officer



Jim Bennett
Vice President of Philanthropy



Kathrine Anderson
Philanthropy Officer

HAPPY THANKSGIVING

May you be surrounded by family and friends and have much to be thankful for.

Independent Record

