



Volume 4, Issue 1

Serving our Communities for over 50 years

Upcoming: 2018

May

3, 10, 17 & 24- Financial Literacy classes at The Home Center

11- Provider Appreciation Day

19- Home Buyer Education Workshops in Red Lodge and Billings

28- Closed

June

7, 14, 21, 28- Financial Literacy classes at The Home Center

14- HRDC offices close at noon for Play Date at the Zoo

July

4- Closed



www.hrdc7.org

HRDC Goes Blue for Child Abuse Prevention



**BECOME PART OF THE
PREVENTION INITIATIVE WHICH
ADVOCATES FOR A HEALTHY
AND HAPPY CHILDHOOD FOR
ALL CHILDREN.**

The Family Tree Center and The Parenting Place in Missoula collaboratively form Prevent Child Abuse Montana, a state chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America.

Child abuse and neglect cases filed in Montana District courts increased to an unprecedented level of 2,667 in 2017. This is an increase of nearly 38% over 2009. The program goal for child abuse prevention is to focus on community activities that profile the impact of child abuse and to diligently work on public policies that prioritize prevention efforts to reduce the incidence

of child abuse across Montana. The shiny blue pinwheels symbolize this effort.

HRDC actively participated in the annual Pinwheels for Prevention campaign by planting its own pinwheel garden throughout the buildings. Agency staff joined together wearing blue on Mondays and posting pinwheel signs in their office areas.

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Harmony House Celebrates 10 Years of Service

Harmony House Transitional Living Program first opened its doors in June, 2008. Its focus then, as it is now, is to provide a comprehensive residential life skills program to homeless women, ages 16-22, and their children. Since its inception, the program has provided a myriad of services to over 90 women and their children. In 2017, the program was expanded to include parenting fathers between the ages of 16-22, offering them the same off-campus program and

HARMONY HOUSE TRANSITIONAL LIVING PROGRAM PROVIDES UP TO 18 MONTHS OF ON-SITE TRANSITIONAL LIVING WITH AN ADDITIONAL SIX MONTHS OF AFTERCARE.

services. Through a process of intensive interactive case management, Harmony House staff provides a menu of management and support services to assist young parents in developing the independent living skills they need to become self-sufficient and economically independent. Case Managers work with residents to help them find employment, complete their education, address physical and/or mental health, addiction issues, parenting and child

development, budgeting and financial education, household maintenance, meal planning and nutrition education, healthy relationships, family dynamics, and other life skills activities. Harmony House participants also receive referral services from other HRDC programs, including, but not limited to; Childcare, Pathways, Youth Employment and Training, Alternative Education financial education, and others.

Harmony House Transitional Living Program provides up to 18 months of on-site transitional living with an additional six months of aftercare. The transitional living program offers two primary housing options; one for group residential housing for women and their children and a second for independent off-campus housing for men or youth couples with children. Women and their children have the opportunity to live in a five bedroom community house with other young female parents or may receive up



Christmas fun with gifts from some of the many generous community partners.

Above: Harmony House in 2017. Below: A new mom and young family who call the Harmony House home.



to six months of off-campus assisted rental support. At Harmony House, each resident is assigned their own bedroom that they share with their child or children. Kitchen, living spaces, and laundry facilities are all shared with the other residents. Residents and their children also have access to a large yard and grill for outdoor activities. They take turns with chores, making house dinners, and planning meals for their house mates. Residents of the house meet weekly to share experiences and address any issues through a house governance council.

"IT TAKES A VILLAGE." HARMONY HOUSE IS AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT A COMMUNITY CAN ACCOMPLISH WHEN WORKING TOGETHER.

Perhaps you are familiar with the adage; "it takes a village"? The Harmony House transitional living village consists of numerous community partners that assist program participants to become successful. Community partners include an array of organizations. As a sampler, Saint Vincent DePaul offers clothing and furniture vouchers, Family Promise provides diapers, wipes, and even household furnishings for participants moving into their own apartments. Family Service, Inc. provides food boxes.

HARMONY HOUSE TRANSITIONAL LIVING PROGRAMS ARE CONTINUALLY ACCEPTING DONATIONS OF ALL THE LITTLE THINGS THAT MAKE A HOUSE A HOME.

Harmony House participants are required to attend Nurturing Parent parenting classes through the Family Tree Center or Love and Logic Parenting classes with Tumbleweed Runaway Program. Some of the families who have experienced violence or abuse find help and strength through classes and support groups provided at Angela's Piazza and the YWCA. Other contributing partners include, but are not limited to Walmart which donates damaged or returned items such as cleaning products. Riverstone Health provides healthcare for parents and children. They have been instrumental in helping to enroll clients into Nurse-Family Partnership and WIC. Rimrock Foundation, Housing Authority of Billings, Planned Parenthood of Montana, and many others have also helped HRDC build this village.

Over time, Harmony House funding partners have included HUD Continuum of Care, Runaway and Homeless Youth Program, and the City of Billings through the Community Development Block Grant, TANF Second Chance Homes, and Montana Healthy

This young mother stayed at Harmony House then successfully got her own place. Here she is outside her new apartment.



One of the bedrooms available to residents & their children.

Teen Parent Program, each of which have been vital to its program success. In 2017 Grainger generously donated \$5,000 to Harmony House for much needed updates and improvements to the structure. Most recently, Saint Vincent Health Care Associate Giving Campaign donated \$2,000.

In 2017, Harmony House was awarded a new Runaway Homeless Youth Transitional Living and Maternity Group Home grant through the Administration for Children and Families. The new funding provides the same services for single fathers and families through a transition in place model which guarantees rental assistance for up to 6 months and intensive case management for up to 18. At completion of the Transitional Living Program, the participants have acquired the skills and knowledge to prepare them for independent living. Harmony House really is a working village and an example of what the community can accomplish when working together. HRDC is always looking for dedicated individuals, organizations, and businesses to join the effort. Harmony House Transitional Living programs are continually accepting donations of household furnishings, bedding, shower curtains, towels, dishes, cleaning supplies, and all the little things that make a house a home.

Harmony House Transitional Living Program covers 20 Montana Counties. If you or someone you know needs a little extra help, contact us at: (406)247-4788. If you are interested in an internship, volunteering, making a donation, or employment, check out our website at www.hrdc7.org

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance

This past year, Mary Beth Shay served as site coordinator for HRDC's VITA program. The 2017 tax season marks Mary Beth's 6th year of service in the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program. VITA is designed to target low and middle income participants making less than \$54,000 annually and provides an IRS trained group of volunteer tax preparers to assist them. While final numbers are not yet available, 35 volunteers donated 1673 hours of their time and e-filed 1162 returns ending April 18, 2018. These numbers do not include hard copy returns that were filed. Tax payer, Deborah commented, "This is our third year using VITA. We are grateful for this program!"

Through VITA, tax payers are able to secure assistance at HRDC offices in Billings and Hardin. MSU-Billings also offered an on campus site for community taxpayers. Early

THE VITA TAX PROGRAM ISN'T JUST FOR PEOPLE WITH LOW-INCOME. MANY MIDDLE-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS IN OUR COMMUNITIES RECEIVE TAX PREPARATION ASSISTANCE.

appointments started filling up in January. Walk-in times were also available and participants were given access to the HRDC computer lab with the guidance of a certified preparer for those choosing to file their own return. One tax payer, Sara, said "I was scared to do taxes myself, but my volunteer monitor walked me right through."

MSU-Billings students make up many of the volunteers that participated in the 2017 VITA program. Kami Kraus was one of the student volunteers. In her assigned term paper, Kami reported, "Through my VITA experience, I was required to prepare many different types of returns, giving me the type

Left: Mary Beth Shay, VITA Site Coordinator
Right: Kami Kraus, MSU-Billings Student



Some of the VITA Volunteers Celebrating at the end of the 2018 Season

of experience I could have never achieved in a classroom." Another peer tax preparer stated "it seemed as if I had been through every type of advanced tax scenario one could imagine utilizing real returns." The MSU-B volunteers were recruited through the university, providing their time in part for college credits and in part to assist others. "Overall, I believe this has been a great experience for anyone that truly wants to help the Billings community. For me, it wasn't just about sitting down and helping someone with their taxes, it was about being able to converse with them, learn about them, and to help improve their day regardless of the results of their return. I met people with diverse backgrounds and it really opened my eyes to who lives in the Billings community."

In 2017, VITA volunteers secured over \$2.9 million in refunds and saved participants over \$300,000 in tax preparation fees. For further information on how to volunteer or become a participant in the program, contact Mary Beth Shay at (406) 247-4760.

Did you know?

HRDC did not use computers until 1986. The 1st WANG Computers were donated from OPA. Staff didn't have individual computers until much later.



A Pathway to Success

Patty enrolled in Pathways last August after losing her job. She had a strong work history and some work experience, but was not having much luck finding employment.

Through Pathways, Patty was able to identify some of the barriers that prevented her from gaining employment. She found herself better equipped to build a resume, navigate an interview, and to follow-up on all of her leads. In September, her hard work paid off as she began working as a volunteer with Easter Seals Goodwill. Through the Pathways program, and her Client Advocate, Patty gained additional skills related to finding and maintaining employment. It was important for Patty to acquire additional work experience.

Patty reports that while she had volunteered to gain experience, she treated the circumstances as if it were an actual job, proving to her would-be employer that she was worth hiring. As a result of

her determination and solid work ethic, she was hired permanently at the first job opening.

Through Pathways, Patty received personalized case management, funds to purchase auto insurance, fuel, and clothing. The job skills training, work experience, and intensive case management led her to gainful employment. Through the services provided by both Pathways and Easter Seals Goodwill programs, HRDC was able to help Patty achieve stability and economic independence by allowing her to find her own way to success.

IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2018
PATHWAYS SERVED 594 PEOPLE IN
YELLOWSTONE COUNTY, 16 PEOPLE
IN THE CARBON, STILLWATER AND
SWEET GRASS AREA, AND 206 PEOPLE
IN BIG HORN COUNTY. EASTER
SEALS GOODWILL PROVIDED 667 HOURS
OF TRAINING TO PATHWAYS CLIENTS.

Team Member Spotlight



Maria Cervantez pictured below with one of the first Macintosh computers at HRDC. Maria began working at HRDC in 1972 through the Work Incentive Program, called WIN, which was administered through Job Service. On the left is Maria celebrating 45 years of service with HRDC alongside her son and grandchildren.



IN 2017 THE HOME CENTER HELPED
301 PEOPLE START WORKING TOWARD
THE PURCHASE OF A NEW HOME IN
HOME BUYER EDUCATION

Founded in 2012, The Home Center is the real estate resource platform for all folks interested in obtaining information, counseling, and education on home rentals, leases, contracts, and housing purchases.

As the only HUD Certified Home Buyers Education Agency in the region, the Home Center partners, supported by local professionals, provide a guided education experience. This 1-day course also satisfies the 8 hours of continuing education requirements for many down payment assistance programs and federally backed loans. Once completed, the education certificate is good for 3 years.

Register for future classes by printing an application off our website www.thehomecenter.org, stopping by The Home Center at 3124 1st Ave N in Billings, or calling (406) 206-2717.