



Volume 5, Issue 1

Serving our Communities for over 50 years

Upcoming: 2019

Volunteer Income Tax Preparation

January 31st - April 14th

LIEAP season ends April 30th.

February

7th- Financial Education
9th- Homebuyer Education
19th- Closed for
President's Day

March

7th- Financial Education
9th- Homebuyer Education
21st- Financial Education
23rd- Homebuyer
Education

Like our Facebook
Page to learn about
more upcoming
events!

Pathways Success

John enrolled in HRDC's Pathways Program in the second half of 2017. The purpose of Pathways is to overcome barriers to employment. As a program participant, John was able to acquire new skills in job readiness and employment preparation. John's case manager referred him to Easter Seals Good Will where he completed part of his requirements, which aided John in finding a great job. While in the program, Pathways assisted John and his family with a menu of services from mental health to rent, work clothing, and vehicle expenses, while John dedicated himself to searching and finding a job at a South Central Montana coal mine.

John's story is not unlike many others in the program. It reaffirms that with humility, perseverance, and hard work families are able to overcome any number of barriers while striving to improve their quality of life.

A year later during the holiday season, John connected with us. He left the following message, transcribed from his voice mail.

"This is John. Its' been a while since last we talked. I wanted to thank you Guys again for the program. I really enjoyed going through it. I was really sad, actually when it was all finished. I was hoping that there was more, ha-ha, but then I ended up getting the job working for the coal mine and stuff, doing the fire suppression system so I'm still doing that. The issue of my license eventually came up and they loaned me \$2,800 to get it back. I, like 100%, have my life back now, and you Guys helped me, well, with my

own work too, I guess, you know. We all worked together to help put my life back on track toward success and I just want to let you know things are still going amazingly well, and I wanted to just thank you both (Chris & Alex) for everything you did for me. I am in Wyoming right now, I am staying in a hotel, but one of these days when I'm in town I'll stop by. All right, love you Guys. Merry Christmas!"

Top Photo: Adalynn and Ethan Boyce having fun with neighbor kids. Taken by Staci Boyce, Administrative Assistant.

HRDC and its community partners have assembled a quick list of services that are available to individuals and families in our community. Perhaps you need a service yourself, or know of a family that may need assistance. While this list is not inclusive of all the community providers and services, it's a good place to start. This combined effort to help others is what community action is all about!

1. Energy Share
2. HRDC's Home Center
3. HRDC's VITA (tax preparation)
4. Family Services
5. The Salvation Army
6. Riverstone Health
7. VOA- Supportive Services for Veteran Families
8. Community Food Resources

See insert for details about the services listed.



www.hrdc7.org

A Few Thoughts from Barb Perzinski

After a long and prolific career, Barb Perzinski, Director of Child Care Services has retired. Her 34-years' at HRDC has affected tens of thousands of children and families. We thought it would be interesting to talk with Barb about her tenure at the agency and to pay tribute to her many accomplishments. These are the highpoints of our discussion.



Over the course of your 34-year career at HRDC, what do you view as your most notable accomplishments?

That's a difficult question to narrow down; I have been very fortunate to be a part of many accomplishments, both personal, and those of the agency.

The ability to begin new programs, improve existing programs, to address the needs of people in our communities is what Community Action Agencies are about. I am fortunate to have been a part of these efforts in many ways including serving clients, providing guidance to staff, and administering programs.

I have a favorite saying; "You don't know what you don't know". Through a myriad of programs I've been involved in, I have interacted with many wonderful people who needed help. In most cases, they simply had no idea where to begin. HRDC helped them with information, referrals, and options for training, employment, education, childcare, and much more. Many of the clients that first secure HRDC services do not think they can survive without public assistance, but over time they flourish!

I have had the privilege of developing and facilitating numerous programs. One of the most meaningful programs that I developed curriculum for and facilitated was "Building Mother and Daughter Relationships." The purpose of this 8-week course was to strengthen communications between mothers and daughters. It was an unexpected pleasure to see the impact this training had on the attendees.

Above: Barb at her retirement party. Below: Past and Present Child Care Team



What has been your biggest challenge?

In 1996, Welfare Reform changed the entire social services landscape. Guiding clients through unknown territories became most challenging. These reforms turned lives upside down. Generational poverty would begin to transition into economic independence. The federal rule at the time imposed a 5-year time limit on public assistance (Aid to Families with Dependent Children – AFDC). Clients were angry, scared. Many people grew up on AFDC, and it was all they ever knew.

Welfare Reform known in Montana as FAIM, (Families Achieving Independence in Montana) provided an opportunity for clients to receive job training, build self-confidence, and obtain employment. For the first time in generations, families would not be dependent on government programs. Many went back to school and obtained their GED. Some pursued Post-Secondary Education, and in many cases became First Time Homebuyers. This program demonstrated to me that when people acquire knowledge and challenge themselves, they have the ability to achieve.

What else would you like to add?

As times have changed, so has HRDC. As an agency we have matured and become more experienced and in some ways more sophisticated. "Play Date at the Zoo" is an event that demonstrates these traits. Today, it is no longer enough to provide programs and services. It is important that the community be aware of what we do and how we do it. It is important to the agency that we forge partnerships with other community organizations to maximize resources and minimize redundancy. For these reasons, we have actively pursued marketing and branding efforts.

In 2014, HRDC held its first "Play Date at the Zoo." Initially this was a Child Care centered event focusing on Early Childhood Education (0 -8 years of age). Our vendors were non-profit organizations and business that were all somehow involved in Early Childhood. It has now expanded into an all agency venue for families to have fun and spend quality time together. The annual event provides an educational platform to inform and instruct attendees on the various resources that are available in our community. Many community organizations, businesses, and agencies set up booths and distribute literature as they provide games for kids.

This past year, Underriner Motors helped sponsor the event. This and other sponsorships



Above: Barb Perzinski and Christy Kramer at HRDC's 40th Anniversary in 2006

Work Readiness Component (WoRC) was designed to support individuals receiving TANF from the Office of Public Assistance in their pursuit of self-sufficiency. The program began with Welfare Reform in the 90's. Today WoRC is known as Pathways and continues to support families and individuals on or eligible to receive TANF using interconnected programs designed to provide support through a guided process.

have helped HRDC build its brand and name recognition. Now in its sixth year, Play Date at the Zoo has helped put the agency on the map. Each year the event has grown and in some ways improved. In 2018, over 5,000 kids and families attended Play Date at the Zoo. In part, this family event has helped HRDC become a prominent name in the community. Most importantly, it has provided a platform to distribute information to individuals and families who may someday need our services, or know a family that does. I am very proud to be one of the founders of Play Date at the Zoo.



Left: Barb with Mayor Hanel at 2016's Play Date at the Zoo declaring "Supporting and Strengthening Families Day"
Right: Barb and Zea Valdez at the 2009 Poverty Walk



Above: HRDC's 50th Anniversary in 2016- Billie Krenzler (past COO), Casey Joyce, Barb Perzinski, Julie Johnson, Denise Jordan (CEO), Carl Visser (past CEO), Monica Tevetene, and Lavonne Peck

Holiday Fun at the Office



Above: The team had a great time creating mini gingerbread houses. Left- Eva from Pathways Right- Tony from Pathways and Silvia, Renee, and Joy from LIEAP



Above: Carly, Program Mangaer, and Nikki from Snap E & T, Christy the group's Program Director, Barb and Penny with Emergency Services
Below: Some of the Child Care Team
Top- Monica, Evelyn, Espri, Rochelle, Pam, Jami, Breann, Sam
Middle- Amanda, Brittany, Jeri, Barb Bottom-Crystal and Lisa





District 7
Human Resources
Development Council
7 North 31st Street
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Billings, MT 59103

GET HELP

with cold weather heating bills!

(LIEAP) The Low Income Energy Assistance Program assists individuals and families with cold weather utility bills, helping families budget for other necessities.

Come in or call HRDC, and we'll personally walk you through your application, making sure you get the assistance you qualify for.

**EARN IT.
KEEP IT.
SAVE IT.**



**FREE INCOME TAX
PREPARATION**

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