



The Community Action Pages

Volume 6, Issue 1

Serving our Communities for over 50 years

Upcoming: 2020

Computer Lab Hours
Mondays 1:00 - 3:00pm
Tuesdays 9:00 am - noon
Fridays 1:00 - 3:00pm

VITA
Free Tax Preparation
Feb 1st - April 11th
Wednesdays 1:00 - 7:00pm
Thursdays 1:00 - 7:00pm
Fridays 1:00 - 7:00pm
Saturdays 9:00am - 2:00pm

February
8- Homebuyer Education
17- HRDC Closed

March
7- Homebuyer Education
21- Homebuyer Education

April
30- May 1st, Yellowstone Valley Gives

Like our Facebook Page to learn about more upcoming events!



www.hrdc7.org

HRDC Needs Your Help!

Every 3 years HRDC conducts its Community Needs Assessment as a requirement of (CSBG) Community Service Block Grant. These funds help us provide vital services to low income individuals and families across the agency's 5 county service area. If you live in Big Horn, Carbon, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, or Yellowstone Counties, this assessment is important to you.

The survey will only take 8 minutes of your time and provides HRDC with the important information we need to ensure the programs and services we provide are the ones you need. All responses will remain anonymous and confidential. No names or personal information are required. We use the survey results to build our Community Action Plan. The plan prioritizes the most vital needs of families in our communities and ensures the

services we provide go to the people who need them most.

If you don't have a computer, you can also use your smartphone to complete the survey. The survey will be online on our homepage beginning March 1, 2020. Find us at hrdc7.org.

Above: Team HRDC at Day of Caring. Below: Pathways Team from our Hardin Office at Play Date at the Zoo.

Plan to join us on June 11th for our 7th Annual Play Date.



Thank You For A Successful 2019

As we settle into the New Year, HRDC takes a few moments to look back at the work we have accomplished and the benchmarks we have achieved for 2019. This year marks the agency's 54th year of service to our communities in Big Horn, Carbon, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, and Yellowstone Counties. The agency's ongoing vision continues to focus on equal access to opportunity for all people. Our programs and services are structured to help individuals and families move toward self-reliance and economic independence. We work with our community partners to eliminate the cultural, economic, and social barriers which impede the growth and prosperity of the people who live in our communities.

HRDC is one of over 1000 CCA's, Community Action Agencies, that covers 99% of U.S. counties as part of the

Community Action Partnership. Each CAA focuses on two primary initiatives; moving people out of poverty and revitalizing our communities. Community Action embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes Montana and America a better place to live by creating and implementing workable local solutions to solve social problems.

Thanks to our dedicated staff, our devoted Board of Trustees, and committed community partners we help move people out of poverty. This is what HRDC accomplished in 2019:

Scan to see calendar of events, or find us on Facebook @HRDC7.



What A Year For Energy Services

One thing we can expect in Montana is weather unpredictability. One thing we count on is HRDC's Energy Services Program. In LIEAP, the agency's Low-Income Energy Assistance Program, our crew of 5 have processed 3,300 applications and have been able to approve 2,263 of them this season. For those who didn't qualify for LIEAP and/or just need some help with high utility bills, the agency's Energy Assistance Program helps people stay warm by providing repayable assistance to them when families need it most. Thanks to our dedicated team for helping folks stay in their homes.

In addition to LIEAP, the agency also provides weatherization programs that help individuals and families reduce high energy costs, and improve their health and safety as they become more energy efficient. An energy audit provides the basis to decrease energy usage by adding additional insulation, replacing windows and doors, inspecting ventilation for health, and providing CO2 and smoke alarms for safety. For additional information about HRDC energy services go to our web portal at www.hrdc7.org.

4th Grade Winner



Huntley Project 4th grader, Grace, won 3rd place in Energy Share's statewide art contest. The prize was presented by Energy Share Vice President, Mark Vinger, with HRDC's Kelly Marquardt and Jeff Day, as well as teacher Mrs. Williams. (Facebook photo courtesy of Energy Share.)

Harmony House



Harmony House, Transitional Living Program provides a supportive, nurturing residence for homeless, pregnant, or parenting youth ages 16-22 and their children. Young mothers live in HRDC's group home with other residents and their children, or receive off-campus rental assistance for their own apartment. Assisted by extensive case management, financial education, and family planning, most of the program's participants are able to step out on their own. These bundled services are provided internally and by the agency's community partners. Only four young women and their children are housed at Harmony House at any one time. In 2019, two program completers started full time jobs with the help of the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships, and two began their college education at MSU-Billings while also working.

Youth couples and single men with children are also eligible to receive rental assistance and program services for their off campus housing. In 2019, the first family to complete this program experienced great success maintaining jobs, completing a HiSET, High School Equivalency, and finally purchasing their own car. Off campus residents are required to participate in the same life skills training, parenting classes, peer support groups, budgeting & financial literacy, and recreational activities as Harmony House residents.

In 2019, the Audubon Center generously provided scholarship assistance for program residents to participate in various recreational activities. The program has also received support from HOPA Mountain, providing a library of age appropriate books for children. The Harmony House Transitional Living Program was established in 2008 as one of three group maternity homes in Montana. Harmony House and off campus transitional living programs accept applications from individuals and families in south central and eastern Montana.



Above: Kristin Domiguez, Program Supervisor at Pathway's Annual Community Connections Resource Fair.



Above: Students at Billings "Get to Work" Career Fair.
Below: Janet Mann, Program Director & Zea Valdez, Case Manager at HRDC's Annual Halloween Party.



Everyone Counts



HRDC staff Wendy & Stephanie help out during the annual Point in Time. The PIT survey is a nationwide effort to determine the number of homeless people across the U.S. All states participate in this effort to count the number of homeless people on a single night in January. Thanks go out to Billings Gazette and Q2 for their part in helping the community better understand the homeless crisis in our own backyard. Thank you also to the donors and volunteers that helped “Make Everyone Count”. (photo credit Casey Page, billingsgazette.com)



Early Childhood Specialists

In 2019, Janet Mann was named HRDC’s new Child Care Director. Janet was the ideal candidate to take the reins of this booming program which covers 14 Montana counties. Given her experience in early childhood and provider services, Janet was well prepared to take the reins of this most important program. She has been with HRDC for 5 years. In her new leadership position, she will administer Best Beginnings Scholarships, STARS to Quality, Child and Adult Food Program, 360 New Provider Support, Provider Services, and Child Care Referrals. Last year Janet and her team announced 2 child care facilities had achieved National Accreditation through NCAF as 5 star providers; the highest level of achievement in Montana’s STARS to Quality program. Congratulations to Munchkin Land, and Michelle Wade’s for reaching this prestigious Child Care benchmark. “Young Families” has also been hard at work and has reached a Star 4 level, another notable accomplishment. There are currently 45 child care providers enrolled in the STARS program.

Under the close watch of the child care team, “Professional Learning Communities”, a group of lead providers, was established in our region. It is supported by HRDC staff and charged with the task of identifying childcare needs that will ultimately initiate change in the region’s communities. The focus of the group is to identify topics to present to the legislature which could impact rule changes. There are 7 regions in Montana. As noted, the HRDC region includes a 14 county service area that stretches to Miles City.

In addition to the other accomplishments achieved by the Childcare team, 2019 introduced new technology advancements that allows providers easy access to support and educational services provided by trained Early Childhood Specialists.



Jeri Fowler, Early Childhood Specialist filming 360 Support for New Providers video outside Sherry Steiner’s in-home child care.



Child Care Scholarships

My husband was a forklift driver for a company in Helena - in 2012 they closed the warehouse. He was given the option of moving to Salt Lake City or Billings. We chose Billings. Four months after our move, the company made the decision to close its Billings facility. While my husband worked, I had been a “stay at home mom” for the past 3 years. During that time our family of 5 was living with my sister. Her family included 2 adults and 6 children, and all 13 of us lived in a 4 bedroom home.

My husband - a high school drop-out - decided to go to college for computer networking. He found a childcare facility that we liked and were told about “Best Beginnings Scholarships”. Because of the availability of this child care program, my husband was able to complete his education and go on to earn his Associates Degree, while I went back to work.

Thanks to the Best Beginnings scholarship, my husband was able to focus on his studies and graduated 2nd in his Cisco Certification class. Immediately following graduation, he began working at St. Vincent Hospital as a help desk employee. Through hard work and continuing study he advanced rapidly and most recently accepted a position as Network Engineer for Wyoming, Montana, and Grand Junction Colorado.

In 2016, I was looking for a change of employment, and discovered HRDC was in need of Child Care Case Managers. I began working for the agency in April, 2016. This year, I accepted the position of Child Care Program Coordinator.

I don’t want to think of where my family would be without “Best Beginnings” Scholarship. This modest investment in my family has allowed us to achieve dreams we never thought possible. We will forever be grateful to HRDC and “Best Beginnings” for changing our lives. I’m privileged and proud to work for the program that did so much for me and my family. It has become my personal mission to help others achieve the dreams they never thought were possible.



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7 N 31st Street
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HRDC's Annual Play Date At The Zoo, June 11th

Follow us on Facebook for event updates @HRDC7.

Tax Time

- 1. Ugh!
- 2. Ack!
- 3. Blech!
- 4. Aarrgh!
- 5. VITA \$\$



FREE INCOME TAX PREPARATION
FEDERAL AND STATE FILING AT NO COST
Volunteer Income Tax Assistance
Call (406) 247-4710 for an appointment.



GET HELP with cold weather heating bills!



Scan for more information.

(LIEAP) The Low Income Energy Assistance Program assists individuals and families with cold weather utility bills, helping families budget for other necessities. Call (406) 247-4778