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:
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.

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.)
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.
Tax Time

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

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. Call (406) 247-4778

Follow us on Facebook for event updates @HRDC7.

HRDC’s Annual Play Date At The Zoo, June 11th

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