

ON A MISSION: AN UPDATE FOR YWCA SUPPORTERS



Greetings and Gratitude

Dear YWCA Missoula Community,

It is with a commitment to transparency, accountability, and fulfillment of our mission that we share with you the findings of YWCA Missoula's anti-racism audit, conducted by [Widerstand Consulting](#) at the end of last year. A summary of the audit, including key recommendations and action items to transform YWCA Missoula into a more anti-racist organization, can be found [here](#).

The audit process took two months to complete, as the auditors reviewed dozens of our policies, financial documents, communications materials, and program forms. They also conducted five different focus groups comprised of YWCA staff, volunteers, program participants, and community stakeholders. I want to express my gratitude to everyone who participated in this process. Your honest feedback has been instrumental in propelling us toward meaningful change.

Our decision to conduct this audit was rooted in our mission to eliminate racism and our recognition that we need to do better. Eliminating racism is not just an abstract goal for us—it directly impacts and is inherently connected to all our programs and services. It is also an acknowledgment that, despite our best efforts and intentions, we have inadvertently perpetuated systemic inequities that are especially harmful to BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) participants and staff. For this we are profoundly sorry. We are determined to do better moving forward.

In 2024, we will be taking much of what we have learned through the audit to build a new strategic plan that will help guide our next work as an organization. A few steps that we have taken so far are: 1) increased our Racial Justice staff position's hours and level of authority and responsibility in the organization, 2) created new Racial Justice Liaison positions to ensure we have staff in every program who have paid time to support the Racial Justice Manager and these efforts, 3) reinvigorated our Racial Justice Task Force, 4) secured facilitators for staff affinity groups, including a BIPOC group, to better support staff through this process and beyond, 5) committed additional staff time to supporting community JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) initiatives, 5) implemented additional staff training from diverse perspectives, 6) begun reviewing and updating policies with a social justice lens, 7) drafted a plan for the Racial Justice and Equity work for the next year to continue implementation of the audit recommendations.

I invite everyone to join us in this work by holding us accountable to the goals outlined in the audit. Feel free to contact me with any questions or thoughts. Your continued feedback and engagement are invaluable as we work toward foundational change within our organization to better fulfill our mission in service to the community.

Here's to showing up, doing our best, and learning as we go. Thank you for joining us on this vital and transformational journey!

In Possibility,
Jen

What's New

Community Celebration for Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Everyone is invited to join the annual community celebration for Martin Luther King Jr. Day, on **Monday**

January 15th at 4 PM, presented by Empower MT and the MLK Planning Committee. The celebration will include musical performances, speakers, and a community dinner. There is also a short march for peace beforehand. You can find all the [event details here](#). See you there!

Thank You for Making the Holidays Magical!

We are so grateful to all the generous donors who helped bring joy to the children and families at the YWCA for the holiday season. Here's a quick look at the impact that you made:

- 73 children's wish lists were fulfilled
- 45 gift baskets stuffed with goodies for families and survivors
- 12 delicious cookie and chocolate trays prepared for our residents and program families

Check out this ['holiday season recap' graphic](#) for more details! Thank you to everyone who generously donated items and gave their time to make the holidays at The Meadowlark extra special.

Join Us for Our Annual Meeting on Feb 9th

All YWCA Missoula supporters and community members are invited to join us for our annual meeting and a light buffet breakfast on Friday, February 9th. You'll hear about our successes and challenges of the last year and plans for 2024.

We're very excited to welcome **Denise Juneau as our guest speaker**. Her storied career in public service has focused on a central mission: combatting the tragedy of educational injustice, investing in opportunities for institutionally underserved peoples, and tearing down the pillars of systemic inequality. Denise's talk and FAQ will conclude the meeting.



[Please RSVP for the annual meeting here](#).

Program Updates

Volunteer Opportunities with YWCA Programs

Are you ready to be a catalyst for positive change in our community? We have several upcoming volunteer opportunities that allow you to become an integral part of our impactful programs.

1) [GUTS! Group Facilitator/ Mentor](#)

As a GUTS! Action Group Facilitator, you'll lead weekly sessions for girls and gender-diverse youth in local schools, fostering a safe space for discussions on real issues, and guide group members to discover their strengths and develop leadership skills. The Spring 2024 session runs from February 12th to May 3rd. Bring your creativity, compassion, and dedication to make a lasting impact. [Apply to volunteer with GUTS and learn more here](#).

2) [Youth Services at The Meadowlark](#)

Ignite joy and resilience in the lives of children who have faced homelessness or domestic violence. Training sessions begin February 26th, and will equip you with the skills to facilitate fun and inclusive activities, such as story time and arts and crafts, fostering a nurturing environment for children residing at The Meadowlark.

3) [Advocate for Survivors](#)

From answering the crisis line to assisting at our counseling center, your dedication can directly impact the lives of domestic and sexual violence survivors. Our in-depth training sessions begin February 26th and will provide you with the tools to support survivors on their journey to rebuilding their lives.

Make a positive impact – join YWCA Missoula's volunteer community today! Questions? [Email Katie](#) or call 406-543-6691.

A Family Housing Center Story: Claire and Sebastian's Path to Stability

Meet Claire (name has been changed), whose journey with the Family Housing Center program, jointly operated by YWCA Missoula and Family Promise, demonstrates her resilience in the face of complex challenges. Arriving just one day after leaving rehab and two months post-release from jail, Claire had no where else to stay and faced immense barriers to housing, including recent felonies and limited rental history. On top of that, she had just been reunited with her one-year-old son, Sebastian. Undeterred, Claire showcased determination and strong communication skills as she worked with her YWCA case manager to find resources for her family. In just a month, she secured public assistance benefits and rose

to the top of the housing Choice Voucher list. Despite temporary funding issues, Claire self-advocated and persevered. Through hard work, she secured housing for the first time in two years.

Claire's story exemplifies the strength and struggles of many of our residents, and the vital impact of the Family Housing Center in fostering stability and success for local families. You can learn more about YWCA Missoula's housing programs [here](#).

Your Gently Used Housewares Can Spark Joy Twice!



Are you de-cluttering after the holidays? Donate your pre-loved kitchenware, art, knick-knacks and furniture to Secret Seconds Thrift Stores. Your items get a second life, and the proceeds empower YWCA Missoula's vital programs for unhoused families, domestic violence survivors, and children in our community.

Let's fill every home with hope. Drop off your donations at either Secret Seconds location, 920 Kensington & 1136 W Broadway. Donation hours: Tues-Saturday, 10-5.

Who We Are



Hillary Salmonsens, Office Manager

Meet Hillary Salmonsens, the Office Manager at YWCA Missoula. Growing up in Lolo, Montana, Hillary started her career early, running a lawn mowing and babysitting business at 12 years old. She later delved into office tasks for local businesses, leading to her first management role at a Missoula tanning salon at 15. With a track record in management, Hillary holds a Business Administration degree with a minor in Marketing, graduating Summa Cum Laude.

Hillary is passionate about social justice and channels her skills to combat oppression, especially across cultural and socioeconomic boundaries. She brings a wealth of experience to the YWCA, aiming to make a positive impact and stand up for those getting back on their feet.

Beyond work, Hillary's diverse interests include hiking, kayaking, camping, and crafting. She's an artist who works with mixed media and enjoys outdoor adventures with her Labrador Retriever.

Get Involved

Tour The Meadowlark

Join us for an informational tour and learn about the impact of YWCA's programs on families, youth, and domestic violence survivors.

UPCOMING DATES:

Tuesday, February 13th, 12:30-1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 12th, 12:30-1:30 p.m.

Limited space. Please [RSVP here](#) to confirm availability.

Tuesdays at 12:30 don't work for you? [Contact Diane](#).

Donate Baby Monitors (and Other Wish List Items)

Our Family Housing Center is in need of baby monitors. Donations can be dropped off at The Meadowlark, Monday-Friday, 9-5.

Do you have other items you'd like to donate? Check out our complete [program wish lists here](#).

You can also order wish list items (including baby monitors) from our [Amazon wish list](#) and have them shipped to us directly - just select YWCA Missoula shipping address at checkout!

Employment Opportunities

Join our team! We're currently hiring for the following positions:

- Housing Stabilization Case Manager (full time)
- Family Housing Center Advocate (part time)
- Secret Seconds Store Clerk (part/full time)
- On-call Relief Staff (part time)

[Find job descriptions and application instructions here](#)

YWCA Missoula | (406) 543-6691 | www.ywcamissoula.org

Crisis line: (406) 542-1944 or (800) 483-7858

STAY CONNECTED

