



A Letter from Jen Euell, Executive Director

Dear Friends,

August is one of those months that feels like standing in a doorway. Summer isn't quite over, but a new school year is already knocking. For the children staying in our shelters, it's one more transition during a time when life is already unpredictable.

We're feeling some of that uncertainty at YWCA Missoula, too.

Our domestic violence shelter is full, our Family Housing Center has a waiting list, and we're continuing to navigate questions about federal funding as we await decisions about grants and potential policy changes that could affect our work. At times, it feels like we're balancing a lot of moving pieces at once.

Even so, there are bright spots that are truly worth celebrating.

Last week, four families moved from shelter into housing. (Yay!) That's four families with a safe place to call home, and four reminders of what's possible when people have the support they need. What those numbers don't show are the months of work behind each success: housing applications that went nowhere, units that fell through, appeals, follow-up calls, and the countless hours our case managers and advocates spent helping families navigate a system that can be incredibly difficult to access. These successes are hard-won and reflect the persistence of both our staff and the families we serve.

Here's how you can help: as we get ready for the new school year, we're asking for your contributions to our school supply drive. A backpack, lunch box, or pair of headphones may seem small, but these items help children walk into school feeling prepared, confident, and included. (You can [order directly from our Amazon wish list](#) – scroll down to “School Supplies”).

Here's celebrating fresh starts, opportunity and the power of community! And as always, we are celebrating you....the people who make it all possible.

With gratitude,
Jen

New & Noteworthy

Shelter to Summit



This summer, thanks to grant funding from **The Rut**, we launched Shelter to Summit, a pilot project that helps residents of the YWCA's shelters access Missoula's incredible trail system through staff-led group hikes.

So far, we've explored two local favorites: the M and the summit of Jumbo. Along the way, residents have challenged themselves, built confidence, and shared plenty of laughs—not to mention celebrating each hike with well-earned ice cream.

Missoula is surrounded by incredible public lands, but barriers like transportation, outdoor gear, and the realities of navigating crisis and transition can put those experiences out of reach. Shelter to Summit helps remove those barriers, creating opportunities for residents to connect with nature, build community, and discover that these trails belong to them, too. We're already looking forward to the next adventure.

Fall Volunteer Training

Want to make a meaningful difference for survivors and families in our community? Join our next Volunteer Advocate Training, an immersive, hands-on program that prepares volunteers to provide direct support in our shelters, advocate alongside survivors, support children staying in shelter, and even answer our 24-hour crisis line.

Training runs **September 9 – October 3**, with sessions each Monday and Wednesday from 5:30–7:30 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m.–2 p.m.

If you're ready to show up for survivors and families in our community, we'd love to have you join us. **Click here to sign up**, or email Tara at tweaselhead@ywcaofmissoula.org with questions.

Welcome to 2026 Board Members



Sara Nelson is the Director of Indirect Lending at Clearwater Credit Union, where she helps people achieve their financial goals. A University of Montana journalism graduate, she has been passionate about equality and women's rights since childhood, inspired by her grandmother, who brought her to Labor Day marches in Detroit. After returning to Missoula, Sara became an active YWCA volunteer and sustaining donor before joining the



Dave Kuntz joined the YWCA board inspired by a belief that everyone deserves the opportunity to live with safety, dignity, and the chance to reach their full potential. He is the Vice President of Marketing and Communications at the University of Montana and previously held communications roles with the Environmental Defense Fund, U.S. Senator Jon Tester, and Governor Steve Bullock. A fourth-generation Montanan, Dave also serves on the boards of the Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce



Amy Ward has lived in Missoula for nearly 20 years and has seen firsthand the important role YWCA Missoula plays in the community. Passionate about building strong, supportive communities, Amy brings experience in human resources, working overseas and across a variety of industries, and building systems that meet the challenges of the moment. She is excited to bring her experience and perspective

Board of Directors. She is honored to support an organization she has long admired.

and Special Olympics Montana.

to the YWCA in support of its mission and people.

Are you interested in joining the YWCA Missoula Board of Directors, or know someone who might want to serve? Nominations for 2027 will open soon... stay tuned!

August is Make-A-Will Month: Fred Ehardt's Lasting Legacy

This August, as we recognize Make-A-Will Month, we're reminded that one thoughtful decision can create a legacy of hope for years to come.

Retired Frenchtown school counselor **Fred Ehardt** believed deeply in helping others. During his career, he worked with the parent of one of his students who was experiencing domestic violence. Along with other school staff, Fred helped connect her with the YWCA where she obtained safe housing and the support she needed. That experience left a lasting impression and inspired his connection to the YWCA Pathways Program.

In 2023, Fred shared that he had included our organization in his estate plans, designating a percentage of his remaining estate to support the Pathways program. Sadly, Fred passed away this June, but his generosity will continue to change lives. His estate gift of **more than \$200,000** will provide critical support for the adults and children who turn to Pathways for safety, healing, and a fresh start.

Fred's legacy is a powerful reminder that planned giving can help strengthen our community for generations to come. If you've ever considered including a charitable gift in your will or estate plan, Make-A-Will Month is the perfect time to start the conversation. [Learn more about planned giving here](#) or contact Julie at jmaturen@ywcaofmissoula.org with any questions.

We are profoundly grateful to Fred Ehardt for his compassion, generosity, and enduring belief in the mission of Pathways. His legacy will continue to transform lives for years to come.

Staff Spotlight

Amy Hetzler, Senior Philanthropy Officer

Amy brings more than 35 years of nonprofit experience to the YWCA, with a background in fundraising, program management, and volunteer engagement. Throughout her career, she's supported organizations focused on wildlife and the environment, heart disease and stroke education, and end-of-life issues and policy. She's passionate about the YWCA's mission because it reflects the values she grew up with: fighting for justice, supporting people in need, and helping families stay together—work she knows would make her mother, Estelle, proud. Outside of work, Amy enjoys gardening, reading, playing pickleball with friends, and serving as the sous chef to her husband, Bob Zimorino.



Program Updates

Planet Kids Supervised Visitation

Earlier this year, we shared that Planet Kids was facing uncertainty due to delays in federal funding. YWCA Missoula has applied for a new Justice for Families grant—the federal funding source that supported Planet Kids for the past three years—and we expect to learn whether we've been awarded the grant within the next few months. While we're hopeful, we also know this funding cycle is likely to be more competitive than in the past.

In the meantime, thank you to everyone who supported Planet Kids during Missoula Gives and our spring fundraising campaign. **Your generosity has allowed us to keep our doors open this summer and continue serving currently enrolled families while we await funding decisions.** Thank you for standing with us and the families we serve.

Support Group: Healing After Sexual Violence

This fall, YWCA Missoula is offering a **free, confidential 10-week support group** for adults of all genders who have experienced sexual violence. It is *tentatively* scheduled to begin September 17, meeting Thursdays at 6:30 p.m.

If you've had a sexual experience that didn't feel fully consensual—whether recently or long ago—and it's still impacting you, you're not alone. This group offers a safe, supportive space to process and heal alongside others who understand.

Pre-registration is required. To learn more or register, please contact Carol at croberts@ywcaofmissoula.org or (406) 541-4006.



Find Your "Y"

Each month, YWCA Missoula highlights events, debunks myths, explores important topics, and celebrates diverse cultures and identities.

Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

On July 2, 1964, **the Civil Rights Act became law**—prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin in employment, education, and public accommodations. Its passage was driven by courageous activists and leaders who refused to accept injustice and fought tirelessly for change.

Today, as civil rights protections face renewed challenges and attacks, this anniversary carries even deeper meaning. It reminds us that progress is not guaranteed—and that the fight for justice must continue. Together, we can continue pushing for policies and practices that promote peace, justice, and dignity for all.

Get Involved

Help Kids Get Ready for School - Donate Backpacks and Supplies

It's almost back-to-school season (!!!), and we're collecting school supplies for kids staying at the YWCA shelters. Starting a new school year is a big deal for any kid. Having a new backpack, a fresh water bottle, and the supplies they need can help them walk into the classroom feeling prepared and confident.

Donating is easy: you can [order directly from our Amazon Wish List](#) (scroll down to "school supplies) and have items shipped straight to YWCA. *You can also drop off new items at The Meadowlark front desk (1800 S. 3rd St. W.) during business hours, M-F 9-5.*

Questions? Call Becky at 406-543-6691. Thank you for making a difference for kids!

Become a Table Captain

We're looking for community members to help make our annual fundraising luncheon in October a success by serving as a Table Captain.

This luncheon is YWCA Missoula's only fundraising event of the year, and Table Captains play a vital role in helping us fill the room with people who care about our mission. As a Table Captain, your invitations help us grow our network of supporters and raise the funds that make our programs possible.

To learn more, please reach out to Amy at ahetzler@ywcaofmissoula.org or 406-543-6691.

Job Opportunities

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

- Secret Seconds Store Clerk (full time and part time)
- Youth Advocate (part time)

Find job descriptions and how to apply [here](#).



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