

Let's Balance Our State

Bill Crane, Executive Director

I often sit down to write these articles and question why I talk about the challenges our society faces. Is it my job to point out what needs help?

Simple answer, yes! Yes, it is my job, and to help raise funds to make a difference. The nonprofit world exists because so many aspects of our society will not be addressed unless we are part of the solution. I am going to pre-balance this equation with a little good news. There were five 24-hour community giving events around the state that just completed with a combined giving total over \$4.4 million! That's the good news. Let's look at the challenges.

One of the biggest challenges we face in Montana is a balanced workforce, housing, and wage equation. Montana has a record low unemployment rate of 2.3%. This sounds great, but we also have what is called the labor force participation rate (LFPR). If we ignore the Covid timeframe, this is the story it tells. In December 2019, unemployment was 3.5% and LFPR was at 64%. In February 2023, unemployment is at 2.4% and LFPR is at 62.6%. So many of the people moving to Montana and buying property do not need to work and are not counted as unemployed. Other people that could be working have stopped looking, often staying on unemployment rather than taking jobs that employers desperately need filled. These figures show we actually lost 1.4% participation in the workforce.

Enter the recession and higher interest rates.

People in the service industry are facing increasing difficulties purchasing their own homes. This trend is primarily due to the rising cost of real estate, slow wage growth, and stricter lending standards imposed by financial institutions.

On the other side of employment are the employers. They face job interviews where 25% to 50% of the interviewees do not even show up for the interview! Sales are dropping as well. Local business owners report sales drops up to 20%

Despite all these challenges, I believe Montana nonprofits can continue to make a positive impact on the lives of those we serve. By adapting to the changing landscape and finding innovative solutions, we can continue to support our communities in need. Back in the '80s and '90s, we had the Montana Brain Drain, where our younger people left the state for better-paying jobs in other states. Now we have the Montana Home Drain. The younger people and working people can no longer afford to buy houses. They have four options: pay unaffordable rent, be homeless, stay with parents, or move out of state.

I want a state that acknowledges that the quality of life for all citizens is diminished when everyone cannot afford to buy a home. I want a state where people can work for a living wage and their employers can thrive while paying that living wage.

Please engage in these goals, talk with friends, and explore solutions.

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Thanks To These Montana Employers

The following employers included Montana Shares in their giving campaigns last year for their employees and/or were special event sponsors. We appreciate their willingness to give expanded choices in giving to their employees. Employees appreciate the convenience of payroll deduction for their charitable donations and the convenience of learning about a wide array of nonprofits at their office. Our campaign isn't complete without the huge generosity of individuals outside of workplaces who also donate through Montana Shares to our members. Those individuals, employees and the employers who generously match the individual contributions have helped Montana Shares during our 2022/2023 campaign. We were able to provide funds supporting our members totaling over \$171,000. If your workplace is not on this list and you want the convenience of "giving at the office" don't hesitate to contact the Shares office or any of the members to discuss how we can make that a reality this fall.

1st Liberty Federal Credit Union, Great Falls
Bison Engineering, Inc., Helena
Blue Cross Blue Shield, Statewide
Bozeman Public Schools
Child Care Connections, Bozeman
Child Care Resources, Missoula
City of Billings
Combined Federal Campaign (CFC)
DA Davidson Companies, Statewide
Disabilities Rights Montana, Helena
Family Connections, Great Falls
Great Falls School District
Helena School District
Intrepid Credit Union

Jefferson County
Lewis & Clark County
Missoula Public Schools
Montana Legal Services Association, Helena
Montana Shares, Helena
Montana State University - Billings
Montana State University - Bozeman
NeighborWorks Montana
NorthWestern Energy, Statewide
On Site Management, Statewide
Opportunity Bank of Montana, Helena
Real Food Market & Deli, Helena
Rocky Mountain Development Council, Helena
Rural Employment Opportunities (REO)

St. Peter's Hospital & Clinics, Helena
State Employees' Charitable Giving Campaign (SECGC), Statewide
The Nurturing Center, Kalispell
University of Montana, Missoula
Valley Bank of Helena
Van's Thriftway, Helena

Plus the many individuals throughout the state who are giving outside a workplace and businesses that support Shares and our members through special events including our annual raffle. All are appreciated and welcome.

New member groups this year.

The Butte SPIRIT Home is a state licensed ASAM Level 3.1 substance use disorder (SUD) recovery home in Butte that serves up to 8 men at a time with case management, peer support, and clinical counseling. We were founded by people in recovery, for people in recovery, and our entire staff is made up of people with lived experience in overcoming SUD.

Montana CASA/Gal - Serving over 1,000 children annually, our mission is to provide CASA services to every eligible child needing services in Montana. Children are removed from their homes and placed in the dependency and neglect system. CASAs are volunteer court appointed special

advocates appointed by judges advocating for the best interests of the child helping to ensure that children are receiving the care and education they need.

Trust Montana - Home ownership and farm ownership are out of reach for many Montana families. Trust Montana can change that by investing in homeownership and farmland projects to buy down purchase price for Montanans, and stewarding properties long-term to ensure they remain affordable from one buyer to the next. More people benefiting from homes and farms they can afford results in healthier families and increased economic viability.

Montana Shares is a partnership of Montana-based nonprofit groups devoted to improving the quality of life in communities throughout the state. Our members promote, protect and preserve our state's human, animal, cultural and natural resources. They work on issues concerning women, children, families and seniors, health and hunger, the environment, arts and culture, education, domestic and wild animals, social justice and human rights. The purpose of Shares is to work with and on behalf of our members to promote and support their programs, provide training, technical assistance, consultation and financial support on a year-round basis and, thereby, to help them expand and diversify their programs that serve Montanans. Contributions received at Montana Shares further serve to accomplish these purposes.

Council Officers - 2022-2024

President- Shaun Tatarka
Vice President- Kelley Willett
Secretary- Michelle Rogers
Treasurer-Bernie Ongoy-Franks
Past President- Nikki Andersen

Council members Individual (representation) (term ends)

Nikki Andersen (WorldMontana) (5/24)
Becky Franks (Cancer Support Comm. MT) (5/25)
Bernie Franks-Ongoy (Disability Rights MT) (5/24)
Callie Houck (Heart of the Valley) (5/25)
Bill Mathews (MT Food Bank Network) (5/24)
Michelle Rogers (NeighborWorks MT) (5/24)
Shaun Tatarka (Great Falls Community Food Bank) (5/25)
Kelley Willett (MT Trout Unlimited) (5/25)



Montana Shares Staff
Bill Crane, Executive Director
Kristi Paulsen, Office Manager
Jami Welch, Accountant

Member of:

Community Shares USA
communitysharesusa.org



Montana Nonprofit Association
mtnonprofit.org



Montana Nonprofit Association



Please open! Your Montana Shares Raffle Ticket sheet is enclosed. Prize packages are valued between \$200-\$300 each!

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sharesreport

A newsletter from Montana Shares, a partnership of Montana-based nonprofit groups devoted to improving the quality of life in communities throughout Montana

www.montanashares.org

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

29th Annual Raffle

Inside are multiple option for tickets to our 29 annual raffle. We have 39 great prizes, of which 14 are prize packages. You have a chance to win gift cards, hotel stays, restaurant certificates, or great artwork. Support Montana Shares, have fun and hopefully win!

Thanks to our funders 😊



This newsletter is made possible in part thanks to a **Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Montana** grant for our communication plan. Thank you BCBSMT for helping us reach donors across the state. **The Real Food Store** gives customers the choice of getting ten cents for reusing a bag or donating it to Montana Shares. Since its inception this program has generated \$45,268.50 in donations to Shares. Thanks to Laughing Water, all the staff and all the customers who re-use their bags and donate the savings to Montana Shares. **Van's Thriftway** customers have donated over \$29,711.25 through the on-going Round Up for Montana Shares program.

44 member groups serving the people of Montana * New Members

Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO)
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Montana
Bike Walk Montana
Bridgercare
*Butte SPIRIT Center
Camp Mak-A-Dream
Cancer Support Community Montana
Disability Rights Montana
Friends of the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula
Friends of the Missouri Breaks Monument
The Foundation for Montana History
Great Falls Community Food Bank, Inc.
Heart of the Valley Animal Shelter
Holter Museum of Art

Jeannette Rankin Peace Resource Center
K9 Care Montana
Last Chance Community Pow Wow
Lewis & Clark Humane Society
Montana Association for the Blind
Montana Audubon
*Montana CASA/GAL Association
Montana College Attainment Network
Montana Discovery Foundation
Montana Food Bank Network
Montana Free Press
Montana Legal Services Association
Montana Meth Project
Montana Natural History Foundation
Montana Spay/Neuter Task Force
Montana Supporting Military

Montana Trout Unlimited
Montana Watershed Coordination Council
Montana Wildlife Federation
NAMI Montana
NeighborWorks Montana
Queen City Ballet Company
Raise Montana
Rural Employment Opportunities, Inc. (REO)
Spay Montana
Thrive
*Trust Montana
Wild Montana
Windhorse Equine Learning
WorldMontana