



An update for YWCA Missoula supporters

Dear Friend,

As we head into our coldest months, the housing crisis is hitting families in our community hard, leaving many of our neighbors, including many children, in especially perilous situations. Alarming, 1 in 20 kids in Missoula is houseless—a rate far higher than the national average of 1 in 31. This shocking statistic underscores the urgent need for expanded resources and community-wide solutions for our most vulnerable families.

At The Meadowlark, where we provide emergency shelter to domestic violence survivors and unhoused families, this growing crisis is all too evident. Over the past year, we provided more than 52,000 nights of safety and warmth—a 150% increase compared to the year before. The severe lack of affordable housing has forced our residents to stay longer in shelter, creating a ripple effect that stretches resources and impacts the entire community.

While we're proud to provide a critical lifeline for families in crisis, we know shelter is just the beginning. The long-term solution lies in increasing access to housing, providing more supportive services for folks with multiple challenges, and creating more transitional options to help families move toward stability and independence. Addressing these systemic issues will require a collective effort, with collaboration and support, to build a stronger, more resilient community for all.

As 2024 comes to a close, **please consider contributing to our year-end campaign** to help sustain this vital work. Together, we provide safety, hope, and stability for families when they need it most.

In Possibility,
Jen

P. S. Thank you for being a part of the YWCA community! Wishing you happy holidays, and a joyful New Year, from our house to yours!

New & Noteworthy

Give the Gift of Shelter this Winter

YWCA Missoula is committed to providing shelter and 24/7 support at The Meadowlark. This year, *we've set a goal to raise \$35,000 by December 31* to fund emergency shelter and critical support services for unhoused families and survivors of domestic violence.

Your donation helps:

- Provide safe, warm shelter for families with nowhere else to go.

- Offer healing spaces where survivors can rebuild their lives.
- Support families as they transition toward long-term stability.

Donate today and help us reach our goal! Together, we can meet the increased demand for shelter and bring warmth and safety to our community this winter.

Learn more.

Chris Young-Greer Honored as a 2024 Adinkra Distinguished Black Achiever



We are very proud to celebrate Chris Young-Greer, our Director of Racial Justice & Equity, for being named a 2024 Adinkra Distinguished Black Achievers Honoree by the Adinkra Alliance Institute! This honor recognizes individuals who exemplify outstanding leadership and create lasting, positive change in their communities.

Chris leads with heart and wisdom. She's an advocate, a mentor, and someone who doesn't shy away from the hard conversations. Despite the challenges of our work at YWCA Missoula, Chris brings such a light to the organization.

Learn more about Chris and the other impressive honorees (including many other leaders from Montana!) at

adinkrainstitute.com.

Staff Spotlight

Zoe O'Brien, Pathways Lead Advocate

Zoe O'Brien brings a strong background in activism and advocacy to her role as Pathways Lead Advocate. Before joining YWCA Missoula, she served on the board of the Human Rights Educational Institute in North Idaho and was involved in various activist and volunteer efforts. Pathways is Zoe's first experience in direct service, and her passion for human rights and women's empowerment has grown even stronger in this role. As a survivor herself, she brings personal insight and compassion to her work.

In her three years with Pathways, Zoe has been inspired daily by the strength and courage of the participants she works with. She values the support of her Pathways team, whose dedication reinforces her commitment to the YWCA's mission and the program's purpose.

In her free time, Zoe enjoys painting, creating wood-burning art, spending time with her cat, and being outdoors.

We're grateful for Zoe's hard work and the care she brings to supporting survivors in our community.



Program Updates

Sexual Assault Support Group Starts in January

Beginning January 8, YWCA Missoula is offering a free, 10-week closed support group for adult survivors of sexual violence. Open to all genders, this group provides a safe, supportive space to share experiences, navigate challenges, and foster healing and growth. The group will meet on Wednesdays at 5:30.

Pre-registration is required. To learn more or to sign up, contact Carol at croberts@ywcaofmissoula.org or call 406-541-4006.



Shop Secret Seconds for the Holidays

Get into the holiday spirit and support a great cause by shopping at **Secret Seconds Thrift Stores**! From festive decorations to unique and budget-friendly gifts, you'll find everything you need to make your holidays merry and bright.

Every purchase helps fund YWCA Missoula's critical programs, supporting survivors of violence, families experiencing homelessness, and others in our community.

Visit us this holiday season and give gifts that give back! **Gift certificates are also available...** the perfect stocking-stuffer for the thrifters in your life.



Find Your "Y"

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

Celebrating December Holidays Through Food

December is a time for many celebrations beyond Christmas, with food playing a central role in bringing people together. Here are some holidays observed this month around the world, and the traditional dishes that add flavor to their stories.

- Kwanzaa (December 26 – January 1): Founded in 1966 by Maulana Karenga, Kwanzaa celebrates African-American heritage and unity. A highlight is the feast on December 31, often featuring dishes like **Southern Fried Catfish**, **African Peanut Soup**, and **Fried Okra**. These foods reflect a connection to African and Southern culinary traditions.
- Hanukkah (December 25 – January 2): The Jewish Festival of Lights commemorates the miracle of oil lasting eight nights. Foods fried in oil are central to this celebration, such as **Potato Latkes** and **Sufganiyot (jelly donuts)**, and **Noodle Kugel**. These dishes are a delicious way to honor resilience and tradition.
- Winter Solstice (December 20/21 in Northern Hemisphere): Celebrated in many cultures, the solstice marks the return of light on the shortest day of the year. Traditional foods include **Tang Yuan (Chinese rice balls)** for the solstice holiday Dongzhi, **Pomegranate Soup** for Yaldā Night in Iran, and **Cancha (crunchy corn)** from Peru, often paired with ceviche, during Inti Raymi (celebrated in June, the winter solstice in Southern Hemisphere).

As we celebrate the season, let's savor these diverse traditions that bring warmth and connection to the winter months!

Get Involved

Holidays at The Meadowlark

The holidays are a special time at The Meadowlark, where nearly 80 children are currently staying with their families in our shelters. You can help make this season bright by contributing to our holiday efforts!

Donate Items for Holiday Gift Baskets:

We're collecting coffee mugs, water bottles, gloves, and gift cards. [Check our updated list to see what items we still need.](#)

Volunteer to wrap and assemble:

We're also seeking volunteers to help wrap presents and assemble gift baskets before Christmas. [Email Alta](#) or call (406) 543-6691 to get involved!

Your generosity helps create joyful holiday memories for families in our shelters. Thank you!



Get a Family Housing Center License Plate

Make a difference in our community by purchasing a YWCA Missoula + MIC Family Housing Center license plate. With its simple, starry mountain design, the plate represents your commitment to investing in families and children and helps

fund essential services and support to unhoused families at The Meadowlark.

[Click here to learn how to get your plate](#)

Employment Opportunities

Join our team and make a difference in the community! We're currently hiring for the following positions:

- Pathways Advocate
- Family Housing Center Overnight Advocate
- Secret Seconds Store Clerk

[Learn more and apply](#)





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