Dear Families, Friends, Supporters:

Blessings from CSSM during this year's Christmas season. Since 1953, Catholic Social Services has continually provided services to women experiencing unexpected pregnancies, and to couples struggling to expand their families. Through our ministry of providing help and creating hope, God has enabled these beautiful and loving families to blend into one. With pride and joy we present the children of 2019; each one special in God's eyes.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from Catholic Social Services of Montana December 2019



Josh and Heidi were thrilled when they received a call from the Helena office. They learned a baby boy had been born just a few days earlier in Helena, and his birthmother had selected them to be his parents! They rushed to pack their things, clear the snow from their driveway and travel as quickly as possible in order to meet their son. **Caleb's** sweet personality brings so much joy and fulfillment to his family!

Erik, Ann Marie and **Edward** were waiting patiently for an addition to their family when they were chosen by a birth mother. From there it was a fast track to meeting the birth parents to finally bringing their son **Andrew** home from the hospital. They enjoy snuggling and being entertained as they watch his personality develop. Edward has totally shown Andrew the ropes and all are excited to be a family.



Based on our commitment to Catholic social teaching, Catholic Social Services of Montana provides for works of advocacy, compassion, pastoral outreach, education, and social justice.

A Look Inside:

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Adoptive placements often have complex legal situations to navigate. Each one is unique, and outcomes are not always certain. When **Elizabeth's** young mother approached CSSM with her desire to place her baby for adoption, it quickly became apparent that her adoption would legally be a complex and uncertain journey. No one could guarantee the adoption would go through. **Joe and Marie** put their fear and uncertainty aside and stepped forward to offer loving arms to not only sweet Elizabeth but as friends and support to her young mother. They relied on their faith in God and the support of the entire CSSM team and said yes, and as a result have been able to officially become a family of three!





Russell and Carolyn had just gotten licensed when they found themselves in the whirlwind of adding a new member to the family! The families met and the next day **Alexander** was born. He left the hospital in their care and life has not been the same. When the social worker spoke with the birth parents months later, the family said, "We have no regrets and could not have picked a better family." They finalized their adoption at the Adoption Celebration in November.

Brian, Amy and their son **Crosby** waited a long time for a new addition to their family. They were "getting older" and felt their window for raising children was closing. Just when they were about to give up hope, they were chosen by a birth mother and their son **Arlis** was born. His birth mother really wanted him to have a life she could not provide him at this time. Since Arlis entered the family he has completely stolen their hearts. They are so thankful for the loving choice his birth mother made.





Byrne and Nissa had waited for their family to grow when they were chosen by a birth mother in Florida. They flew to Florida when the baby was born and they stayed in a hotel for six weeks before they could bring **Emelia** home from the NICU, as she was born very premature. After a long road to finalization the family is ecstatic that she is now "truly theirs".

Adam and Kelly had been talking with a co-worker about wanting to start their family through adoption. Shortly after, the co-worker discovered she was pregnant and asked them if they would adopt her baby. Of course, the answer was "yes" and **Lilian** joined the family. She has brought many smiles since then.





Jon and Chelsea's family appeared to be full to those looking in. God had blessed them with three amazing children. Their hearts however were still missing someone. They were thrilled when an expectant mother selected them. It was all this mother could do to care for her older children, one of which had special needs. She chose Jon and Chelsea's family to give her baby boy all the things she felt like she could not. **Isaiah** fills their home with joy and rounds out their beautiful family perfectly.

Tobie and Lynnsey longed for another child to give their young son a sibling and to round out their family. They tried being foster care parents, but found the journey was just too difficult and painful. They chose adoption and began working within the CSSM infant program. CSSM's number one priority is to make sure that children in need of good homes connect to good families. Many are unaware of the fact that we have positive ongoing relationships with all licensed agencies in Montana including DCFS, and Lutheran Social Services (LSS). This is part of **Micah's** story. When Micah was born, Lutheran Social Services was supporting his birth mother, but did not have a home that met the requirements of ICWA (Indian Child Welfare Act). Tobie and Lynnsey met those requirements. CSSM and LSS worked collaboratively to help this beautiful family come together.





Jeremie, Kay and **Dawson** waited for five years to receive an addition to their family. They were just about ready to go in a different direction when they got "the call." **Braxton** was well worth the wait and Dawson couldn't be more excited to have a new baby brother.

Sahayleigh's birth parents knew fairly early on that adoption would be the right choice for their child. They chose a wonderful family and were lucky enough to have about 3 months prior to the birth for the families to get to know each other! Sahayleigh joins her older brother and sister, **Afton** and **Patience**, who dote on her, and are incredibly helpful to their parents. **Mark and Michaela** now feel that their family is joyfully complete!





The two recommended vaccinations for adults caring for a new baby are:

- 1. Current Flu Shot
- 2. DTAP Diphtheria Tetanus Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

Social Worker Updates

We've been busy here in the **central** part of the state! We held our CSSM workshop for new adoptive couples in September and had six couples from this area participate. That means many home studies have been in the process since then as we work to get them ready to receive placements. Other families have been re-licensed as they wait to be chosen by birth mothers. We have not had as many birth mothers in this area as last year, so hoping to see more of them in 2020. November was National Adoption Month and we held the 23rd Annual Adoption Celebration at the Capitol in Helena. CSSM had two finalizations at the ceremony. We continue to do home studies and post placement visits for parents doing direct placements. We have significantly increased the number of families and children served at the Baby Boutique in Helena . Our donations are barely keeping up with the need. We can always use donations of diapers sizes 4, 5 and 6, pull-ups, diaper wipes and clothing. JANN

Here in **western** Montana, I've been planning for and, ultimately, putting on our second annual Dueling Pianos fundraiser! "Dueling Pianos: A Gala Benefiting Montana Children" was held at the University Center Ballroom in Missoula on Saturday, October 19th. We had a fantastic turnout, showing significant growth from our first year in nearly every aspect! The event for 2020 is tentatively planned for Saturday, October 3rd and we're already excited about it! Please consider supporting this budding fundraiser as it continues to gain momentum. The Missoula office was represented at the September workshop with two couples from this area who are now working their way toward joining the adoptive parent pool. We also held an adoption celebration and had one family finalize the adoption of their daughter. The Missoula area has not seen many potential birth parents seeking adoptive services but continues to serve families through conducting home studies, foster care licensing and re-licensing, post placement visits and offering support and guidance as needed. JENNY

The **Billings** office has had an exciting year not only supporting families through adoption but getting a facelift and a few new advocates! Through our infant program we have seen several adoptive placements, new home studies and home study renewals. In addition to our infant program, we have had international adoption post placements, several domestic and private adoption placements and home studies. We are also thrilled to continue to educate about infant adoption. We have participated in the Infant Adoption Awareness Program to help educate medical providers about adoption, continued to work with our local pregnancy centers, and most recently have been invited to come speak to the child development class at Billings Senior High about adoption awareness!

As well as supporting families, the Billings office received a generous donation to give our declining facilities a facelift! Drive past our office and peek at our new paint job if you have not had the opportunity to do so. Thank you to Ted, Vonnie, Eric, and Amy Fink, Linda Cladis, Rimrock Auto and John Soares, William and Laverne Royer, Brian Anderson at Time Square Furniture, Kevin Nelson at Peterson Quality Office Supply, St. Vincent Healthcare, St.Bernard's CCW, St. Anthony CCW, Saunders Construction, and Ross Martz at Elite Pro Painting.



Our Billings Office after the renovations

One of the great challenges of being a small organization in a large state is the isolation of our satellite offices like the Billings office. The Billings office has spent the year working hard to remedy this by making our presence more known and engaging others in our mission. This is being done by the creation of a team of supporters from the Billings area. This team meets about every six weeks to look at networking opportunities in the community as well as support the growth of Catholic Social Services in the state of Montana but especially in Eastern Montana. If you or your organization has ideas for ways you may contribute to this mission, please reach out and let us know! The Billings office would also like to welcome our new office volunteer, Diana Penney to our team! MICHELLE

A SOCIAL WORKER'S PERSPECTIVE

by Michelle Perlick, MSW

Growing up the youngest child of a devout Catholic woman, Catholic Social Teaching was at the foundation of how my parents raised me. I was raised to treat everyone with respect and kindness, to be a friend to those who needed one, to advocate for others when needed, to accept that everyone is equal in God's love, to listen to others, to use my logic, empathy and God given mind, and to help unite those that were fractured. These were always principles I have tried to emulate in my life. When I decided to go to school to pursue social work, I did so with a prayer filled heart. I prayed every day that God would teach me what I needed to learn so I could do the work He needed me to do. The possibility I could work for a faith-based organization, let alone a Catholic one, never crossed my mind. I just soldiered on with an open heart. As graduation neared, I began to worry about what type of employment I would find. When I saw a posting for the Social Worker position with Catholic Social Services, I am not exaggerating when I say my heart leapt into my chest! Employment in my profession that was not only in line with my moral and ethical code but my own personal faith? It seemed almost unbelievable. The more I read, the more excited I became. The job description ticked every one of my desires... even some I hadn't allowed myself to hope for. I was so blessed to be offered the position. It quickly became apparent to me that this was more than a job. It was a mission. That God had indeed been listening to my prayer and answered in a call to service. That was the beginning of my story at Catholic Social Services. I can honestly say that I not only feel God's presence, but I often see His hand at work. The work is not easy. There is grief, loss, and sorrow that accompanies moments of joy, wonder, hope and the beginning of new life. But always intertwined in it all is the foundation of Catholic Social Teaching: advocacy, compassion, pastoral outreach, education and social justice. This experience has been one of my life's greatest gifts. I have an amazing team that I work with that feels like family. I have a job that I believe in, and I am privileged to have a gift that very few get. I can be open about my Catholic faith and belief in God, every day in all my moments. I can pray with my boss and team, I can offer prayers to all those I meet and encounter, and even sign my professional email with a blessing. There are days that are long, emotional and taxing. But in my heart, I know that I am doing the work God needs me to do. I am so very grateful for all who support our small organization. Not only do your donations allow me this great gift, but I pray that you know how your support helps those who feel lost, alone and uncertain. Blessings to you in the new year. I pray that you reach out to God and ask for His guidance and accept His grace to lead you on your own mission for Him and that you feel the joy and reward that I feel in doing His work.

There are many ways you can help CSSM with our mission and commitment to human dignity, the common good of all, and the care of people who are poor and vulnerable.

- Select CSSM as your **Amazon Smile** partner and every time you make a purchase at smile.Amazon.com, a donation will be made to CSSM by the Amazon Smile Foundation.
- Donate to our Baby Boutique that is filled with diapers, wipes, clothing and other baby items to share with folks in the Helena community that need help.
- Join our monthly givers who donate on a regular schedule. Even a small monthly donation adds up and makes a difference for our organization.
- Donations can be made online at our website www.cssmt.org or mail checks to our office: Catholic Social Services of Montana; PO Box 907; Helena, MT 59624 or call our office at 406-442-4130 for more information.

We are so very grateful for our many friends and donors! We recognize the multiple claims on your resources, all for worthy causes, and we are honored our supporters have chosen CSSM!

MANY THANKS TO OUR MONTHLY DONORS!

Wade & Denae Mayfield Myles & GG Grotbo Ted & Allison Burch Kristy & Jamie Ogolin Lynnette Stern Kally Haag Molly Miller Bryan & Twila Costigan Jay & Karen Trepanier Saint Mary Catholic Community Bob Frazer Linda Pouliot

Wendy's Wonderful Kids

Katie Lamach is the Wendy's Wonderful Kids Recruiter for the western half of Montana. She travels all over the state to visit with the children on her caseload. She currently has children placed in Anaconda, Butte, Helena, Kalispell, Trout Creek, Billings, Bozeman, and Great Falls.

One of the children on her caseload is ready to be adopted by her foster family. They are waiting for a court date, so the adoption will likely take place the beginning of 2020. What a great way to ring in the New Year!

Katie also has a duffel bag project she has worked on over the years. She raised money through donations to provide children in foster care with duffel bags so that when they switched placements, they would not need to use a garbage bag for their belongings. She is getting ready to make another bulk purchase of bags to give to children in foster care. Katie also requested and received generous donations from the Helena community to purchase a special Christmas gift for a foster child with Autism. The only gift the child wanted for Christmas was a 15x15x15 Moyu cube (similar to Rubiks), which cost more than \$150. She received enough donations to purchase the gift and make this child's Christmas a little brighter.



The services Wendy's Wonderful Kids Recruiters provide are extremely important for children in foster care. More than 130,000 children in the foster care system across the nation are waiting to be adopted. In Montana approximately 600 children are permanent wards of the State and waiting to find adoptive families. Wendy's Wonderful Kids believes every child is adoptable and every child deserves a safe, loving, and permanent family. Across the US, it is estimated that 20,532 children will age out of the foster care system without a family or home to call their own. Wendy's Wonderful Kids is trying to change those

numbers. More than 9,000 children have been adopted through the Wendy's Wonderful Kids Program. If you would like more information about this program, please contact Katie Lamach at 406-442-4130 or 1-800-222-9383.



It is estimated that annually over 10,000 households contribute to the Diocese of Great Falls Billings Care and Share and the Diocese of Helena Annual Catholic Appeal in support of the ministry of Catholic Social Services of Montana. It is a privilege for appeal donors to contribute 21% of the overall CSSM budget, through annual appeal funding, to further the work of building and strengthening families all across Montana. *Together we do make a difference.*

Thank you for supporting our *Catholic Social Services of Montana* **Endowments**! Because of supporters like you, we are fortunate to have an endowment with the foundations for **both** Montana diocesses. Every gift to our endowments increases the amount Catholic Social Services of Montana receives this year, next year, and **forever** in support of our mission! No gift is ever too small.

Giving to our *CSSM Endowments* is simple – through the mail or securely online. Guidance is below. If you would like to make a *planned gift* for our CSSM Endowments that will qualify you for the 40% Montana Charitable Endowment Tax Credit, contact the respective Foundation for the diocese in which you live and they will be more than happy to help you! And we will be forever grateful.

Earnings from our endowments are used each year to help the individuals and families we assist daily. Without question, the most important things our endowments provide are "hope" and "security". To know that a constant stream of income will be coming to our organization each year because of your generosity provides hope to those of us working and those of us being served by Catholic Social Services of Montana. And the guarantee of this supplement to our annual budget provides peace of mind and security. Thank you again!

The Foundation for the Diocese of Helena

Jeanne Saarinen, Executive Director P.O Box 1729 Helena, MT 59624 Secure online giving at <u>www.fdoh.org</u> (406) 389-7051 <u>isaarinen@diocesehelena.org</u>



The Catholic Foundation of Eastern Montana (Great Falls-Billings Diocese)

Judy Held, President PO Box 1345 Great Falls, MT 59403 Secure online giving at <u>www.catholicfoundationmt.org</u> (406) 315-1765 judy@catholicfoundationmt.org





The CSSM 20th Annual Golf Tournament took place at Bill Roberts Golf Course in Helena on July 13th. CSSM would like to recognize all the generous sponsors that helped make this year's tournament a huge success!

SAVE THE DATE ~ our next tournament will be held on Friday, July 10, 2020 at Bill Roberts Golf Course in Helena!

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PRIZE DONATIONS



Going for a hole-in-one and a new Subaru!

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GRANTS

The Foundation for the Diocese of Helena recently awarded CSSM a grant in the amount of \$1,401.20. This money will be used to purchase Bloomerang, a donor management software program. To learn more about the Foundation, its grants program and endowments, please contact the parish office or Jeanne Saarinen at the Foundation—(406) 389-7051, or jsaarinen@diocesehelena.org.

The Town Pump Charitable Foundation and the Montana Community Foundation both recently awarded CSSM a grant in the amount of \$500!

Thank you to The Foundation for the Diocese of Helena, Town Pump and Montana Community Foundation!





Thanks to the hard work and dedication from Knights of Columbus Councils of Flathead Valley, the NW Charity Golf tournament is going strong! Now in its second successful year, the tournament was held at the Village Greens Golf Course in September.

Thank you to the Knights of Columbus, the players and all the sponsors!

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CSSM partnered with the Montana Hope Project for a second year to put on a fundraiser in Missoula - Dueling Pianos: A Gala Benefiting Montana Children. This entertaining event had attendees laughing, dancing and singing along as two piano players from Fun Pianos entertained the crowd. We plan to hold the event in Missoula again in early October 2020. You don't want to miss out on the fun, watch our website for details as we get closer to the event. **Thank you to our fabulous sponsors and everyone who attended this exciting and successful event!**

MAJOR SPONSORS

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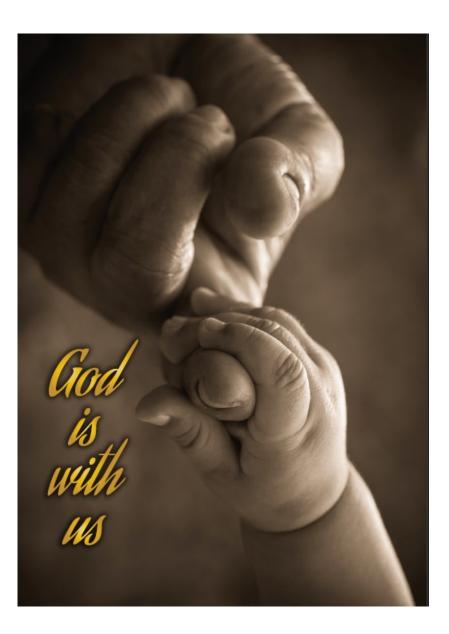
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BILLINGS

1048 North 30th St. Billings, MT 59101 (406) 252-3399 billings@cssmt.org

MAIN OFFICE

PO Box 907 Helena, MT 59624 (406) 442-4130 helena@cssmt.org

MISSOULA

420 W. Pine Missoula, MT 59802 (406) 728-5429 missoula@cssmt.org

GREAT FALLS

410 Central Avenue #601 Great Falls, MT 59401 (406) 771-7805 greatfalls@cssmt.org