

MERRY CHRISTMAS



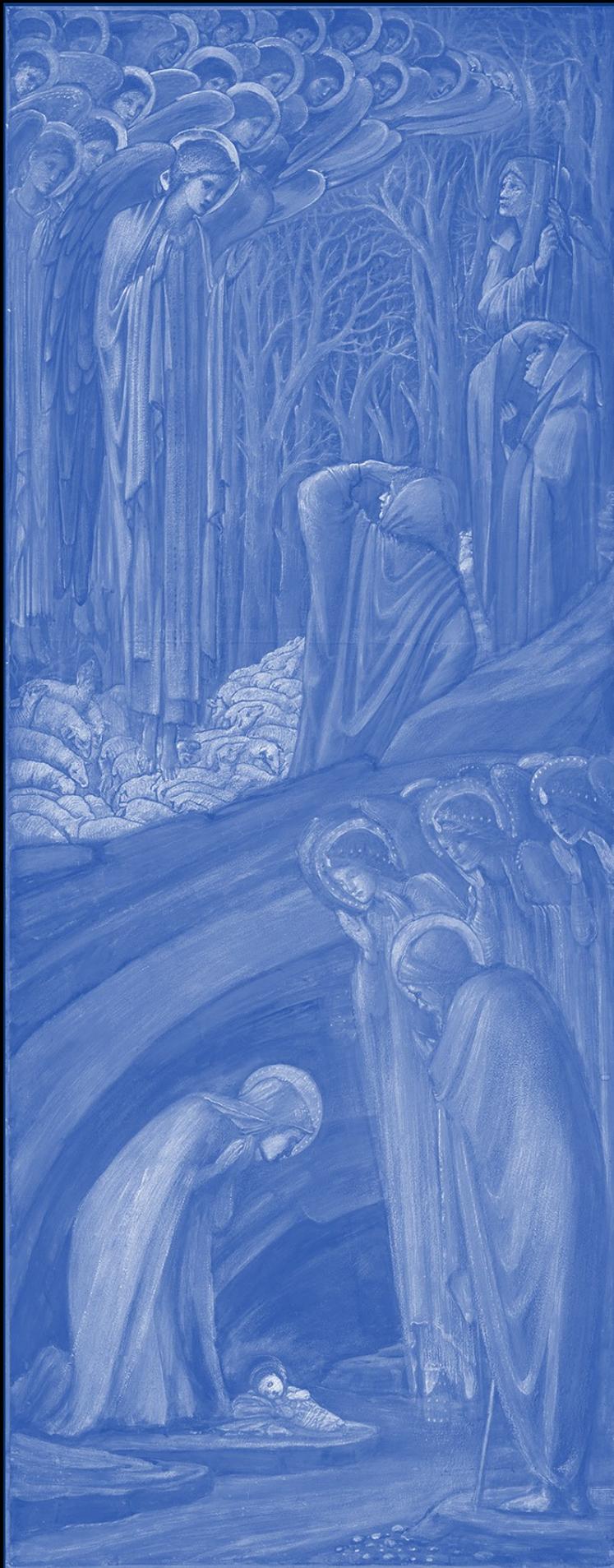
CSSM
CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES
of Montana

A LOOK INSIDE

- ★ Greetings from our Executive Director
- ★ Updates from our Mental Health Program
- ★ CSSM's Baby Boutique Ministry
- ★ Stories from our Adoption Program
- ★ A Year in Review at CSSM
- ★ How you can Partner with us

Our Mission:

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.



Merry Christmas and happy holidays!

Wow! What a year. I am so proud of and grateful for the team, volunteers, and all those who supported CSSM this year. Together, we worked across Montana to build families through adoption, support families with young children in need through our Baby Boutiques, and be there for those seeking assistance and guidance with a mental health situation in their life. As you flip through our yearly update, I hope you find inspiration and experience joy in knowing that together, we are able to do this work that enriches the lives of all we serve. Thank you for your generosity of time, prayers, and donations to our charitable work.

God Bless,



Scott Held, Executive Director

OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Most Rev. Austin Vetter

Diocese of Helena

Most Rev. Jeffrey Fleming

Diocese of Great Falls-Billings

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Helena

Rev. Ryan Erlenbush

Great Falls

Laure Pengelly Drake

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Marty Beatty

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SCOTT HELD

Executive Director



SUE STAHLEY

Mental Health Counselor



SENJA LINJANEN

Program Coordinator Adoption



JEANNETTE BOWER

Program Coordinator Mental Health



JANN PETEK

Social Worker



MICHELLE PERLICK

Director of Adoptions & Social Worker



STEVE NASH

Mental Health Counselor



PHIL QUINN

Mental Health Counselor

"YOUR MENTAL HEALTH AFFECTS YOUR SPIRITUAL HEALTH"

It has been an exciting year for the mental health program. We're excited to share Steve Nash, who works out of our Bozeman office, and Sue Stahley, who works out of our Billings office, have joined Phil Quinn and Michelle Perlick as therapists in our program. To date, the program has:

- ★ Provided counseling and therapy in-person and through telehealth to more than 200 clients of all ages, genders, and other factors.
- ★ These clients live in more than 40 Montana communities and have taken part in nearly 1,800 sessions with our licensed therapists.
- ★ Of these sessions, 42% are discounted in one way or another. This is part of our commitment to being there for everyone, regardless of ability to pay, in their time of need. Many sessions bill at less than half the average cost of a counseling session in Montana.
- ★ Clients have sought help for many different reasons, including marriage and relationship work, anxiety, grief, depression, trauma, and many more.

We're here for you. To get started with a therapist, call (406) 442-4130 or visit www.cssmt.org/contact to message us.

Testimonials

- * Phil is good people. He's one of the only people on my Christmas card list because he's one of the only people I trust to talk to.
-counseling client
- * I'm so appreciative of your generosity. It has been quite difficult to live off of only my husband's paycheck for nine months. I am hoping and praying my unemployment comes to an end soon. *(it did, which has helped the client immensely. Hooray!)*
-counseling client referencing their drastically discounted session costs



Normalizing the Conversation



This year, the team has spent extensive time traveling across Montana to facilitate conversations and provide educational opportunities on the topic of mental health. It has been wonderful to see and meet so many people, who are all committed to normalizing the conversation around mental health and how important it is to our daily lives. Through education, we are empowering our neighbors to be ready to care for a mental health crisis they may experience in their community.



We're happy to share our Baby Boutiques in Helena and Billings continue to successfully meet the needs of families. By creating a shopping experience for diapers, wipes, clothing, toys, blankets, and other necessities, the volunteers and staff at the Baby Boutiques help "bridge the gap" for families experiencing a shortfall in their finances. This helps provide dignity for the mothers and fathers by giving a "hand-up" instead of a "hand-out," and gives peace of mind to these families, knowing the hygiene of their children is cared for. *If you live in Helena or Billings and want to experience the joy of this ministry, we'd love your help as a volunteer! Just give us a call! Both locations also accept donations of diapers, pull-ups, rash cream, and other gently used items.*

BABY BOUTIQUE

Our Distributions

- Diapers- 82,164
- Clothing- 13,698
- Wipes- 2,272 packages
- Other Items- 3,398



Our Two Locations:

BILLINGS

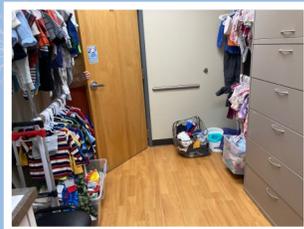
Billings Baby Boutique

Location:

St Patrick Co-Cathedral
215 N 31st St
Billings MT 59101

Hours:

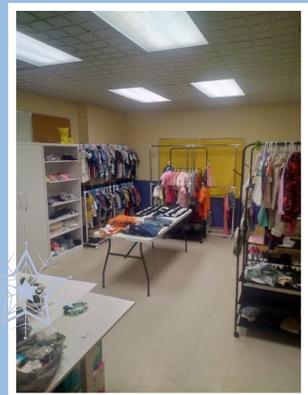
Tuesdays-9:30-11:30
Thursdays-9:30-11:30



Before...

WE MOVED!

In September, the Billings Baby Boutique moved from its location at RiverStone Health to St. Patrick Co-Cathedral. This move more than doubled the size of the space and allows for more families to be served simultaneously!



After!

HELENA

Little Essentials Baby Boutique

Location:

The Cathedral Center, Room 108
530 N Ewing
Helena MT 59601

Hours:

Tuesdays-11:00-1:00
Thursdays-11:00-1:00



Some of our amazing Helena Baby Boutique volunteers — we're so grateful for their hard work and big hearts!

From Our Adoption Department: Journeys of Hope

Vocation of a Social Worker, a True Calling

While infrequent, from time-to-time we have a case where an expectant mother shows up at the emergency room, actively in labor, saying she cannot keep her baby, wants no connection after the birth, and wishes to sign over custody. While yes, we, as a licensed adoption agency, are taking custody, this incredible responsibility feels like it falls directly to us, the social workers, since we are there to ensure the well-being of the wonderful little blessing of the new baby. The weight of this first hit me when I started at CSSM a decade ago and our Executive Director at the time, Rosemary Miller, said, "Congratulations, it looks like you had a baby!" I sat confused for a minute until it clicked and I realized I was signing all the authorizations for care as if I was the baby's parent!

When a woman chooses to completely put up walls and disconnect from her child, and we take custody, we become that child's parent of sorts. When I, as the social worker, am standing in a dark, quiet NICU room, looking down at this precious gift from God desperately fighting to live, with all the tubes and lines coming and going from them, I suddenly feel the swelling of my heart to care, love, and give this baby the best of everything. The little one needs me, not as a mom, but as the bridge between them and their mom and dad, working hard to find the one adoptive family who has been waiting for them. I have families to call. Families who have been waiting for this call. Families who have been dreaming of the perfect addition to their loving home.

When I walk into a NICU room with a family who has said yes, and all the hospital team lines up to see the first time the adoptive couple lay eyes upon their child, it is like winning the lottery. I see their joy and fear turn into immediate love for the angel in front of them. During this time, the real miracle happens. That sweet baby feels the love of their new parents. The connection, heartbeat, and warmth of a living person: their family. They blossom and the positive physical change that occurs is a sight to behold. To say I feel forever connected to each baby is an understatement. I leave a piece of me with each one of them and in turn, take a piece of them with me for always. This is when I always think, "I truly have the best job in the world." -this is an abridged version of the original piece. The full length piece is available on CSSM's website, at www.cssmt.org.



Written by: Michelle Perlick, Director of Adoption Services and Social Worker for Eastern Montana



A Gift of Love

Our hearts overflow with gratitude for the journey that brought our precious Aurora into our lives. After nearly two years of hopeful anticipation, she arrived in February 2024 at 18 months old, instantly filling our home with laughter and light. The joy of her final adoption in December of that year was a moment we'll forever cherish. Now a spunky and thriving three-year-old, Aurora keeps us on our toes and reminds us daily of the incredible gift of adoption. She is a constant source of energy, love, and endless wonder, and we can't imagine our lives without her.



A LOOK BACK AT 2025 - A YEAR AT CSSM

FEBRUARY

Steve Nash joined the CSSM team as a mental health counselor.



MARCH

The Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians blessed our Baby Boutique with a large gift.

The Cathedral of St. Helena organized a successful diaper drive for the Baby Boutique.

ProLife MT organized a diaper drive for our Baby Boutique as part of the 40 Days for Life Rally.

Divine Mercy Academy supported our Baby Boutique with generous donations and even held a bake sale!



Counselor Phil Quinn presented on the importance of mental health at the Diocese of Helena's Eucharistic Congress.

APRIL

Phil hosted a mental health education session in Billings.

The Knights of Columbus made a HUGE donation of diapers to our Baby Boutique.



Our Baby Boutique was gifted with a large donation of diapers from Helena Alliance Church.

Our Lady of the Valley delivered their many Lent to Life donations to our Baby Boutique.

St Cyril and Methodius organized a diaper drive benefiting our Baby Boutique.

CSSM received a grant from Helena Area Community Foundation to support our Baby Boutique.



MAY

CSSM received a grant for our mental health program from Catholic Extension.



JUNE

Phil hosted a mental health education session for the Missoula community.



JULY

CSSM placed a baby with an adoptive family, beginning the joyful journey towards adoption finalization.

CSSM held its annual Adoption Workshop, welcoming 12 couples!



AUGUST

Sue Stahley joined the CSSM team as a mental health counselor.



A LOOK BACK AT 2025 - A YEAR AT CSSM

AUGUST (continued)

CSSM was awarded two grants from the Catholic Foundation of Eastern Montana: one for our Baby Boutique ministry and one for our mental health program.



CSSM was awarded a grant from the Foundation for the Diocese of Helena for our Baby Boutique ministry.



SEPTEMBER

Phil presented on the importance of mental health at the presbyteral assembly for the Diocese of GF-Billings.

The Billings Baby Boutique moved to its new location at St Patrick Co-Cathedral.



OCTOBER

CSSM placed two babies with adoptive families, beginning their blessed journeys toward adoption finalization.

NOVEMBER 2025

CSSM celebrated National Adoption Day, honoring the love of birth parents and adoptive families, who choose adoption for their children, precious gifts from God!



DECEMBER

Saint Mary Catholic Community's Giving Tree will bless CSSM with gifts for our birth mothers and Baby Boutiques.



On Friday, June 20th, CSSM held its 26th Annual Charity Golf Tournament at Bill Robert's Golf Course, bringing together 21 teams for a day of fellowship, fun, and fundraising to support the families we serve. The day was cool, with participants completing their rounds just before a heavy downpour began!



In addition to a round of golf and lunch, teams participated in a variety of on-course games, including the long putt challenge, yardzee, cornhole, and the marshmallow long drive challenge. The day was a joyful way to come together in community and support CSSM's mission of serving life and family.

You can see the full list of results, prize winners, and sponsors by visiting our website at www.cssmt.org.





Catholic Social Services of Montana

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406-442-4130
www.cssmt.org

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How You Can Partner With Us In Our Mission

- ★ **Mail us a donation** using the envelope in this newsletter. Please make checks out to CSSM.
- ★ **Donate online** by visiting our website and clicking on the DONATE button in the upper right corner. There, you can select a one time donation or an ongoing monthly donation.
- ★ **Contribute to one of our endowments.** CSSM has endowments with The Catholic Foundation of Eastern Montana and The Foundation for the Diocese of Helena. To donate to one of these, visit their websites and follow their instructions. Make sure to choose the CSSM endowment. Endowment donations ensure your gift will benefit us in perpetuity.
- ★ **Donate land, property, or distributions from your IRA.** Donating land, property, or distributions from your IRA may allow you to avoid paying taxes, while benefiting CSSM.
- ★ **Remember CSSM in your will with a bequest.** This is a great way to create a bright future for CSSM in your memory.
- ★ **Give the gift** of diapers, wipes, or other essentials to our Baby Boutiques. If you live in Helena or Billings, **give** of your time by volunteering to help.
- ★ **Follow us** on our website AND Facebook to keep up with all our latest news.
- ★ **Pray for us.** We are grateful for your thoughts and prayers that accompany us in our work.

Thank you for your generosity to our mission and ministries.

CSSM is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization and contributions may be tax deductible. Consult with your tax professional.

HELENA

PO Box 907
Helena MT 59624
(406) 442-4130
M-F 9:00-3:00

BILLINGS

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By appointment only



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