IMPACT REPORT 2023

MISSION:
STRENGTHENING FAMILIES THROUGH EDUCATION, CONNECTION, PLAY, AND PARTNERSHIP

VISION:
TO CREATE A COMMUNITY WHERE FAMILIES FEEL SUPPORTED, EMPOWERED, AND INSPIRED TO LEARN AND PLAY TOGETHER.
A Year of Unique Challenges

For 30 years, Families First has been providing life-altering parenting classes and opportunities for parents to connect with peers and professionals to build a strong support network! This last year, we’ve witnessed families in Western Montana being faced with challenges ranging from inflation, lack of childcare, unaffordable housing, and behavioral, academic, and social impacts on children.

A message from our Executive Director

Imagine the single mother who, with the help of our counseling services, finds the strength to overcome adversity and create a safe, loving environment for her children. Picture the teenager who, through our educational programs, discovers a love for learning and the confidence to pursue their dreams despite the challenges they face. Think about the dad who has been able to reunify with his kids and strengthen their parent/child relationships. These are the stories of compassion in action, stories possible thanks to the community that supports us.

It’s hard to believe that this year, we have served a record number of families, but we would not have been able to do it without the help and support of the Department of Justice, who so generously awarded Families First a $764,000 grant to strengthen community support and well-being in Western Montana.

Thank you for being an integral part of our compassionate community.

With heartfelt gratitude,

- Hannah Zuraff
Meet The Team!

Hannah Zuraff
Executive Director

Marina Ferraris-Mercado
Development Manager

Katie Little
Child Enrichment Director

Hannah Wright
Family Education Director

Brie Shulman, LCPC
Clinical Director &
Inner Roads Program Director

Clay Veron
Inner Roads Expedition
Coordinator & Asst. Manager

Corrine Garrett
Teen Coordinator

Brittany Simonich
Family Education Coordinator -
Lake County

Jess Carrol
Child Enrichment Coordinator

Dylan Wright, NCC, PCLC
Wellness Education Coordinator

Jadd Davis
Clinical Intern
These Valentine’s were made by students throughout Western Montana at Title I schools, district partners, and childcare centers. They were distributed to Senior Living centers, Missoula Food Bank ROOTS participants, the Poverello Center & Johnson Street Shelter, and the VA Clinic.

These kits follow themes of Cultural Expression, Dramatic & Imaginative Play, Empathy & Kindness, and Social-Emotional Development. Children are able to engage in a fun, new activity, and parents receive tips on how to continue the conversation by learning through play.

830+ families participating in monthly programs at the Missoula Public Library

64% increase in Child Enrichment Program Participants since 2022

EATING & READING

In partnership with the Missoula Food Bank and Community Center, we offered free lunches and books to children during the summer with special readings by guest readers.

KINDERGARTEN READINESS CAMP

Summer camps work with children 4-6 years old to enhance their social and emotional skills in preparation for kindergarten!

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In our Family Education programs, parents and guardians have the opportunity to network and exchange ideas and advice. All programs are free and open to the public with childcare provided or have a reduced fee option. Our core curriculum emphasizes positive parenting, communication, and self-esteem in families.

700+ PARTICIPANTS

275+ families participating in our Family Education Programs

450+ families participating in our Clinical Support Programs

150+ PARENTS

sought 1:1 support through consults & counseling child development, parenting skills, divorce/separation navigation & more

"It really helps to hear other parents open up and be vulnerable with their struggles and successes. It motivated me to do better for my kids and to be more compassionate to myself."

- Circle Of Security Class Participant

LAKE COUNTY PROGRAMS

250+ PARTICIPANTS

in different programs throughout the Flathead Indian Reservation

32% increase in 2023 on participants from the Flathead Indian Reservation

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The Montana Happiness Project is dedicated to supporting mental health, promoting well-being, and reducing suicide rates through professional education, consultation, and supervision.

Ceci is getting her BA in Psychology and BFA in Acting from Pennsylvania State University. She is currently an intern with Families First, and the Montana Happiness Project where she develops positive psychology workshops for students K-12.

Dream Bigger is a dynamic program focused on making our communities stronger. We work across boundaries and stigmas to connect teens and young adults with a supportive network of mentors who are equally committed to their success.

T.N. is a young artist in Missoula. Their work, shown below, is a result of their participation in the Summer 2023 program session. T.N. won the stipend offered by the program to financially assist them with the materials needed to pursue art as a profession.

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100% of Dream Bigger participants reported a greater understanding about career paths and budgeting.
A Look Into 2024

01 30th Anniversary of Families First

02 Implementation of the Moms Making Meaning Program in Lake County

03 Developing Evaluation Strategies for ALL Families First Programs

04 First Inner Roads Expedition via Families First

05 Building Upon a Culture of Inclusion that Values Justice, Equity, Diversity, Accessibility, and Sustainability

06 Expanding of Teen Programs
Special thanks to all our partners for making our work possible!

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Missoula Electric Cooperative
- S&K Gaming
- Riverside Contracting, Inc.
- Blackfoot Communications
- Full Throttle Excavating
- Still Room
- Minuteman Press
- GLAC ER Brewing
- Jiffy Lube
- Unity Bank
- Stoney Financial
- NVita Nova Marketing Group
- P&C Recruiting
- Mann Mortgage
- Bonner Property Development LLC
- Leading Edge Aviation Services Inc.

FAMILY SERVICE PARTNERS

- Missoula Public Library
- Missoula Children's Theatre
- Missoula Childcare
- St. Luke University Hospital
- Montana Department of Health
- The Y
- Zero to Five
- Hire-Mont
- Living Lab
- Montana United Way
- Choices Family Planning
- Community Health Alliance
- Boys & Girls Club of Missoula County
- University of Montana
- Living Lab
- 406 Families

SUPPORTING FOUNDATIONS

- Missoula Community Foundation
- Dennis & Phyllis Washington Foundation
- Otto & Bertha Borick Foundation
- The Louis L. Borick Foundation
- Sample Foundation
- The Max and Betty Swanson Foundation
- Headwaters Foundation
- The Steele-Resee Foundation
- The Max and Betty Swanson Foundation
- The Max and Betty Swanson Foundation
- The Max and Betty Swanson Foundation
- Merlin Foundation
- Brian Weiss Memorial Fund
- George & Shirley Jensen Foundation
- William H. and Margaret M. Wallace Foundation

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