



# ROCKY MOUNTAIN DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, INC.

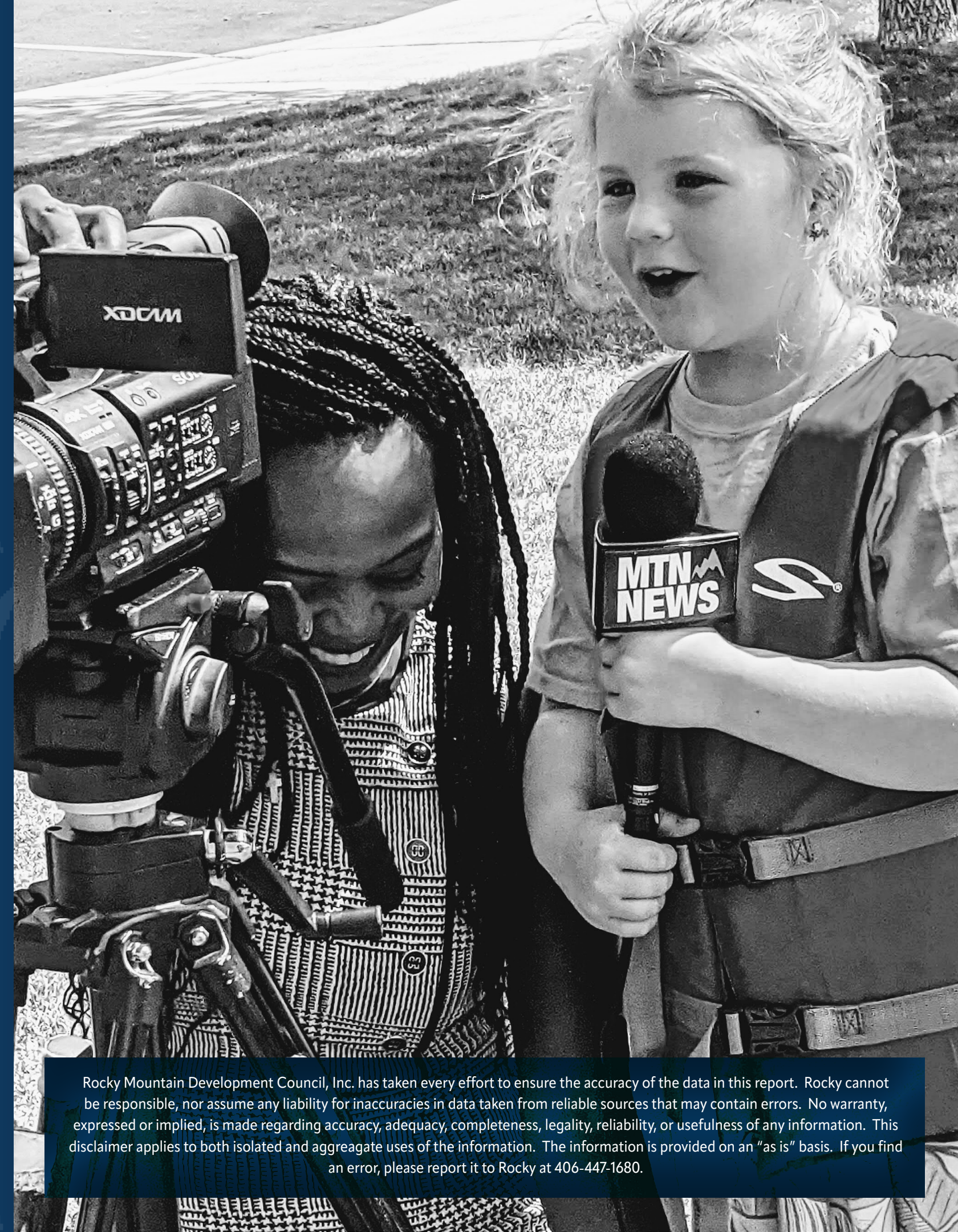
2021 Comprehensive  
Community  
Needs Assessment



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**ROCKY MOUNTAIN DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, INC.**  
Improving lives, strengthening communities.

Rocky Mountain Development Council, Inc.  
PO Box 1717; 200 South Cruse Avenue  
Helena, MT  
406-447-1680  
406-447-1629 (fax)  
[www.rmdc.net](http://www.rmdc.net)

PHOTO CAPTIONS

COVER: A volunteer packs groceries for Senior Nutrition and Transportation's Senior Commodities Program

PAGE 3: A Rocky Mountain Preschool student practices her broadcasting with a local reporter

PAGE 4: A Headstart student enjoys an ice cream cone

BACK COVER: An AmeriCorps Seniors Foster Grandparent works with a student



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rocky's Needs Assessment Committee identified the following as the key findings from research, the survey results, community forums, interviews, and partner discussions. The findings integrate with each other. For a person to find a job, they need an address and a home. For a person to keep a job, they need to be healthy to work. For a person to get to their job, they need transportation. For a person to keep a job, they often need childcare, sometimes at unusual times of the day.

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Rocky properties have a wait list of over 600 people. God's Love is full, and Good Samaritan Ministries (GSM) currently has about 13 motel rooms filled with homeless individuals. Unfortunately, the hotel owner abruptly notified their guests and Rocky's partners that they no longer would house homeless guests. GSM is working to find a replacement hotel. This is indicative of the scarcity of affordable housing in our area. Helena's Almanor Apartments used to offer flat rent, affordable two and three bedroom apartments. The rent was \$695-830/month. A different company purchased the apartment building. The rent is now \$1,025-1,550/month.

*A Pew Charitable Trust analyst says the rising housing costs are due to a Montana home shortage. All three of Rocky's counties experienced so much population growth that it outstripped housing supply.*

While there are new federal programs to help with rent, the software programs are cumbersome, staffing shortages are rampant, and rental payments are taking too long to get to the property owners.

An article from the Montana Business Quarterly (October 2021) entitled "Tackling Housing Affordability in Montana" reported that since 2016, there have been over 30,000 applications for housing choice voucher programs, yet in that same time frame, only about 4,000 have been issued. The article goes on to say that the rise and visibility of homeless individuals and families in Montana shows the shortfall of housing.

According to the Point in Time survey for 2021, Lewis & Clark County has seen an increase of 150% in the number of homeless people living in the area. Based on the quantitative and qualitative data gathered for this Needs Assessment, housing for homeless individuals is the number one issue with our communities. The needs are for people to be permanently housed, temporarily housed when necessary, and off the streets. A number of nonprofits in our communities are already hard at work trying to combat homelessness, but we need to do more. It will take a generous cross-section of our community to address this challenge – the public, local, state, and federal government, healthcare, law enforcement, mental and physical healthcare, the business sector, faith communities, and builders/developers.

Older adults and people with disabilities also face dire housing problems. The ability to age in place in one's home and community is threatened by worker shortages in home health and in-house maintenance, lawn care, and snow removal. Additionally, rapidly increasing property values drive up property taxes, which hurts housing affordability for individuals on fixed incomes. The same issue plagues people with disabilities who prefer community-based over institutional living.



**HEALTH**

The 2021 Lewis & Clark Community Health Report indicates the health areas of concern in our communities are asthma, cancer, heart disease, housing, mental health, and substance abuse. This report states that respiratory problems are noticeable particularly among lower-income households, frequently caused by smokers in the household. Risk behaviors associated with heart disease are high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, obesity, excessive alcohol consumption, and tobacco use.

Lack of adequate housing leads to poor health, higher hospitalization rates, shorter lifespan, and premature death. Recently, United Way of the Lewis & Clark Area, Helena Housing Authority, and St. Peter's Health received a Housing is Healthcare (HiH) grant from the Montana Healthcare Foundation for the FUSE project. FUSE is Frequent Users of Systems Engagement. This project will ensure the individuals with high utilization patterns of emergency services (mental healthcare, chronic health conditions, EMS, Emergency Department, police, jails, etc.) are successfully connected to housing and community-based wrap-around services.

Mental health conditions, such as depression or anxiety, increase the risk for a variety of long-lasting conditions like stroke, Type-2 Diabetes, and heart disease. In Lewis & Clark County, suicide mortality increased from 20 deaths per 100,000 in 2011-2013 to 24 deaths per 100,000 in 2017-2019. This rate is significantly higher compared to the United States rate, and did not meet the Healthy People 2030 target of reducing death rates to 12.8 deaths per 100,000 population. Nearly 9% of Lewis & Clark's population reported feeling isolated or lonely most days, and over half (57%) felt moderate or high stress levels most of the time. A community collaboration is hard at work to improve services and to review and make recommendations about behavioral health services.

Substance abuse is defined as overindulgence in or dependence on an addictive substance, especially alcohol or drugs. People with addiction can have associated health issues such as lung or heart disease, stroke, cancer, or mental health conditions.



*PICTURED ABOVE  
Carroll College nursing students present on the benefits of complementary therapies at the Helena Senior Center in collaboration with Rocky's Agency on Aging.*

Access to healthcare and mental healthcare is a vital component of the overall health of residents. Groups in our area addressing these needs are Lewis & Clark Public Health, St. Peter's Health, PureView Health Center, Center for Mental Health, Shodair, and a host of other organizations. However, the need is still great.

The COVID-19 pandemic created unprecedented levels of social isolation, particularly among older adults and people with disabilities.

*People experienced a loss of self-determination as programs designed to encourage socialization and engagement closed or limited public participation.*

Older adults and people with disabilities faced the impossible choice of staying safe with COVID-19 precautions or connecting with other human beings. Subsequent mental health issues have been massive and universal among those forced to isolate because of the pandemic.



## TRANSPORTATION

Capital Transit is Helena's public bus system. The Capital T has two fixed routes that run hourly on weekdays. There is also an ADA Paratransit Service. Other than that, there is one taxicab service and occasional Uber and Lyft. For many months during the pandemic, Helena had no taxi service whatsoever. There is no service for those without transportation to get easily to medical services. The American Hospital Association states that each year, 3.6 million people in the US do not obtain medical care due to transportation issues.

*Some cannot work without appropriate transportation; others cannot get their children to childcare without transportation.*

The problem is worse in rural areas. Only 32% of all rural counties in the US have full access to public transportation services. Low-income people in rural areas indicate that lack of transportation is a barrier to working. Limited transportation also isolates people from government services and programs designed to lift them out of poverty.

The lack of public transportation is often talked about, but few answers are found.

## CHILDCARE

Without childcare, parents often have to cut back hours or leave the workforce. The Bureau of Business and Economic Research at the University of Montana found that for Montanans who struggle to find childcare, 22% turned down a job offer, 15% went from full-time to part-time, and 12% quit their jobs. According to the Harvard Business Review, "the pandemic has exposed the previously invisible (or forgotten) link between childcare and the economy. It is the lifeline for women to stay employed. More than 2.3 million women have left the labor force since February 2020, accounting for 80% of all discouraged workers during the pandemic, reducing the labor

force participation rate to 57%, the lowest it's been since 1988."

Through the American Rescue Plan, Montana was awarded more than \$110 million in one-time only funding to support stabilization grants to childcare providers to cover their operating expenses as they face less revenue and higher expenses during the pandemic. It is hoped that childcare providers in Montana will apply and receive funding through this program. Rocky submitted an application for Rocky Mountain Preschool Center at the end of January 2022.

## LIVABLE WAGES

What is considered a livable wage? To have economic security, working adults must have enough income to meet their basic monthly expenses – such as housing, food, transportation, and childcare expenses – and save for emergencies and retirement. For childcare to be affordable, it is supposed to cost less than 7% of your income. The average cost to enroll a four year old in full-time care in Montana is \$7,900/year, so the livable wage would need to be \$79,000/year. A single mother earning minimum wage spends 47% of her income on care for one child. Livable wages means lower worker absenteeism, households can afford heat without sacrifice, food insecurity decreases, fewer workers receive public assistance, workers can save for unexpected events, and companies improve their competitiveness and reputation.



A single mother earning minimum wage spends  
**47%**  
of her income on care for one child.



## INTRODUCTION

They say the worst pandemic in 100 years changed everything, but no one encountered more challenges than older adults over the past two years. Until vaccines became available, older adults comprised the group who were most vulnerable to COVID-19. However, the consequences of the pandemic extended far beyond health precautions. All the sheltering in place and closure of public accommodations such as senior centers inflicted social isolation on older adults. If there is one characteristic that defines the past couple of years, it was our sometimes successful and sometimes unsuccessful attempts to find a balance between safety and access for services.

While older adults were presented with unique challenges, children and families were affected by COVID-19, too. At the start of the pandemic, both Head Start and the Rocky Mountain Preschool closed. After some time, Head Start opened with online learning and RMPC opened with an additional site so that fewer children were in each classroom. Other Rocky programs closed to the public, but offered assistance over the phone and in online meetings. Meals on Wheels (MOW) took over for those who formerly participated in the daily congregate lunches.

ASPE, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, noted that the COVID-19 crisis has disparately harmed low-income households. Across the United States, systemic inequalities in employment, wage earning, health, and well-being have been strained for populations facing poverty or near-poverty conditions. Another group disproportionately affected by COVID-19 is people with disabilities. Typically, people with disabilities suffer lower rates of employment and earn significantly less than people without disabilities. COVID-19 compounded the economic hardships many with disabilities faced before the pandemic.

*The Montana Food Bank Network stated, "Prior to the pandemic, an estimated 109,000 Montanans lived in food insecure homes, facing daily challenges to provide food for their families. As a result of COVID-19, thousands more were suddenly unemployed and pushed toward poverty, without the resources to weather the crisis. Additionally, COVID-19 accentuated the gaps and limitations of our food system, creating the perfect storm for food insecurity."*

FedCommunities undertook a survey of the COVID-19 impact. Nearly 60% of the respondents to their survey noted that resources made available during the pandemic (stimulus checks, small business supports, unemployment benefits, and rent relief) were very critical. Nonprofits picked up the slack and did their best to help those in need. Even distributing some of the federal money fell on the backs of nonprofits, many times with new software programs and little guidance on how to administer the program.

Rocky serves older adults with a number of our programs:

**ROCKY'S AGENCY ON AGING** provides education and outreach, information and referral, advocacy for older adults in nursing homes and assisted living centers, fraud prevention, and more.

**AMERICORPS SENIORS** connects older adults 55 and older with the people and organizations that need them most. They become mentors, coaches, or companions to people in need, or contribute their job skills and expertise to community projects and organizations.

**SENIOR NUTRITION & TRANSPORTATION's** goal is to promote the health of older adults by providing hot, nutritious meals that meet a minimum of one-third of their daily dietary needs. The transportation portion of the program is to get older adults to the Helena Senior Center and back home again for daily meals and activities.





Other programs at Rocky include:

**ROCKY HEAD START** is an inclusive Early Childhood learning opportunity for children of all abilities, 3-5 years of age, in the communities of Townsend, Whitehall, Boulder, East Helena and Helena, with an emphasis on education, health, family engagement, and social services. Head Start centers on supporting families to identify strengths, work toward goals, and recognize and build on efforts to be strong families and successful children. The program focuses on high quality early childhood education, physical and oral health, positive social/emotional development, healthy nutrition, and access to a stable, nurturing, and encouraging environment.

**THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN PRESCHOOL CENTER (RMPC)** offers a quality environment that incorporates each child's uniqueness into the classrooms. RMPC's belief is that in a sound learning atmosphere, your child will develop a true sense of his or her identity.

**ENERGY SERVICES** includes Low income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Low Income Home Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) Weatherization, and Energy Share all ensure that families have safe and warm homes.

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING's** program is proud to provide safe, healthy homes that are affordable to residents in the tri-county area.

**EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS** is a grant that provides for street outreach, emergency temporary shelter, rapid re-housing, and homelessness prevention. Rocky administers this grant, and Good Samaritan Ministries is responsible for providing the services.

Despite COVID-19, Rocky continued to provide most regular services and added new and unique services.

- Affordable Housing completed and leased up Red Alder Residences, a project that provided 85 new affordable homes in our community.

- AmeriCorps Seniors Foster Grandparent Program received a new three-year grant, purchased six iPads and trained volunteers to help train others, provided two virtual seated tele-health yoga classes offered by the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation, served 52 children through AWARE Early Head Start, and volunteers assembled 1,100 School-to-Home packets for Rocky Head Start.
- AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP (Retired Senior and Volunteer Program) had a huge growth in volunteers especially for the MOW program. RSVP added two new stations: Rocky's Agency on Aging and Montana Legal Services Association. They also started a walking group called Rocky's Walkie Talkies. The social aspect of the group is what keeps people coming back every week.
- AmeriCorps Seniors Senior Companion Program purchased Personal Protective Equipment and trained all volunteers on COVID-19 safety, and provided tele-service or one-on-one service to 184 clients. A station at Ruby Valley Medical Group was added.
- Area IV changed their name and mission and became Rocky's Agency on Aging. They responded to the pandemic by applying ample doses of technology-based services:
  - Created Zoom-based social group called Morning Chat.
  - Provided educational presentations and discussions called Pop Knowledge.
  - Purchased iPads with data plans for older adults and now have technology help.
  - Delivered groceries and pharmacy items.
  - Volunteers made phone calls to older adults once per week just to see how they were doing and to communicate with one another.



- Energy Services maintained their ability to serve clients by adjusting the normal LIHEAP process. The program was able to adapt and be flexible in their handling of assistance programs that require strict adherence to program rules and regulations.
- Head Start implemented remote options for families who were unable to attend classes in person, enhanced their virtual/remote communication systems to continue supporting families, children, and staff, and enhanced health and safety protocols across the program. All Head Start sites are now STAR 5. (The Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program is a voluntary quality rating and improvement system that aligns quality indicators with support and incentives for early childhood programs and early childhood professionals.)
- Senior Nutrition successfully transitioned from a Meals on Wheels (MOW) 100% staff delivery model to a volunteer-based model. Along with cost savings, volunteers are able to timely deliver meals to our older adults. During the shutdown, the program implemented a software program called My Senior Center in all locations. My Senior Center generates MOW routes, provides daily usage numbers for senior center activities, congregate and MOW meals, commodity distribution, and transportation services to the Helena Senior Center.
- When the pandemic finally allowed, the Rocky Mountain Preschool Center brought infants back from another location to the Neighborhood Center, and was able to add another classroom for eight more two-year-old children.
- The pandemic caused God's Love, Helena's congregate shelter, to lower their census. The Emergency Solutions grant provided for hotel rooms for homeless people.



ABOVE

*In August of 2019, Rocky purchased a new bus as a part of their Senior Nutrition and Transportation Program through a matching grant with the Montana Department of Transportation.*



ABOVE

*A student from the Rocky Mountain Preschool Center plays on outdoor playground equipment.*







# SCOPE AND ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

Rocky completes a Comprehensive Community Needs Assessment (CCNA) every three years to assess gaps in services and to identify resources to address those needs, to determine the need of a particular program, to support organization strategic planning, to develop program priorities, to support the need for funding, and to assist with program evaluations. As stated in "A Community Action Guide to Comprehensive Community Needs Assessments" from the National Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCSPP), the CCNA will allow Rocky to:

**UNDERSTAND** the scope of both emerging and ongoing needs of economically insecure residents in the Tri-County area (Lewis & Clark, Broadwater, and Jefferson Counties),

**CHOOSE THE ROLE** that Rocky will play in meeting some of those needs,

**IDENTIFY ECONOMIC RESOURCES, SOCIAL RESOURCES, AND PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES** in the area that can help meet the needs,

**IDENTIFY SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES**, educate community residents and leaders about the identified needs and provide input on policies and strategies, and

**EXPLAIN TO THE COMMUNITY** the rationale behind decisions to prioritize needs and allocate resources.

Rocky distributed a 25-question survey that included both demographic and customer satisfaction questions. Using Survey Monkey, we provided electronic versions of the survey to donors with email addresses, Rocky staff members, and community partners. We purchased a list of 500 area residents and asked them to complete the survey. We circulated paper copies throughout the communities - Helena Food Share, Meals on Wheels clients, tri-county Senior Center customers, and Head Start and

Rocky Mountain Preschool parents. The response rate was 37%.

Rocky held community forums in Augusta, Boulder, Lincoln, Townsend, Whitehall, East Helena, and at two locations in Helena.

A committee made up of Rocky employees and two members from the Rocky Board of Directors, compiled qualitative data from the surveys, community forums, and key informant surveys. The committee then analyzed quantitative data from Rocky's CSBG reporting, Census data, and other resources. The committee used the data to rank community priorities.

*The Community Action Partnership states "America was built on the promise that every family should have an opportunity for success. Yet, today's uneven economy has put a good quality of life of out of reach for too many Americans."*

Rocky Mountain Development Council, Inc. believes in improving lives and strengthening communities. Using the research and data analysis completed through the Comprehensive Community Needs Assessment process, Rocky will conduct a strategic planning process to assure we are meeting the needs of the communities where we can, and make other organizations aware of the needs in our communities that they might address.

**How has your life changed over the last 3 years?**

A lot has happened since 2018. Tell us **YOUR** story.

Make your voice heard. **Complete our Comprehensive Community Needs Assessment** and tell Rocky how we can best serve you and your community.

**Choose how you participate:**

- Visit [www.surveymonkey.com/r/Rocky2021CCNA](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Rocky2021CCNA)
- Use your smartphone to scan here:

Call 406-447-1680 to receive a paper copy by mail

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram for updates @rockymountaindevelopmentcouncil

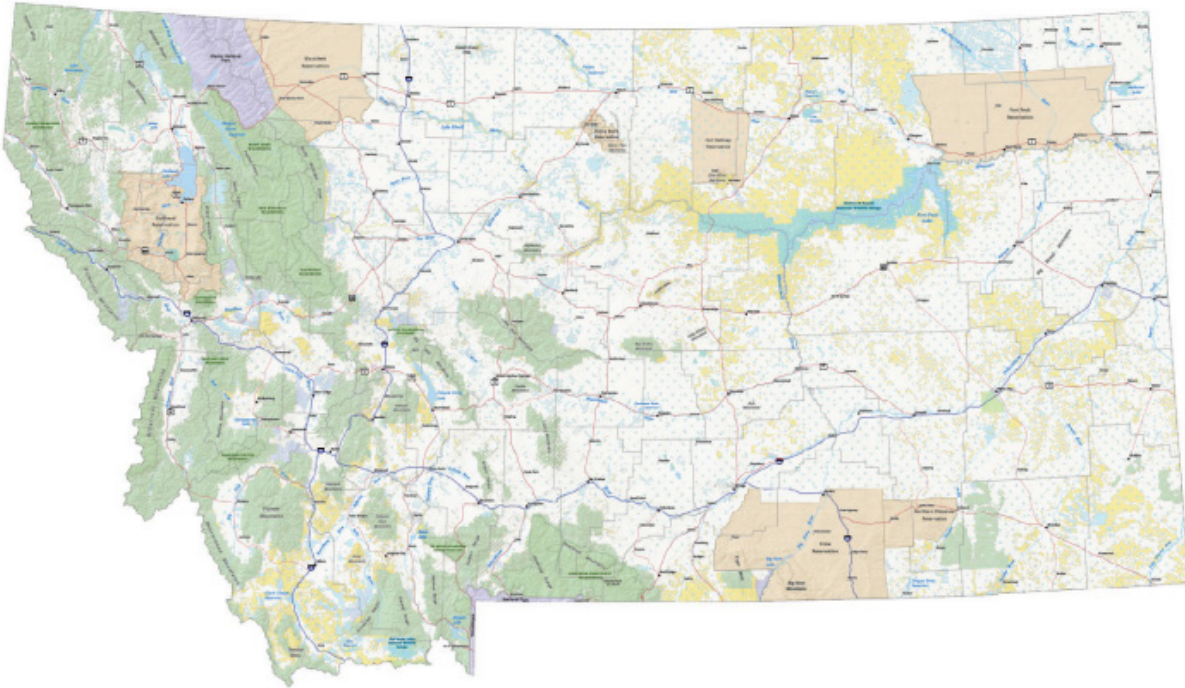
50% change in housing  
20% change in employment  
30% change in childcare

**ROCKY**  
ROCKY MOUNTAIN DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, INC.  
improving lives, strengthening communities.

ABOVE  
Advertising for Rocky's Needs Assessment Survey



## MONTANA DEMOGRAPHICS



(In some cases, we have rounded percentages to the nearest whole number. See Appendix for data sources.)

Montana is the fourth-largest state by area (147,000 square miles), the seventh-least populous state, and the third-least densely populated state. Nicknamed the Treasure State, the population is 1,084,225 a 9.58% increase since 2010. Montana became a state in 1889 and Helena became the capital.

The state's race demographics are 88.5% White, 6.4% American Indian, .8% Asian, 3.1% mixed race, and .7% other. A little over 10% of the adult population are veterans, which is more than the national average of 7%.

Poverty estimates from 2019 show 130,974 Montanans living below the poverty level of 100% of federal poverty income guidelines. Households with income below 200% of the Federal Poverty

Level are 32.4% compared to the US of 30.86%. It is interesting to note that the poverty rate in children ages 0-17 decreased by 3.4% since 2000.

According to the American Community Survey (five-year data), an average of 8.5% of people age 65 and older in Montana lived in a state of poverty during the survey calendar year. This compares to 9.3% nationwide.

The November 2021 Montana's unemployment rate is 1.9% compared to the nation at 3.9%. This is down 2.34% since November of 2020.

The estimated average for education attainment from 2014-2019 is 21.5% have at least a college bachelor's degree, while 28.8% stopped their formal educational attainment after high school. This compares to the US average of 19.8% with bachelor's degrees and 27% only high school. Montanans with no high school diploma is





6.45%. An unfortunate statistic is that 7.15% of Montana's youth are not working and not in school. The national percentage is 6.61%.

The US Census Bureau estimates 291,471 owner-occupied homes in Montana. This 57.13% is a decrease from over the 69.07% owner-occupied homes in 2000. Montana has a vacancy rate of 2.3% compared to the national rate of 2.4%.

The median annual household income for 2019 is \$57,248 compared to \$65,712 for the US.

Montana students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch is 40% compared to 49.6% nationally. Households receiving SNAP benefits is 9.25% compared to 11.74% in the US. Children under

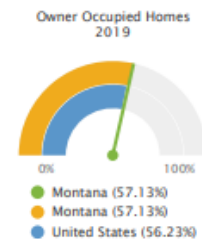
age 18 who experienced food insecurity at some point during the year is 17.7% and 18.21% nationally. The percentage of the low-income population with low food access is 22.05%. Nationally, it is 19.41%.

The Voices of America Stories of Hunger & Hope 2020 COVID-19 Education from the Montana Food Bank Network states that there was a 36% increase in Montana children living in food insecure homes in 2020 and a 29% increase in all Montanans living in food insecure homes. Montana Food Bank Network with the USDA Farmers to Families food box program provided 5 million pounds of food distribution from May to November 30, 2020.

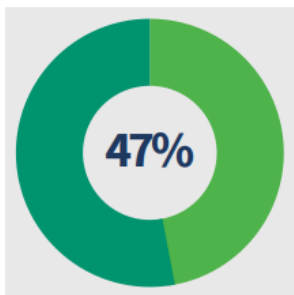
**Homeowners**

The U.S. Census Bureau estimated there were 291,471 owner occupied homeowners of the estimated 510,180 housing units in the report area in 2019. This 57.13% is a decrease over the 69.07% owner occupied homes in 2000.

Report Area	Total Housing Units 2000	Owner Occupied Homes 2000	Owner Occupied Homes 2000 (%)	Total Housing Units 2019	Owner Occupied Homes 2019	Owner Occupied Homes 2019 (%)
Montana	358,667	247,723	69.07%	510,180	291,471	57.13%
United States	105,480,101	69,815,753	66.19%	137,428,986	77,274,381	56.23%



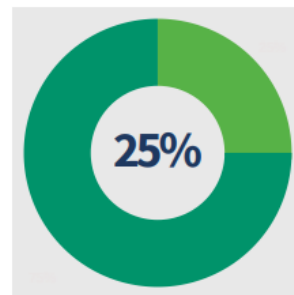
Note: This indicator is compared to national average. Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. US Census Bureau, Decennial Census. 2015-19. Source geography: County



Licensed child care in Montana meets only about **47 percent of demand**, leaving over 20,000 children without licensed care



Montana is **1 out of 5 states** in the U.S. that fails to meet even **1/2** of the potential need for child care.



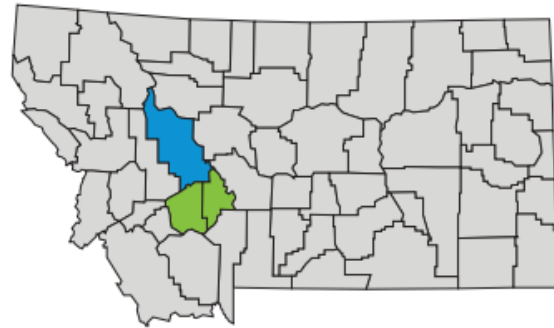
Broadwater's licensed child care capacity only meets approximately **25 percent** of demand

# DEMOGRAPHICS BY COUNTY

## LEWIS & CLARK COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS

The Montana Legislature established Lewis & Clark County in 1865 as Edgerton County. It was renamed for Captain Meriwether Lewis and Second Lieutenant William Clark two years later. Helena is the county seat and the state capital. The county is approximately 3,458 square miles. As of 2019, the population is 67,805, a 21.7% increase since the 2000 census. The female population comprised 50.85% while the male population represented 49.15% and the county is 93.75% white. Over 12% of the population are veterans, which is more than the national average of 7.29%.

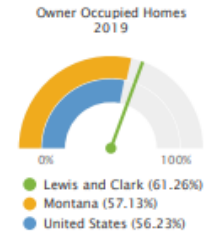
18.3%. Older adults in poverty have a rate of 8% compared to 8.5% in Montana and 9.3% for the US.



### Homeowners

The U.S. Census Bureau estimated there were 19,371 owner occupied homeowners of the estimated 31,621 housing units in the report area in 2019. This 61.26% is a decrease over the 70.06% owner occupied homes in 2000.

Report Area	Total Housing Units 2000	Owner Occupied Homes 2000	Owner Occupied Homes 2000 (%)	Total Housing Units 2019	Owner Occupied Homes 2019	Owner Occupied Homes 2019 (%)
Lewis and Clark County, MT	22,850	16,008	70.06%	31,621	19,371	61.26%
Montana	358,667	247,723	69.07%	510,180	291,471	57.13%
United States	105,480,101	69,815,753	66.19%	137,428,986	77,274,381	56.23%



Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.  
Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey; US Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 2015-19. Source geography: County

The 2019 poverty estimate from the Census shows the overall poverty rate in Lewis & Clark County is 9.4%, which is less than the national average of 12.16%. The percent of poverty for female-headed households is 49.2% compared to Montana's rate of 44.2%. According to the American Community Survey, an average of 21.9% of children ages 0-4 lived in poverty compared to all of Montana with a rate of

The Lewis & Clark County unemployment rate as of October 2021 is 1.7% compared to Montana at 1.9% and the US at 4.3%. This is a 1.7% decrease since October of 2020.

In Lewis & Clark County, 25% of the population has at least a bachelor's degree and 23.6% stopped their education after high school. An unfortunate statistic is that 7.4% of Lewis & Clark County's youth are not working and not in school. The national percentage is 6.61%.





The US Census Bureau estimates there were 19,371 owner-occupied homes of the estimated 31,621 housing units. Owner-occupied homes in 2000 were at 70.06% and in 2019 61.26% representing almost a 9% decrease. The vacancy rate is 1.1% compared to 2.3% for the rest of Montana.

The median household income for Lewis & Clark County is \$65,791 compared to the rest of Montana at \$54,970.

Census data shows that 30.0% of students in Lewis & Clark County were eligible free or reduced price lunch compared to 40.0% for the rest of Montana and 49.6% for the US. The food insecurity rate for the county is 10.7% compared to Montana at 11.1% and the US at 12.63%. However, 15.9% of food insecure children are eligible for assistance compared to Montana at 17.7% and the US at 18.21%

Report Area	Population Under Age 18	Food Insecure Children, Total	Child Food Insecurity Rate
Lewis and Clark County, MT	14,340	2,280	15.90%
84,769	15,004	17.70%	
United States	73,641,039	13,411,620	18.21%



ABOVE  
 Rocky's Development team, area and state civic and business leaders, and government representatives at the groundbreaking ceremony for Rocky's most recent affordable housing venture, "Red Alder".

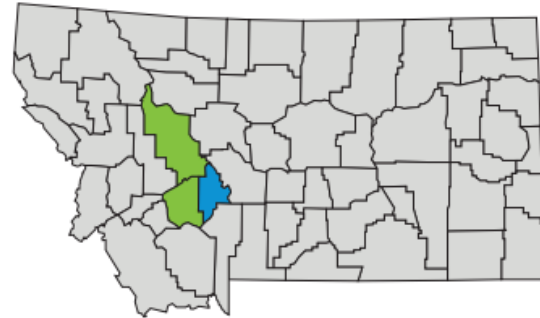


## BROADWATER COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS

The Montana Legislature approved Broadwater County, named for Colonel Charles Broadwater, as an official county in 1897. Townsend is the county seat and is the only incorporated city in the county. The county is approximately 1,192 square miles. As of 2019, the population is 5,945, which is a 35.58% increase since 2000. Close to 20% of the population is 18 and under and 22.28% is 65 and older.

The 2019 estimate shows 556 or 9% persons living in poverty. Population estimates for children 17 and under is 12.3% compared to 15.4% for Montana and 16.34% for the US. Older adults in poverty is 9.4% compared to 8.5% for Montana and 9.3% for the US.

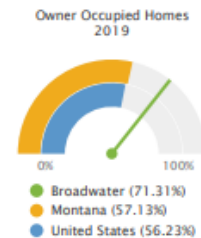
In Broadwater County, 19.7% of the population has at least a bachelor's degree and 32.2% stopped their education after high school. An unfortunate statistic is the 25.57% of Broadwater County's youth are not working and not in school. The national percentage is 6.61%.



### Homeowners

The U.S. Census Bureau estimated there were 1,951 owner occupied homeowners of the estimated 2,736 housing units in the report area in 2019. This 71.31% is a decrease over the 79.39% owner occupied homes in 2000.

Report Area	Total Housing Units 2000	Owner Occupied Homes 2000	Owner Occupied Homes 2000 (%)	Total Housing Units 2019	Owner Occupied Homes 2019	Owner Occupied Homes 2019 (%)
Broadwater County, MT	1,752	1,391	79.39%	2,736	1,951	71.31%
Montana	358,667	247,723	69.07%	510,180	291,471	57.13%
United States	105,480,101	69,815,753	66.19%	137,428,986	77,274,381	56.23%



Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.  
Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey; US Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 2015-19. Source geography: County

The Broadwater County unemployment rate as of October 2021 is 2.2%, Montana's is 1.9%, and the US is at 4.3%. This is a 2.6% decrease since October of 2020. The average commute time is 28.19 minutes compared to the rest of Montana at 18.27 minutes.

The US Census Bureau estimates 1,951 owner-occupied homes in the county in 2019. Owner-occupied homes in 2000 were at 79.39% and in 2019, 71.31%, representing an 8% decrease. The vacancy rate is 0.0%

The median household income for Broadwater County is \$60,594 compared to the rest of Montana at \$54,970.





Out of 647 total public school students, 228 were eligible for the free or reduced priced lunch program. This represents 35.2% of public school students, which is lower than the state average of 40.0%. Households receiving SNAP benefits is

7.74%, lower than the rest of Montana with a rate of 9.25%. Children under age 18 who experienced food insecurity at some point during the year is 14% and 17.70% for the rest of Montana.

Report Area	Population Under Age 18	Food Insecure Children, Total	Child Food Insecurity Rate
Broadwater County, MT	1,143	160	14.00%
84,769	15,004	17.70%	
United States	73,641,039	13,411,620	18.21%



ABOVE  
 Volunteers are an integral part of the Senior Nutrition team. Without dedicated volunteers, Rocky would not be able to meet the needs of the individuals we serve. Pictured here, volunteers are bagging up non-perishable food items at a bi-monthly Grocery Packing for Seniors event. Volunteers with Rocky's Senior Nutrition and Transportation prepare food packs to be distributed to qualifying low-income seniors in Avon, Boulder, East Helena, Elliston, Helena, Lincoln, Whitehall, and White Sulphur Springs.

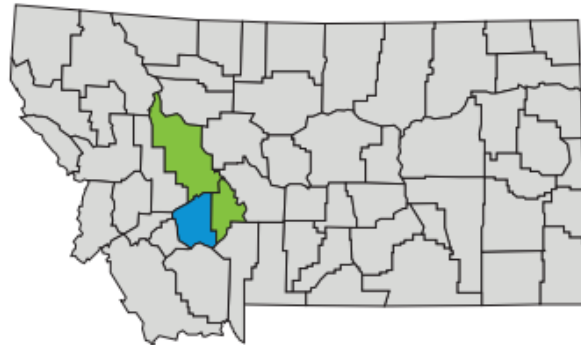


## JEFFERSON COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS

The Montana Legislature approved Jefferson County, named for Thomas Jefferson, as an official county in 1865. Boulder is the county seat. The county is approximately 1,657 square miles. As of 2019, the population was 11,917, an 18.59% increase since 2000. About 21% of the population is under 18 years old and older adults represent 19.8% of the population.

The 2019 estimate shows 967 or 8% persons living in poverty. Montana's rate is 12.6% and the US is 12.16%. Population estimates for older adults in poverty is 5.1% compared to 8.5% for Montana and 9.3% for the US. The American Community Survey shows 13% of children 0-4 live in poverty.

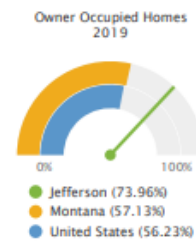
In Jefferson County, 24.9% of the population has at least a bachelor's degree and 26.5% stopped their education after high school. An unfortunate statistic is the 10.74% of Jefferson County's youth are not working and not in school. The national percentage is 6.61%.



### Homeowners

The U.S. Census Bureau estimated there were 3,781 owner occupied homeowners of the estimated 5,112 housing units in the report area in 2019. This 73.96% is a decrease over the 83.16% owner occupied homes in 2000.

Report Area	Total Housing Units 2000	Owner Occupied Homes 2000	Owner Occupied Homes 2000	Total Housing Units 2019	Owner Occupied Homes 2019	Owner Occupied Homes 2019
Jefferson County, MT	3,747	3,116	83.16%	5,112	3,781	73.96%
Montana	358,667	247,723	69.07%	510,180	291,471	57.13%
United States	105,480,101	69,815,753	66.19%	137,428,986	77,274,381	56.23%



Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.  
Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey; US Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 2015-19. Source geography: County

The Jefferson County unemployment rate as of October 2021 is 2.0%, the same for all of Montana and less than the rate of 4.3% for the US. This is a 1.8% decrease since October of 2020. The average commute time is 20.39 minutes compared to the rest of Montana at 18.27 minutes.

The US Census Bureau estimates 3,781 owner-occupied homes in the county in 2019. Owner-occupied homes in 2000 were at 83.16% and in 2019 73.96%, representing a 9.2% decrease.

The median household income for Jefferson County is \$69,646 compared to the rest of Montana at \$54,970.



Out of 1,797 total public school students, 510 were eligible for the free or reduced price lunch program. This represents 28.4% of public school students, which is lower than the state average of 40%. Households receiving SNAP benefits is

6.02%, lower than the rest of Montana with a rate of 9.25%. Children under age 18 who experienced food insecurity at some point during the year is 15.50% and 17.70% for the rest of Montana.

Report Area	Population Under Age 18	Food Insecure Children, Total	Child Food Insecurity Rate
Jefferson County, MT	2,452	380	15.50%
84,769	15,004	17.70%	
United States	73,641,039	13,411,620	18.21%



ABOVE  
 Rocky's Big Boulder Residences opened in 2011. At the time of publication, Rocky's Affordable Housing properties had a waitlist of 643 people.



## WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Throughout this section are comments from those attending the forums.

### COVID-19 IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES

The impact of COVID-19 affected all communities a bit differently. In Whitehall, we learned that no businesses closed, older adults were very diligent with mask wearing and social distancing, and the only cases now seem to be those who are not vaccinated. However, in Augusta, the Public Health Nurse had to deal with many non-cooperative people. In Townsend, it was reported that people went home and never came back out. In Boulder, there was isolation and fear of getting together. There were also deaths and people getting angry at each other due to masks and vaccinations. The grocery store in Boulder started delivering groceries and that was a tremendous help.

In Lincoln, participants reported deaths and isolation. People couldn't go to sporting events and now they don't know the kids playing. The telephone co-op stepped up and gave children computers. The older adults in attendance said they want the center open more, and that they don't like the four-to-a-table rule along with no salt and pepper or anything on the tables. One said "older adults feel like they are being treated like children, like children with head injuries. We need to find a place in the middle." Another said "COVID-19 is here forever; quit closing things."

At one of the Helena forums, COVID-19 testing came up. People remarked that "we" haven't figured out faster COVID-19 testing and that needs to be addressed.

*At another event, comments were about job losses, people not being able to pay rent and affecting property owners, and people walking away from rentals and unpaid rent to go live in the woods.*



*BELOW:*  
After being closed for over one year to congregate dining and group activities, Rocky staff serve lunch in the Helena Senior Center at the Rocky Neighborhood Center.

In interviews with people who couldn't attend a forum, we learned in Whitehall that housing has been a big issue and that COVID-19 intensified the issue. A similar problem was expressed in Boulder in that home prices had been skyrocketing and COVID-19 exploded the situation.

Helena's City Manager's Office said that, due to COVID-19, "City services were adjusted to accommodate distancing, census reduction, and remote work. In some instances, such as with transit, services had to be reduced due to staff being out due to illness or caretaking. The City, like many employers, has experienced challenges in filling open positions since the onset of the pandemic. Acquisition of building materials and technology supplies has also been a challenge."

In the survey, we asked about how COVID-19 affected the participant and/or their family. The three highest responses to the question were: suffered social isolation, had COVID-19, and there was a lack of information or misinformation.



*One person said, "I lost my wife in March 2020, had to sell my house because of loss of hours due to COVID-19. I am 55 and could not find affordable housing for a single senior because I am not 60."*

Another person said, "I saw the people around me decline emotionally and physically, and they became so lonely and depressed. I fared quite well considering. I had more trouble watching what happened to the other residents I did see while outside getting mail, etc."

### EMPLOYMENT

There were a few common points around employment. Every community said there were job openings, but no one filling them. Every community talked about low wages.

*A former County Commissioner said, "The cost of living has out-stripped the wages."*

Two threats to employment are the lack of affordable housing and childcare. Every community expressed that they cannot hire from outside because the family would not be able to find housing. There is a lack of childcare in every community – especially for those working non-traditional hours. Many restaurants are closing early or closed on certain days because there is no one to take on jobs. A comment we heard in Lincoln was that there is too much government money, so no one wants to work.

In the survey, close to 31% of respondents said that there is a lack of adequate paying jobs, and 27% said unemployment was a serious concern for the community.

Survey participants noted that employment support needs are higher wages and benefits (44%), before and after-school childcare (25%), and job hunting help (career information/assessment, job search/interview, resume writing, clothing, dentures, glasses) (close to 19%). A bit over 53% of respondents said they were employed and another 36% said they were

retired. Of those unemployed, 8% said they were unemployed due to health problems, 4% said due to mental health problems, and 3% lacked transportation.

Several comments from the survey were interesting: "I have submitted applications without any response," and "there is a lack of specialized childcare/education for multiple needs son." Something we heard in the survey and in the community forums is that it is very difficult for someone with a criminal background to be hired or find housing.

The 2021 Montana Labor Report, created by the Research & Analysis Bureau in the Department of Labor & Industry, notes that Montana's economy is in the midst of a strong recovery from the pandemic recession. The study describes who was most impacted by the pandemic recession. It was no surprise that women, low-wage workers, and workers in more populated counties were most likely to make unemployment insurance claims. The labor force declined because thousands of Montanans quit their jobs due to fears of contracting COVID-19, and 55,000 parents decreased their work hours due to a lack of childcare and the need to monitor child learning at home. One lasting impact is that some Montanans are receiving higher wages. This benefits both the worker and the state's economy. Another impact is that more Montanans are working remotely providing greater worker productivity. The smaller work force and lack of available workers are impacts that challenge economic recovery. The aging Montana population started the movement toward a smaller work force, but the pandemic worsened this issue.

The Helena City Manager's office reported that Helena is relatively economically resilient due to the presence of local and state government. She also said that there is a high level of education and a skill among our residents.





**EDUCATION & COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Most participants in the survey and forums responded that the schools in their communities are great. In every community, the lack of housing was discussed along with education because lack of housing availability makes it difficult to hire teachers. In Whitehall, tagged to the school was the library and skate/bike park. The library was commended with being a great resource for latch-key kids and the skate/bike park as giving kids something to do.



ABOVE  
*Children play outside the Head Start Valley Center in Helena.*

In Augusta it was noted that the community likes the new school superintendent, that Augusta graduates are coming back to teach, and that younger people with children are moving to Augusta. It was also reported that all teachers are certified, and new subjects like physics and calculus are being offered. In Townsend, we heard that there is a new grade school, and there is a Head Start program along with a couple

other daycares. However, the internet is terrible. Families living on the north end of the county are sending their children to Helena to school, and at the south end, they are going to Bozeman.

In Lincoln, the participants said they have a great school, but that 60% of the children attending are “welfare” kids. There is no daycare in Lincoln and no classes for children with disabilities. Enrollment seems to be rising. East Helena has a new grade school and high school. One comment was that there is no “fast food” in the area for when people are just getting off work and need to get their child to sports or other activities. We also heard in East Helena that there needs to be some job skills training. Another comment was that parents didn’t finish high school, so they don’t see that need for their child. Someone else told us that the schools (and employers and the criminal justice system) do not make any accommodations if people are working and have transportation issues.



ABOVE  
*Lieutenant Governor Kristen Juras and students from the Rocky Mountain Preschool Center discuss drawings made by students about lifejacket safety, in partnership with Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks’ “Kids Don’t Float” Lifejacket Lending Program.*





Boulder has created the Boulder Transition Advisory Committee; “a paradigm that should be modeled everywhere.” A group formed a nonprofit and is working to bring childcare to Boulder. They purchased a building formerly used at a school in Helena and will put it on the school grounds. The group has already hired a Childcare Coordinator. Boulder also passed a \$12m bond to upgrade Jefferson High School; the first update in over 30 years. The school prides itself on the fact that kids do not fall through the cracks at Jefferson High School.

In Helena, it was mentioned that teachers don't teach to all children and their learning needs.

The 2020 Kids Count Data Book noted: “When many schools were relying on remote learning, nearly one in six households with children (16%) did not always have access to the internet and a computer for educational purposes. This was the case for one in four Black households (25%) and one in five Latino households (20%).”

*The lack of childcare came up in every education discussion. “If you can find childcare, it costs more than UM in-state tuition.”*

Most mentioned the lack and cost of childcare. Others talked about how there is no childcare for those working other than regular hours and that there is no after-school care.

According to the 2021 Trends Report from the Helena Area Chamber of Commerce, 6% of the state's labor force relies on some sort of childcare. Available licensed childcare capacity in Lewis & Clark County only meets 45% of the estimated demand. The state's average is 47%. Jefferson County's average is 51% and Broadwater County's is 25%. While there was already a childcare shortage, the pandemic exacerbated the problem. Over 40% of licensed childcares closed; however many have reopened using innovative ways to adhere to health guidelines.

According to Childcare Connections, childcare is considered affordable when it takes up 7% or less of a household's income. Lewis & Clark County's families spend over 27% of their income for one infant and one toddler; Jefferson County spend over 25%, and Broadwater spends 29%

### INCOME, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND ASSET BUILDING

According to the Asset Funders Network, “Asset building is how individuals, families, and communities gather the resources that will move them towards economic well-being, for now and years to come.”

Assets can range from savings accounts and business ownership to education and health. Barriers have to be dismantled for people trying to find economic security. Without assets, people live from paycheck to paycheck. Services for families to improve outcomes include Social Security, food assistance, tax credits, and housing assistance.

Community Forum comments regarding income and asset building included:

**IN WHITEHALL**, a group of Continental Divide Hikers came through town last summer (they were diverted by fire and smoke). Whitehall opened up the Town Hall garage for them; it has a bathroom, showers, and a place to stay out of the weather. It was a boon for local shops because they spent their money in Whitehall.

**IN BOULDER**, we heard the most promising information. A change in government is helping, as is the Boulder Transition Advisory Committee. The Montana Highway Patrol relocated to Boulder and that is helping the economy. Younger kids are helping older adults with projects, the schools are strong and a point of pride for the community, and the voters passed a \$12.5 million dollar bond for improvements in the high school. The problems include no infrastructure west of the highway, no police force, and a low tax base.



**IN HELENA AND EAST HELENA**, we heard COVID-19 stories about property owners struggling to pay mortgages and people losing jobs.

**FROM AUGUSTA:**

- the community is pretty anti-government
- If the grocery store closed, it would be awful
- Government Day once a month is great (county commissioners come to town)
- The cost of living is higher than wages paid
- Unless you inherit a place, you cannot afford to buy a place and run it

**FROM TOWNSEND:**

- People with wealth are moving in. However, their investment in the community is yet to be seen
- Younger generation does not want to work
- Stop the extra benefits and then people would have to work
- CARES money will be beneficial in investing in broadband and public health

**FROM LINCOLN:**

- The pay is not enough; people need to make \$25-30/hour to make a living
- Sculpture park brings in people
- "Things up here" can't support the wage required to attract a job force.

The survey showed that 31% want retirement and estate-planning services, 2% want to learn about personal savings, and 21.5% need financial management education.

From the FedCommunities Perspectives from Main Street, 86% of those surveyed said that COVID-19 was a significant disruption to the economic conditions of the communities they

served; 94% said that the pandemic caused disruptions to financial stability. More than 60% noted that federal stimulus checks, small business support, unemployment, and rent relief were critically important for the people and communities they serve.

During the pandemic, families received up to \$300 per child into their bank accounts on the fifteenth of every month. However, this benefit is expiring for 2021 with hopes that Congress will revive it in 2022.

*Rocky opened Red Alder Residences, an 85-unit workforce and low-income housing project, in 2021. However, the wait list is now over 499. Rocky properties as a whole report 643 on wait lists.*

According to the 2021 Trends Report, 60% of the Helena workforce is connected to State government. Also, 3,300+ employees from Jefferson County and 600+ from Broadwater County travel to Helena to work each day.

The Institute for Women's Policy Research notes that to have economic security, working adults must have enough income to meet their basic monthly expenses such as housing, food, transportation, and childcare expenses, and save for emergencies and retirement. Only 66% of Montana's working women and men (aged 19-64) are economically secure. Montana ranks 41<sup>st</sup> out of the 50 states and the District of Columbia for its share of working adults with economic security.

**HOUSING**

In Rocky's survey, 70.31% said lack of affordable housing was the most serious to our communities, and 56.77% said homelessness was an issue. In the data pulled from those making under \$25,000, lack of affordable housing was 70.33%, and homelessness was 56.04%. A higher issue for this group, however, was drug and alcohol abuse at 68.13%.





*Every community said that affordable housing was a crisis.*

**IN WHITEHALL**, participants said more people had been moving to Whitehall before COVID-19, but it has accelerated. People are commuting to Bozeman and Belgrade from Whitehall. Rentals are few and far between and some landlords are selling their rentals.

**IN AUGUSTA**, the real estate prices are strikingly high and there is not much available. Rocky's Rocky Mountain Front Properties has a parking problem that needs to get fixed. Helena's Habitat might be coming to Augusta.

**TOWNSEND** reported that the prices are relatively lower (even if over-priced), but the inventory is very low.

As in other communities, **LINCOLN** reported that there is not enough housing; what housing that is in Lincoln is being "taken over by welfare people." Hotels/motels are offering monthly deals and are becoming long-term rentals. Older adults are renting rooms in other's homes and some people are living in sheds.

**WHITEHALL** residents told us that the town needs housing for low-income, and middle-income as well. Luckily, two developments are in the works. However, there is a real lack of senior living.

**HELENA AND EAST HELENA** talked about affordable housing, but the main topic was the homeless. Housing and lack of shelters are a concern for participants. One said:

*"No one takes responsibility for the homeless. It's put on the backs of nonprofits." Another said: "Every level of housing is pushed out of reach."*

Regarding affordable housing, everyone at the Helena-area forums just said we need more of it. Housing is a fundamental foundation to everything. It was mentioned that we need a strong voice in the legislature to build the supply

of housing. Comments included things like:

- We are now in a true housing emergency
- Need affordable rentals
- Home ownership builds wealth
- There is no supply and a growing population
- People don't make enough for rent or a house payment
- It used to be that SSI would pay rent; now it takes 120-140% of SSI; this destabilizes a community
- The high cost of rent makes Helena Food Share even more relevant
- Kids miss opportunities (like sports) because of the cost of housing; no money left for activities

*The Point in Time Survey conducted in January of 2021 by United Way of Lewis & Clark Area, Good Samaritan Ministries, and the YWCA found a total of 298 homeless people. This is up from 196 the year before. Of those, 167 were sheltered either at God's Love or in a local hotel.*



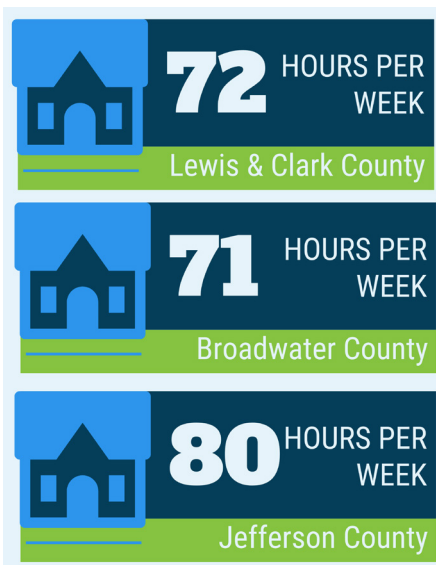
ABOVE  
In Helena, Rocky's River Rock Residences consist of one and two-bedroom garden style homes for seniors ages 62 and older.



Montana Homelessness Statistics from the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness state that as of January 2020, Montana had an estimated 1,545 experiencing homelessness on any given day, as reported by Continuums of Care to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Of that total, 167 were family households, 165 were Veterans, 79 were unaccompanied young adults (aged 18-24), and 223 were individuals experiencing chronic homelessness.

The 2021 Montana Housing Profile, conducted by the National Low Income Housing Coalition, indicated that 24% of rental households are extremely low income and 68% of extremely low-income renter households have severe cost burden (spending more than half of their income on housing). Of those extremely low-income renters, 49% are in the labor force, 12% are disabled, 26% are older adults, 4% are in school, 1% are a single-adult caregiver, and 8% indicated other.

The Montana Budget & Policy Center says that a minimum wage worker in Lewis & Clark County needs to work 72 hours per week to afford a two-bedroom at fair market rent. For Broadwater County, it is 71 hours per week, and Jefferson County is 80 hours per week.



The Montana Business Quarterly reports that “there are currently over 23,000 housing units in Montana that are supported by one or more affordable housing programs. This is a substantial number, yet in comparison to the more than 510,000 housing units of all kinds in the state, it is clearly a tiny segment of the market. That number is also low relative to potential demand, amounting to 39% of the number of households who earn extremely low incomes, defined as 30% or less of local median income.”

A July 2021 Reuters article says that America’s landlords are selling and big investors are buying the properties. Investors purchasing rentals is pushing up rents and home prices during the pandemic. Rents are up 7% nationally from a year ago. Average home prices rose 16.6% in the year ending in May of 2021. Even before the pandemic, there was a lack of affordable homes in the US. Fully 25% of renters pay more than half of their incomes on rent. And, an estimated 6.5 million tenants owed \$27.5 billion in back rent and utilities as of the middle of July.

**A** report by Pew Charitable Trust reported in November of 2021 that Montana’s population increased by 10% between 2010 and 2020 while the number of housing units in the state grew by 7%. Alex Horowitz from Pew said, “With inventory getting tighter in terms of the number of homes available in these markets for purchase, prices rise sharply in response, because this is a seller’s market without enough inventory to keep up with the demand in it.”



In response to the housing crisis, both houses of the Montana State Legislature approved a bill in the spring of 2021 that would have created a Montana workforce housing tax credit that could be paired with federal LIHTCs (Low-Income Housing Tax Credits) for tax years beginning on or after January 1, 2022. The statewide cap would have been 50% of the federal cap. Montana Governor Greg Gianforte vetoed this bill highlighting the fact that the federal LIHTC allocations could increase, which would increase Montana's tax credit responsibility. He wrote that a reduction in regulations is the best way to address housing affordability in his state. The Legislature was unable to override the veto. This was a huge blow to the state's Human Resource Development Councils and others involved in low-income and affordable housing. In Colorado, a similar bill created 19,000 jobs, \$465 million in private-sector investment, and more than \$1.5 billion of economic activity. Worst of all, the veto cost homes and apartments to those who needed them most.

*The 2021 Community Health Assessment Report for Lewis & Clark County reported that there are four pathways that directly impact health: not having a stable home, conditions inside the home, financial burden resulting from high-cost housing, and neighborhood of environmental and social characteristics of where people live.*

The report goes on to say impacts of these pathways, including homelessness, can have profound effects on individuals and families resulting in poor health, higher hospitalization rates, shorter lifespan, and premature death.

Our Father's House Soup Kitchen from Pompano Beach, FL, tells us that homelessness affects us all whether we experience it or not. It is a complex social problem that affects our communities in many ways.

- It costs the government more money: a homeless person receives an average of \$38,146 worth of public services. That number dropped by 60% after the person received housing.
- It poses a threat to public health: homeless people are more vulnerable to communicable diseases.
- It can compromise public safety: many homeless people struggle with mental health issues; they tend to inflict the same suffering on others resulting in higher crime rates.
- It breaks down community life: with large populations of homeless people, it tests the very being of a community, their shared morals and that sense of belonging. It fosters uncertainty and constant fear of the people we pass on the streets. People start to distrust each other.
- It creates social barriers: often homeless people suffer shame and isolation. Those of us who have not experienced homelessness tend to shrug them off as lazy bums who just can't be bothered to work.
- It shapes the next generation: children born to homeless parents often grow up to be homeless adults themselves.

Rocky oversees the Emergency Solutions Grant that assists individuals and families experiencing homelessness, or who are at risk of homelessness to regain stability. Last fiscal year, Good Samaritan Ministries (who administers Rocky's grant) served 206 individuals and families. The grant money for ESG was increased with CARES and ARPA funding. Unfortunately, the lack of inventory, especially inventory that falls within rent reasonableness, makes it difficult to house individuals and families. Due to Montana's cold weather and the increase in our area's homeless, many people are housed in a local hotel on a temporary basis, paid for by the ESG grant.





As of the date of this Needs Assessment, the Helena City Commission is looking at new ways to address homelessness in the community, including a proposal to build or purchase an additional temporary shelter. Right now, God's Love is the only shelter in town. COVID-19 has caused fewer people to live in congregate settings.

Another aspect to housing is services to keep people in their homes. Close to 34% of our survey respondents indicated that the community needs energy services for no-heat emergencies, weatherization, and energy bill assistance. This year marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of LIHEAP-Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. This program keeps families safe and healthy. LIHEAP is federally funded assistance in managing costs associated with home energy bills, energy crises, weatherization of homes, and energy-related minor home repairs.



*ABOVE*  
A contractor works with insulation

Many factors can affect high-energy burden. For some, it might be higher-cost fuels such as propane or energy-inefficient homes. It could be lack of qualifying credit allowing a family to finance upgrades. According to the Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy, "Energy efficiency and weatherization not only help to lower energy bills for low-income households, but are also proven to improve indoor air quality, safety, and comfort, thereby positively impacting human health. When hiring locally, these projects help to shore up neighborhood housing stock and create local jobs where they are often needed."

In Montana, the LIHEAP season is October 1 and April 30. Last fiscal year, Rocky served over 3,000 individuals and families.

## HEALTH/SOCIAL BEHAVIORAL DEVELOPMENT

Most survey respondents (55%) said they had no health barriers. A bit over 9% said high deductible health insurance was a barrier, and 7.86% said chronic illness was an issue. The comments showed a number of people having dental issues and lack of coverage or poor coverage. Some need help completing applications for insurance and disability. The comment was: "I don't know where to go to get help."

In the survey question about most needed services in our area, over 25% said nutrition, 33.74% said healthcare services, 28.57% said senior information and referral services, 34.24% said senior services, and 15.52% said respite care. The survey question asking about the most serious concern in our community showed senior isolation at 32.54%, lack of affordable healthcare at 31.59%, mental health services 50.36%, care for older adults at 20.19%, and the need for home healthcare provider at 14.49%.

**WHITEHALL** participants said they have a clinic with two doctors, a PA, and nurses, a dentist, ambulance service, mental health services, assisted living. There is not much home healthcare, and people call on family or friends to help.

**IN AUGUSTA**, participants mentioned that the community has a great public health nurse. Most seniors go to Great Falls for medical care. The flood of 2019 caused many mental health problems, especially with men. However, mental health counseling was well received. Home healthcare is a great need.

**TOWNSEND** has two clinics and the Billings Clinic purchase strengthened healthcare in the area. Weaknesses are staffing and transportation. There is only one dentist in town and appointments are 2 ½ months out.



LINCOLN has Parkview Medical Center, but there is no permanent doctor and no one on the weekends. Lincoln has a good ambulance service and young people are volunteering. There is no pharmacy and the Stage Coach brings the prescriptions. Some older adults are moving out of town because, as they age, they need to be closer to medical services.

*“There is no transportation but friends and neighbors.” The community needs mental health services and home healthcare.*

BOULDER participants thought the greatest need was home healthcare (including mental healthcare) and more dental services.

In one of the HELENA Community Forums someone mentioned that faster and more convenient COVID-19 testing is needed.

Two interesting comments were: “We need more access and support of alternative medicine, i.e., homeopathy, acupuncture, holistic healthcare, non-surgical modalities.” And, “We need advocates for medical care (older adults and mentally ill people).”

Rocky covers other aspects of health and aging. Senior programs include Rocky's Agency on Aging, AmeriCorps Seniors programs, Senior Nutrition and Transportation, Commodities, and the Helena Senior Center. There were numerous survey comments about the need for home healthcare and social isolation.

Due to COVID-19 and closures, Rocky's Agency on Aging's response was to offer a number of services for isolated seniors such as grocery shopping and delivery, pharmacy deliveries, telephone check-ins, letter writing to long-term care residents, and various online classes and opportunities. Rocky's Agency on Aging served 724 seniors during 2021.



ABOVE  
A community member has her blood pressure checked at the AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP “Be Well Clinic”.



ABOVE  
The evidence-based class “Stepping On”, presented by Rocky's Agency on Aging, is effective and proven to reduce falls in older people living in the community.





Senior Nutrition had to close for congregate dining, but Meals on Wheels picked up meals for those who needed them and served 2,214 people.

Now back in action, the Helena Senior Center and affiliated programs have a number of activities for seniors including Jennie's Arthritis Class, Line Dancing, wood carvers, bingo, Walkie Talkies (a walking group), Tech-Time with Mary, Morning Chat, Memory Café, card games, the Be-Well Clinic, Crafty Quilters, and PopKnowledge.



ABOVE  
In collaboration with the Holter Museum of Art, participants in a Memory Café work on watercolor paintings. Memory Café is a safe and welcoming community event for people living with memory loss and their caregivers.

AmeriCorps Seniors, too, had to curtail some services due to COVID-19. However, all are back in some capacity providing volunteer opportunities for seniors as well as helping other seniors and children.

BELOW  
A member of Rocky's AmeriCorps Seniors Senior Companion Program helps a client to her vehicle.



## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

When asked about civic engagement and community involvement, most communities thought it was lacking somewhat. In Whitehall, it was reported that parents with kids in school participate in the community. And, some are in groups like the Saddle Club.

*The City-sponsored pool is popular in the community, although it runs in the red. "Some things are worthwhile, even though they don't make money."*

IN AUGUSTA, when the hotel burned, there was a "bucket brigade" to help put out the fire. The community came together even though people mostly do for themselves. Augusta needs an advisory council like the one in Lincoln.

IN TOWNSEND, many people aren't part of the community. They go to Helena or Bozeman. There is no transportation to get to activities even though the town hosts a number of events.

IN LINCOLN, there is the Optimist Club and the Chamber. People help each other and the whole town jumps in if necessary. The American Legion and churches help with rides.

HELENA'S participants said there is a strong community of cooperation and that agencies work together. The nonprofits sit down together to find out what needs to be done and support each other to get it done.

The community in BOULDER sees a need for a hotel/conference center so that they can host high school games.





The survey showed that only 13.35% of respondents participated in any civic or service group. Others said they work with the YWCA, NAMI, their church, Helena Food Share, Humane Society, and other local nonprofits.



ABOVE  
Team Rocky raised funds and walked in the 2021 "Walk to End Alzheimers" and the 2021 NAMI Walk (not pictured)



BELOW  
A volunteer for Rocky's Meals on Wheels program delivers a meal during the COVID-19 pandemic.



## SERVICES SUPPORTING MULTIPLE DOMAINS

### TRANSPORTATION

When asked if they had any transportation barriers, close to 56% reported no barriers, 18.25% said the cost of fuel was too expensive, and 14.5% said their vehicle is in need of repairs.

When pulling data of incomes of \$25,000 or less, 28% of survey respondents said the cost of fuel was too high, 25% said they had no vehicle, and 27% said they had no barrier.

**F**rom a survey comment:  
"Helena should have a robust bus system. The current transit system doesn't run consistently or frequently enough, and the routes are not spread out throughout the city. The bus isn't available on weekends, so people can't rely on it to get to work on weekends or do shopping, errands, etc. on weekends."

Whitehall has Whitehall Transportation, a local bus system that takes people to Butte, Bozeman, and Helena for doctor appointments. They also have a local shopping day.

Augusta has no transportation and older adults need help in getting groceries and going to doctor appointments.

Townsend reported a hospital bus, and they are hoping for congressional COVID-19 support to purchase a county bus.

Lincoln has no official transportation. The American Legion and some churches help with rides.

Boulder has a van for veterans. They noted that

the lack of transportation is a serious concern for older adults.

Rocky provides free transportation for Helena and East Helena area older adults participating in the following Rocky programs:

- Helena Senior Center
- Congregate dining
- Senior Companion Program
- Foster Grandparent Program
- RSVP
- Rocky's Agency on Aging

The need is great for additional transportation opportunities. Accessible transportation services are critical for enabling older adults to live independently. Lack of transportation leads to missed appointments, emergency hospital visits, and lack of continual care. Social isolation due to lack of transportation can have an equally negative effect on health and mental health.

### CLIENT SATISFACTION

Rocky's survey included a couple of client satisfaction questions. When asked about calling or stopping by Rocky's offices and finding the support you were looking for, 61.6% said it was not applicable, 36.41% said yes, and 2% said no. Comments were, "Didn't know you existed," "I have no idea what Rocky does," "Not knowledgeable," "There are so many locations and information is not easily accessible," and "Awesome work culture/business culture." These comments show Rocky has work to do in promoting services, communication, and outreach.

Another survey question asked how to improve a Rocky program. Following are some responses. Many comments were of additional programming needed and not about improving a current Rocky program.





- You guys do a good job with the housing program you have
- Energy Services should include charging stations and funding for harnessing the wind
- Mental health programs
- Provide assistance to high school students with mental health issues
- More programming for seniors
- Senior transportation
- I love all Rocky programs; our community would struggle without them
- Affordable housing; build more
- Transportation hours and information
- Outdoor walking groups and exercise classes
- Homebuyers information; recruit people more diversely
- Housing is doing a great job. Red Alder was needed. We just need more and I know that is a very complicated, multi-layer task.
- Assist and protect the elderly
- Eagle Manor Residences is in need of some updating to the apartments.
- Meals on Wheels food quality
- Head Start needs better COVID-19 safety
- Diets for Meals on Wheels clients
- Have steady volunteers for Bingo
- Weatherization should expand scope of work for home repairs and asthma remediation
- Maybe more awareness of senior health issues. For example, the new ID card that we need to use is too small and easily lost. Also, the envelope it came in should be bright pink, red, or yellow so that it can be easily seen. I would also put RMDC in big black letters on

the envelope. Many of us have vision and hearing problems.

- I would like to see at least two meals a day served at Eagle Manor Residences
- Senior Commodities needs more options for diabetics
- Get more and smaller buses for senior transportation – offer transportation to medical appointments, etc.
- Meals on Wheels is a fantastic program
- Rocky Head Start needs better living wages
- Head Start should work on getting it promoted better in the community, like the electronic billboard on Montana Avenue
- Head Start could use an additional facility in East Helena in conjunction with affordable housing units.
- It would help many families if Head Start still had bussing
- RSVP needs get the word out about the availability and benefits of the program to more seniors
- Hope to see AARP Tax-Aide able to provide services this coming tax season

**WHAT WAS NOT INCLUDED IN THE SURVEY THAT RESPONDENTS FELT WAS IMPORTANT**

- Mental health awareness programs
- Desire for Senior Companions
- Employment and housing
- With the population increase, has anyone thought of building a second location of RMDC? If there were two locations, maybe more people could/would partake in the offerings. Keeping the current but building on the north side.
- Gambling addiction





- What can the community (government) do to ensure people are taking the opportunities provided to be gainfully employed?
- How to get help if you are in an abusive relationship
- It was listed, but I would like to emphasize the huge need for childcare in our area – especially for infant children
- I am recently divorced and trying to start over. The marriage was abusive and I'm trying to get on my feet again. The current state of economics makes it very difficult. I want to help myself, but feel like there is a penalty for trying.
- Boulder is in dire need of childcare services and affordable, adequate housing
- Improvements to medical services
- Opportunities for senior group living arrangements as a co-op or neighborhood
- List of services available
- I need help feeding my great grandchildren. DPHHS is unreachable or no help. Can't grocery shop due to COVID-19 and local store doesn't have delivery services
- Senior Companion improvements
- Senior Center information
- COVID-19 friendly activities and food supplies
- Parking issues
- Nature programs
- Need help applying for RMDC services and other services available to me like Social Security, Section 8 or low-income housing, and LIHEAP
- Maybe a COVID-19 support group for people especially seniors, children, or parents who are recovering and still dealing with the previous isolation and current ongoing situation
- What/how ARPA funds can be used in Helena
- Apartment and home rentals are priced outside of most residents' income levels. Many rental owners have sold their rentals because of the eviction moratorium which caused them financial difficulties. This drops the number of available units
- Educating and encouraging people to get involved in the decision-making process at local, county, state, and federal levels
- Are there any services RMDC could bring to the community that are missing in Helena? A program or service other HRDCs offer that RMDC does not?
- COVID-19 safety measures
- Military support for families with a spouse deploying; how to help the adult and the children. Veteran help also



*BELOW*  
Kitchen staff prepare meals to be served in the Helena Senior Center Dining Room.



# CAUSES AND CONDITIONS OF POVERTY

According to ReliefWeb, the top 11 causes of global poverty are:

1. Inequality and marginalization
2. Conflict
3. Hunger, malnutrition, and stunting (Stunting is the impaired growth and development that children experience from poor nutrition, repeated infection, and inadequate psychosocial stimulation.)
4. Poor healthcare systems – especially for mothers and children
5. Little or no access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene
6. Climate change
7. Lack of education
8. Poor public works and infrastructure
9. Lack of government support
10. Lack of jobs or livelihoods
11. Lack of reserves

According to debt.org, there are many factors associated with poverty including unemployment, population density, high school dropout rate, and incidence of drug use. The most impoverished

are those living in female-headed households with no husband present, young adults without a high school diploma, those living in a family whose head is unemployed, and minorities.

From debt.org:

**POVERTY AND EDUCATION** – the more education a person has, the greater chance of achieving a secure economic future.

**POVERTY AND HEALTH** – poor people have higher mortality rates, a higher prevalence of acute or chronic diseases, and more emotional and behavioral issues.

**POVERTY AND FOOD** – poorer families tend to have low intakes of fruit and vegetables and high intakes of junk food. They also tend to suffer more from cancer, diabetes, obesity, and heart disease.

**POVERTY AND CRIME** – this issue is complex. Factors associated with poverty and crime include unemployment, population density, high school dropout rate, and incidence of drug use.

*BELOW (left) Senator Jon Tester and staff visit Red Alder Residences to see first-hand what can be accomplished with federal funding.*

*BELOW (right) The Red Alder playground in Helena.*



During Rocky's community forums, we asked what is keeping people in poverty. Responses included:

- lack of good paying, easily accessible jobs
- lack of retirement planning
- lack of social care systems to support seniors
- we don't have the right people at the table trying to help
- need to get faith-based communities involved
- criminal records (can't get a job, rent, etc.)
- unaffordable housing
- meth and other drugs
- confidence and knowing how to get services
- lack of resiliency
- generational – lack of role models
- increasing costs without pay being increased
- cliff effect – when a person gets a raise, the benefits drop or stop altogether
- lack of childcare and no after school care



*BELOW*  
AmeriCorps Seniors' service is celebrated at a group luncheon in 2019

## WHAT ARE WE DOING IN OUR COMMUNITIES TO ADDRESS POVERTY?

**UNITED WAY OF LEWIS & CLARK AREA (UWLCA)** recognizes racism, discrimination and oppression have contributed to disparities that have existed in the past and persist in the present across our nation and in Montana. We acknowledge those inequities are the result of policies and practices that work to marginalize entire populations of people. We denounce discrimination in all its forms because it undermines the well-being and vitality of our communities. Our United Way Network seeks to dismantle disparities. We strive to engage residents and community members, especially those whose voices have traditionally been marginalized, in the shared work of building equity and empowerment. We work with public and private partners to co-create solutions that ensure everyone has the resources, support, and opportunities they need to thrive. We believe that diversity drives creativity and innovation, therefore we commit to leveraging all of our assets to create more equitable communities. We know that having varied perspectives helps generate better ideas to solve the complex problems of an ever-changing and increasingly diverse world.

**HELENA FOOD SHARE** was founded in 1987 to help provide emergency food to our neighbors who face hunger. Families come to the pantry because they are facing difficult times. These folks need help while they experience difficulty paying medical bills, struggling with a disability, finding their way through a layoff, or they're simply doing their best to make ends meet with a low or fixed income. No matter the situation, we are dedicated to serving our customers with dignity and respect and providing them with emergency food to help in any circumstances.

**GOOD SAMARITAN MINISTRIES (GSM)** provides stability to the Helena-area community members by creating a network of care and connecting







individuals and families to resources to help create stability in their lives. Our partnerships with other area nonprofits, the homeless shelters, and the Helena Police Department help us meet the day-to-day needs of individuals in our community.

Good Samaritan Ministries also runs **OUR PLACE**, a safe haven for those in need. Our Place is a peer-run support program that provides a safe physical space for men and women in the Helena Community. Those struggling with behavior challenges and/or addiction can relax, socialize, and begin to take steps toward lasting stability.

**YWCA HELENA** strengthens women, children, and families to make a better community. We provide safe and supportive housing, empower women, and promote justice and dignity for all. We strive to expose women to all services and programs needed in the community to improve their lives.

**THE CENTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH (C4MH)** provides quality mental healthcare, diversified programming, and a full range of community-based services to both adults and children. The Center has 20 locations including outpatient, day treatment, transitional living, crisis stabilization, and group homes.

**THE EARLY CHILDHOOD COALITION OF THE GREATER HELENA AREA** is a local coalition working to improve early childhood systems. The group is a collaborative effort between providers, advocates, businesses, parents, and professionals dedicated to growing and improving support and services for Helena families who are expecting or have young children.

**THE SALVATION ARMY** in Helena provides disaster services, seasonal assistance (Holiday Season), meals to those in need, after-school programs in low and moderate-income neighborhoods, shelter, and life skills coaching to those in need.

**FLORENCE CRITTENTON HOME AND SERVICES** provides innovative, comprehensive services and nurturing programs that engage and empower children, young adults, and young families to thrive and build productive lives.

**HELENA INDIAN ALLIANCE** exists to advocate for and to responsibly serve the mental, physical, spiritual, and social welfare of the Native American population and the entire Helena Community.

**CAREER TRAINING INSTITUTE** is a full-time employment and training service with skilled staff able to deliver quality, customer-focused employment, training, and business resource services with a special focus on low-income individuals.

**MONTANA LEGAL SERVICES ASSOCIATION (MLSA)** is a law firm that provides non-criminal legal information, advice, and representation to thousands of Montanans each year. We empower low-income people by providing legal information, advice, and other services free of charge.

**THE FRIENDSHIP CENTER** is a shelter for victims of domestic and sexual violence in Lewis & Clark, Broadwater, and Jefferson counties, and provides support for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault with free services available 24/7.

**FAMILY PROMISE OF GREATER HELENA** helps children and their families overcome homelessness.

**GOD'S LOVE HOMELESS SHELTER** was founded in 1981 to provide shelter for those in need, meals three times per day, clothing and hygiene products, some financial assistance, and a Family Transitional Center.

**PLANNED PARENTHOOD, PUREVIEW HEALTH CENTER, LEO POCHA CLINIC, ST. PETER'S HEALTH,** and the **VAMEDICAL CENTER AT FORT HARRISON** provide medical services for appropriate patients.



**VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICAN (VETERAN SERVICES)** offers supportive services for Veterans across all of Montana. The services include addiction treatment, mental health services, homeless services, low-income senior housing, youth services, adult re-entry, and community health services.

**HELENA HOUSING AUTHORITY (HHA)** is Helena's largest landlord with 366 managed units. HHA offers several tenant-based voucher programs, and has a state-of-the-art energy efficient community center designed to help public housing residents achieve economic self-sufficiency.

**AWARE, INC.** offers early childhood services to families and prenatal children through age five, offers jobs for people with disabilities through its employment network, offers residential services for adults and youth, and is a leader in community care and treatment of adults and children.

**NAMI MONTANA** is the state chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, the nation's largest grassroots organization for people with mental illnesses and their families.

**CAPITAL TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CTAC)** is a group with diverse local and intergovernmental representation that cooperatively participates and assists the local transit agency in planning, assessing, prioritizing, funding, and coordinating transit services.

**BOULDER TRANSITION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (BTAC)** is a collection of elected officials, business owners, community organizations, and engaged citizens of the Boulder area. BTAC is a not-for-profit organized to work on transitions in the area, most currently bringing childcare to Boulder.

There are also many other organizations in our area that provide services to the most vulnerable in our communities.



*ABOVE*  
Claire Bischoff of Nosh Café participates in Rocky's version of "Chopped" on March 7, 2020. This cooking competition and fundraising event was in its inaugural year but, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, has not been held since.



*ABOVE*  
A crowd gathers in the Helena Senior Center for the St. Patrick's day annual luncheon in 2019. This large celebration did not take place in 2020 or 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

The high-level recommendations for Rocky are:

**ESTABLISH A MORE VISIBLE PRESENCE IN THE COMMUNITY.** We found in the survey results and community forums that some people did not know much about Rocky, its programs, or its customers. Rocky will develop a comprehensive communications plan. This will most likely include enhanced media, marketing, and public relations to increase awareness of the programs and services offered by Rocky.

BELOW

*Rocky staff collaborate to host "Rocky-Palooza", an outdoor event where community members were able to gather information about all Rocky programs in a one-stop format.*



BELOW

*Members of Rocky's Affordable Housing and Energy Services programs appear on KCAP Radio's "Coffee Break" to outreach upcoming Homebuyer Education classes as well as the debut of the State of Montana's Low Income Home Water Assistance Program*



We will continue to promote Rocky's social media platforms and website to provide the community with easy access to information and events. We will focus on customer satisfaction to ensure Rocky is providing on-going value to its customers to build community recognition and become a respected, "go-to" organization.

**FOCUS ON IMPROVING SERVICES IN THE COMMUNITY.** Rocky plans to conduct a Risk Assessment and begin updating our Strategic Plan during 2022. We will develop a formal strategy that outlines our program roles and responsibilities. The Risk Assessment will identify potential hazards and determine which measures should be in place to eliminate or control the risk of any potential situation. Rocky will also maintain and enhance partnerships with agencies and nonprofits in our communities to advocate for improved services in our communities.

**REDUCE BARRIERS TO ACCESSING AND UTILIZING ROCKY'S SERVICES.** Rocky's programs, during the strategic planning, will review and evaluate the delivery of services to identify barriers. This includes language or other requirements so that our services meet customer needs. Rocky will explore all ways to improve access to our customers.





**COMPREHENSIVE, COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH TO ROCKY'S PROGRAMS AND SERVICES.** Rocky will look to increase support and resources where necessary to improve programs. Rocky will advocate for our customers and provide referrals to other agencies for additional support. We will collaborate with community partners to assist our customers.

**STRENGTHEN AND BUILD PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS.** While Rocky already partners with a great many community organizations, we will work to identify gaps and areas of opportunity related to community partners and the delivery of our services in the community. Rocky will collaborate with new and existing community partners to better direct public health and other services to priority populations in our communities.



**BELOW**  
*The 9/11 Flag of Honor Ceremony was a collaboration between Rocky's three AmeriCorps Seniors programs and was part of a nationwide initiative to recognize and remember the lives lost on September 11, 2011. The Helena location was one of over sixty cities across the United States to participate. Helena's Magpie Singers provided an Honor Song and a Farewell Song for the ceremony.*

Recommendations that specifically address the key findings from our Needs Assessment:

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS:** Rocky is working with Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church, Helena Area Habitat for Humanity, the YWCA, and the City of Helena on a new project to create a neighborhood made up of financially feasible housing. Habitat is looking to build 33 homes, Rocky 78 apartments, and the YWCA 20 transitional units totaling 131 new affordable housing options. While the need is much greater, all new developments like the proposed plan at Our Redeemer's will be a start for additional housing in Helena. Rocky's recommendation is to collaborate on projects like this with our partners.

**HOMELESSNESS IS A MORE COMPLEX PROBLEM.** Good Samaritan Ministries is in talks with the City of Helena regarding a purchase of an extended-stay small motel to provide more housing for people who are homeless, as well as providing wrap-around services for them. The long-term solution is for transitional and permanent supportive housing with wrap-around services to keep people off the streets, warm and safe.

**TRANSPORTATION:** There are two issues with transportation in our communities. One is for seniors who need transportation for medical appointments and other errands. The other is for people who need public transportation to get to and from work and childcare. Rocky's first recommendation is to seek funding for additional bus driver salaries to help seniors get to appointments. The other recommendation is to continue to work with the City of Helena and CTAC (Capital Transit Advisory Committee) to pursue all avenues for more bus routes and additional hours.

**CHILDCARE:** Childcare is definitely in short supply in our communities. Rocky's only recommendation is to work with our community partners to advocate for more funding and for childcares to take advantage of the ARPA available funds.





**LIVABLE WAGES:** Rocky recommends advocacy on lowering healthcare costs, help with childcare costs, and employee training as a way for a low wage to become a livable wage. Rocky encourages the federal government to bring back government aid for low-income people with children.



## NEEDS ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE AND ROCKY BOARD MEMBERS

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

#### ROCKY BOARD:

*Jerry Loendorf*

*Lois Steinbeck*

#### ROCKY EMPLOYEES:

*Lori Ladas, Executive Director*

*Kathy Marks, Operations Director*

*Jim Marks, Rocky's Agency on Aging Program  
Director*

*Jaymie Hazel, Head Start Family & Community  
Partnerships Manager*

*Diane Edgar, Executive Assistant*

*Kara Nelson, Community Outreach Coordinator*

### ROCKY BOARD MEMBERS:

*Trever Kirkland, President*

*Andy Hunthausen, Vice President*

*Eric Schindler, Secretary/Treasurer*

*Lois Steinbeck, private sector representative*

*Mary Pat Penley, low-income sector  
representative*

*Bob Mullen, public sector representative*

*Mike Delger, public sector representative*

*Dannai Clayborn, public sector representative*

*Mark Young, low-income sector representative*

*Paula Wright, low-income sector  
representative*

*Bruce Day, low-income sector representative*

*Jerry Loendorf, private sector representative*

*Daniel Pocha, private sector representative*

*Kate Anderson, public sector representative*





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Rocky would also like to thank all individuals who completed the Needs Survey, attended a Community Forum, or participated in a direct interview. By participating, you helped Rocky understand the emerging and ongoing needs within our communities. The responses gathered provided Rocky with information about which partners and other organizations are working on issues and where gaps exist in our community services.



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