

Caregiver Support for Resilient Aging

Respite Helps a Devoted Couple Navigate a New Chapter



Nancy and Bruce, with Lolita, celebrate Bruce's 90th birthday.

Nancy Browning shares an art-filled home with her husband Bruce Beckwith in Missoula's Brookside neighborhood. The couple enjoys the sound of Rattlesnake Creek in the woods outside their windows and the birds, bears, and even mountain lions that visit their porch throughout the year. Their journey together began in Seattle, when Nancy applied for a job where Bruce happened to be the head of labs. During her interview, she laughed at his nearly illegible handwriting, and Bruce, overhearing, was instantly charmed. The couple discovered shared interests in birdwatching, art, hiking, and travel, which formed the foundation of their life together.

Bruce and Nancy retired in Montana, and now, at 91, Bruce is living with dementia, and Nancy is with him every step of the way, as wife, best friend, and primary caregiver. The transition is difficult for both partners, but Nancy shoulders additional emotional and physical challenges and responsibilities that come with the caregiving role.

According to the couple, Bruce's cognitive changes have progressed slowly, even subtly, over time, and they first noticed small signs about a decade ago. As Nancy took on more responsibilities, transitioning from equal partner to caregiver, she found the demands unexpectedly challenging. "I don't think people realize the physical toll of this stress," she says. "I'm going to be 72 in December—there's such an age difference, but I wouldn't have changed it for the world. I understood that we'd be going through this, but it is a steep learning curve." When the strain of caregiving landed Nancy in the hospital, it was a turning point that led her to seek respite support. Familiar with Missoula Aging Services (MAS) from years prior when she and Bruce volunteered for Meals on Wheels, Nancy trusted MAS to help.

Initially, Nancy used her respite hours for errands, feeling that every moment away should be spent tackling an unending list of tasks. Over time, she realized that these hours could also provide a window for self-care. "My favorite thing to do when I have respite is to take myself out to lunch," she shares. "To not have to worry about lunch, not have to clean the dishes, not have to do the cooking." Dining out, once an ordinary affair, has become a cherished pleasure. Nancy has learned to use her respite time as an opportunity to 'recharge her batteries,' returning home with renewed energy.

MAS In-Home Client Support Specialist Kelli Atkins strives to connect with clients in meaningful ways. "Helping serve up a warm lunch meal, reading the news, looking through photograph albums," Kelli says.

(Continued on page 3)

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Reflecting on a Year of Service and a Bold Future for Missoula's Older Adults



As we look back on this year, I am deeply proud of what we have accomplished together. Your support has been vital in helping Missoula Aging Services provide critical services in our community. This past year, we delivered 123,237 meals through Meals on Wheels, worked with community partners to serve 31,833 lunches, and logged 19,500 volunteer hours. These aren't just numbers, but the tangible human experiences at the center of our commitment to empowering older adults to live with independence and dignity.

Our Resource Center answered over 22,700 calls and provided personalized Medicare and Medicaid guidance to over 4,200 clients, ensuring access to essential services. Additionally, we offered 568 hours of respite services to caregivers, helping families continue caring for their loved ones at home.

With you, MAS touches lives, eases burdens, and strengthens the vibrant community we call home. Looking ahead, we are dedicated to innovating to meet the evolving needs of older adults. In 2024, MAS launched a new Strategic Plan to shape our efforts to create an inclusive, supportive community for all. This plan emphasizes Accessibility, Autonomy, Culture, Security, and Well-being—our pathways to transformative change. We envision a future where confident aging is a shared experience, not only supported but celebrated.

Thank you for standing with us on this journey. Together, we are working together to build a brighter future for all Missoulians.

Lisa Sheppard

Chief Executive Officer

6,800 TOTAL
INDIVIDUALS
SERVED IN FY 2024

123,237

MEALS ON WHEELS
SERVED

31,833

COMMUNITY LUNCHES
SERVED

19,500

VOLUNTEER HOURS
LOGGED

(Continued from cover)

Nancy and Bruce beachcombing in Oregon's Ozette region.

"I'm happy I can provide quality care to the both of them," she adds. The photographs that document Bruce and Nancy's adventures create paths to engagement for Bruce. Nancy treasures these tangible links to their past together. "I really encourage people to do regular old-fashioned photo albums," she says, "Not just stuff on your phone or computer."

In addition to respite support, Nancy finds strength in the caregiver community. She took part in MAS's Powerful Tools for Caregiving class, where she met others navigating similar journeys and built lasting friendships. The group recently gathered at her home for a Halloween luncheon, further fostering their sense of community and connection.

Reflecting on her role, Nancy sees that the shift has reshaped her life in countless ways. Raised in a military family, Nancy grew up valuing independence and self-reliance, traits that once made it difficult to ask for help. Caregiving has taught her the importance of leaning on others. Nancy continues to find comfort in the

love she and Bruce share. Their connection remains strong, and through MAS's support, Nancy can continue to be there for Bruce while also taking the steps needed to care for herself. Though the road ahead remains challenging, Nancy's resilience and compassion are constant, honoring the life and love she and Bruce built together.

Expanding Support for Caregivers

We are excited to announce that MAS was awarded a new grant by the Alzheimer's Association to expand respite services in Missoula County, with outreach to rural areas and the LGBTQ+ community, where caregivers face unique challenges when seeking help. MAS is gathering community input regarding needs in a listening session cohosted by the Center for Dementia Respite Innovation. With the support of this grant, we'll offer financial assistance and a sliding fee scale to ensure that more caregivers from all walks of life can take necessary time for themselves.

Respite care is a critical lifeline, providing regular breaks as well as peace of mind, knowing that a loved one is safe and supported. Breaks from caregiving can reduce stress, prevent burnout, and improve mental and physical health. We understand the demands that caregivers face.

To meet growing need, particularly in underserved communities, we are actively recruiting new respite volunteers who are passionate about making a difference in the lives of caregivers and older adults. **If you or someone you know could benefit from respite care, or if you're interested in volunteering, please reach out.** Caregivers need support—and this new grant strengthens our ability to deliver the care everyone deserves.



Shelli Fortune
In-Home Services Director

For Jimmie Deeds, the Adventure Never Ends

Keep Going, Keep Giving, and Keep Connecting



Jimmie Deeds has called Mallard Estates home for more than 30 years.

meaningful moments. He developed bonds with many clients along his route, often stopping for coffee and usually returning later than he intended when he set out. He recounts fond memories of one client who was a fellow fishing enthusiast. “We’d have a walleye fish fry at his house with other drivers and the client and his friends,” Jimmie recalls. Such experiences have made his volunteer work deeply rewarding, not just for the clients but also for him.

The social interactions with clients are more than just friendly visits—they’re a lifeline. Jimmie understands the importance of these connections, especially for older adults who may feel isolated. He shares a story of a client who hadn’t responded when he knocked on the door. Concerned, Jimmie called 911, ensuring the individual received the help they needed. His quick thinking likely made a significant difference that day, a testament to the vital role volunteers play in supporting the well-being of MOW clients. Jimmie knows that the social aspect of MOW is just as valuable as the meals themselves: “People have this need, and I’m fulfilling it,” he says, grateful for the opportunity to make a difference.

Jimmie sees growing up in a supportive community surrounded by natural beauty as a blessing— one he’s committed to paying forward by giving back. From his early days of hunting, fishing, and backpacking in places like the Bob Marshall Wilderness and the Wind River Range, he has built a life enriched by the outdoors and strengthened by service. Although his body may limit some of his activities now, the need to keep going is stronger than ever. He has accomplished all he set out to do in his life, yet he feels a profound

At 80, Jimmie Deeds reflects on a life defined by service, adventure, and an unwavering commitment to helping others. Jimmie has filled his life with diverse experiences, from his time as a smokejumper for the Forest Service to his career with the Smurfit–Stone Container Corp. in Frenchtown. His journey with Missoula Aging Services (MAS) began when a doctor advised him that he could no longer work due to physical challenges. “I’m one of those people who can’t sit on my duff,” Jimmie says. He immediately found ways to give back to his community, a decision that has led to nearly two decades of service with MAS.

He reached out to see where his skills could make a difference, and that decision brought him to volunteer roles that have become essential parts of his life: from tagging abandoned vehicles for the police department to cooking for the Poverello Center and delivering meals through the Meals on Wheels (MOW) program. For the past 18 years, Jimmie has balanced these commitments, finding purpose and connection in each interaction. “I dearly love delivering Meals on Wheels because I enjoy being with some of those older people. I have a rapport with them, and I get the gist that they like me,” he shares.

Jimmie’s role with MOW has provided him with countless meaningful moments. He developed bonds with many clients along his route, often stopping for coffee and usually returning later than he intended when he set out. He recounts fond memories of one client who was a fellow fishing enthusiast. “We’d have a walleye fish fry at his house with other drivers and the client and his friends,” Jimmie recalls. Such experiences have made his volunteer work deeply rewarding, not just for the clients but also for him.

We Want to Hear From You!

What's something you tried for the first time as an older adult? Did you look forward to retirement so that you'd have the time to do something new? Start writing poetry or running? Are you studying Spanish or experimenting in the kitchen? We love to hear your stories and we're looking ahead to 2025, when we'll feature glimpses into the new beginnings that come with aging. Every new experience is an adventure and no adventure is too small. Please email your story to Anna at awilson@missoulaagingservices.org or send c/o MAS, 337 Stephens Ave., Missoula, MT 59801.



(Continued from page 4)

urgency to continue giving back. Even prior to retirement, Jimmie volunteered in trail maintenance projects organized by the Smokejumper Association. When physical limitations made strenuous activities difficult, Jimmie adapted by moving to a role as cook. This adaptability speaks to his resilience and dedication, qualities that have shaped his approach to both life and service.

Jimmie's spirit of giving extends beyond his time and energy; he is also a generous donor. He and his wife, Katheryn, developed a unique way of setting aside money for donations by allowing the IRS to withhold more than necessary. Each spring, when he receives a tax refund, he divides and donates it to several local organizations, including St. Francis Xavier Church, the Poverello Center, the Food Bank, and Missoula Aging Services. He also gives to St. Jude's and the World Kitchen. This system allowed the couple to contribute to causes close to their hearts, fulfilling what Jimmie describes as a "powerful need to help."

Jimmie believes that staying active through his volunteer work has kept him going, even through numerous surgeries and physical setbacks. "This keeps me going and moving," he says, describing his goal to reach 22 years of service, or perhaps even 24. For Jimmie, each new year offers a chance to meet different people, make new memories, and deepen his sense of purpose. The community he's built through volunteering is a source of joy and motivation that sustains him through difficult times.



Jimmie and Katheryn Deeds.

Holiday Hats & Heartfelt Cheer

Each year, MAS knitting and crocheting volunteers, like Donna Friauf (at right in green sweater), create cozy hats for local Head Start students, who visit Missoula Manor to receive these special gifts. This year's event was full of smiles as the students sang for the volunteers and Manor residents—and enjoyed a festive holiday cookie treat afterward! It's a truly special moment, and a reminder of the warmth and community spirit shared across generations.



Come Together: Missoula County Community Lunch Locations

MAS partners with the organizations below to provide community lunches throughout the county.

Bonner: First Monday every month, 11:30 pm

Our Savior's Lutheran Church: 8985 MT Hwy. 200E
To register: (406) 258-6245

Lolo: Thursdays every week, 11:30 am

Lolo Community Center: 12345 US-Hwy 93
To register: (406) 304-4515

Missoula: Monday through Friday, 11:30 am

Missoula Senior Center: 705 S. Higgins Ave.
To register: (406) 728-7682 or on arrival

Seeley Lake: Monday through Friday, noon

Sela-Senci Senior Center: 707 Locust
To register: (406) 677-2008

All sites request a suggested, voluntary contribution of \$5 to help cover the cost of meals. All are welcome and no one is turned away based on ability to pay.

BREAKING BREAD IN BONNER

Community Meals Support Autonomy



Many people know Bonner for its easy access to the river, its rich history as a former logging town, and for the Kettlehouse Amphitheater. Bonner maintains a small-town feel while offering easy access to shopping and healthcare in Missoula. The community is a welcoming haven for those who wish to age in place—on their own terms. Social interaction and continued learning support independent living, and older adults in Bonner weave both into the time-honored tradition of sharing a meal together in a MAS-sponsored meal program tailored to their preferences.

On a recent Monday, Bonner locals gathered for a community meal of spaghetti, homemade bread, squash, and carrot cake—all prepared and served by local volunteers. A session focused on fraud prevention and tips for keeping devices secure followed the meal. The Bonner meal events are offered for a suggested, voluntary donation of \$5.

In Bonner, the congregation of Our Savior's Lutheran Church donate their space and kitchen to make the monthly meals possible. Mike Heisey and the team at Bonner Mill Properties sponsor the cost of the food and dedicated volunteers show up each month to make it all happen. Missoula Aging Services responded to the needs of Bonner's older citizens to help them create a program that's personal and meaningful for them. Our newly formed Strategic Plan focuses on "Autonomy" as one of the pathways to effect positive change in the culture around aging. MAS works to help people assert choice and control over where and how they live, and the care and services they receive, including social meals.

In Missoula, Seeley Lake, and Lolo, MAS's social meal programs look different, to serve the different needs of each community. Wherever you reside, if you're looking for a satisfying and enriching experience, **we invite you to join us for a nutritious meal and engaging conversation.**

Ria Overholt

Community Services Director



Lolo residents gather for a meal at their community center.

MAJOR DONORS

August - October 2024

Individuals and Businesses who made gifts of \$200 or more:

Donna Ard
James & Beverly Backus
Patricia Baumgart
Mari & Bruce Bender
Bonner Property Development LLC
Rose-Marie Bowman
Rod & Mary Jean Brod
Judy & Bill Brodsky
Marshall & Mary Brondum Foundation
Chris & Dorothy Busch
Clyde & Sharon Bush
William Clarke
Clearwater Montana Properties
Kenneth Cote
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Kris & Louis Sommerville
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Shenoa Strandvold
John Swanson
Western Montana Chapter for the Prevention of Elder Abuse
Carrie Welch
Ken & Eilene Willett
Betty Winchell

GIFTS IN HONOR OF INDIVIDUALS

August - October 2024

Chris Hightower
Robin Abeshus
Beverly Marshall
Joseph Shlegel
Felicia Saunders
Pearl Saunders

GIFTS IN MEMORY OF INDIVIDUALS

August - October 2024

Roy Anderson
Rod & Mary Jean Brod
Carolyn Baranowski
Susan Apelt
Meartia Bevins
Barbara Riley & Collin Bevins
Tracy Jeanne Bowman
Rose-Marie Bowman
Warren Carlson
Michael Carlson
Evie Cote
Kenneth Cote
Roger Diettrich
Kenneth Cote
David & Gerrie Diettrich
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Charles Meyer

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Michael Nelson

Myra Shults

Michael Priddy

Judy Arledge

Carl Prinzing

Anonymous

Ed Redhammer

Gary Mitchell

Micky Redhammer

Gary Mitchell

Bill & Marilyn Schwaderer

Richard Meisinger

Carol Ulsafer

Donna Ard



In Memoriam

In honor and remembrance of these dedicated individuals whose volunteering enhanced the lives of those they served.

**- Rose Marie Cromwell -
- Joan Elmore -**



CONGRATULATIONS, LADIES! Carolyn McDonald, Kate Marshall, Felicia Saunders, Jean Bardwell, and Patti Thomas (pictured above with MAS Development Director Allison Strekal) were named "Outstanding Volunteers" by the Montana Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals in Oct. 2024.

Jewelry Sale!

Visit us at the
Missoula Made Fair
December 15, 2024
University of Montana
Adams Center

Save the Date!
May 17, 2025
Missoula County Fairgrounds
Home Arts Building

Embrace the Spirit of Giving

Brighten Lives This Holiday Season



As the crisp winter air settles in and festive lights begin to twinkle, the holiday season calls us to pause, reflect, and share in the spirit of giving. This cherished time of year reminds us of the importance of coming together, caring for one another, and extending a helping hand to those who need it most. At Missoula Aging Services, we see how holiday generosity can become a true lifeline, filling hearts with warmth and ensuring that older adults in our community feel supported, valued, and connected.

Your holiday gift is more than just a donation—it's a beacon of hope and compassion for those who may feel alone or vulnerable this season. Every contribution helps fund essential services that support older adults in maintaining their independence and dignity. From Meals on Wheels deliveries that bring both nourishment and friendly faces, to in-home support and respite care for caregivers, your kindness keeps our community thriving.

Make a Donation: A financial contribution, whether large or small, goes directly toward programs that provide nutrition, companionship, and essential resources to older adults.

Become a Volunteer: Volunteers are at the heart of our mission, delivering meals, offering companionship, and helping in countless ways. Giving the gift of your time and talents makes an invaluable impact in our community.

Leave a Legacy: Planned giving is a way to extend your holiday generosity beyond this season, ensuring that older adults continue to receive compassionate care and vital services for years to come.



For more information on these opportunities, please visit our website. There, you'll find all the details on how to give, volunteer, or plan a legacy gift to help older adults in our community.

In this season of gratitude and giving, we are immensely thankful for supporters like you. Your kindness lights up lives and makes the holidays brighter for those we serve. Together, let's ensure that every older adult in our community feels valued, safe, and surrounded by the warmth of community—today, tomorrow, and for many holiday seasons to come.



Allison Strekal
Development Director

NEW EXPANDED PROGRAM Home Safety and Improvement Assistance

We're excited to offer home improvements, modifications, and repairs to help Missoula County adults over the age of 60 maintain independence and prevent accidents. Work can include modifications such as replacing doorknobs, weatherization, installation of railings, etc. Clients pay for parts at cost and \$35/hr for labor. Our home modification coordinator provides a detailed estimate and work plan for clients to approve prior to starting work. Call us to get started!



Peter Bushman worked with MAS to repair wooden steps for a client.

MAS Staff News

At Missoula Aging Services, we are thankful for our incredible and dedicated staff members; they are the heartbeat of every service we deliver to our community! This fall we had the pleasure of welcoming two new staff members to our team and celebrated one promotion and one position change internally.

ANNA WILSON joined the Development and Communications Team as Public Relations and Marketing Manager in late August. Prior to joining MAS, Anna managed marketing and communications for the Missoula Art Museum. She is passionate about community-building and brings experience in trade publishing and higher education to her work for nonprofits.

KYLE WOOD was welcomed to the Resource Specialist Team in October. Originally from Great Falls, Kyle has worked serving adults with disabilities in Missoula for a decade, providing direct care, medical care coordination, employment training and experience to the individuals he served. Kyle's dedication to serving our community is a wonderful addition to the Resource Specialist Team.

PROMOTIONS & POSITION CHANGES

KYLE BROECKEL was promoted from Dev/Com Team Lead to Data Systems Manager in October.

THERESA RAGSDALE moved from Complex Case Resource Specialist to Resource Center Analyst in September.

EST. 1982

MISSOULA *aging* SERVICES

WE'RE PROUD *of* OUR YEARS

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MAS Events

IN-PERSON NEW TO MEDICARE WORKSHOP

Monday, January 13, from 12 to 1:30 pm.

Missoula Aging Services

337 Stephens Ave., Missoula, MT 59801

Register online: <https://medicaremas.eventbrite.com>

VIRTUAL NEW TO MEDICARE WORKSHOP

Wednesday, February 19, from 6 to 7:30 pm.

Register online: virtualnewtomedicaremas.eventbrite.com

IN-PERSON MATTER OF BALANCE

Tuesdays from 2 to 4 pm, January 7 - March 4.

*No class February 18.

Missoula Public Library

301 E. Main St., Missoula, MT 59802

Register online: MatterofBalance-MAS-2025.eventbrite.com

VIRTUAL MEMORY LOSS CONVERSATIONS

Thursdays from 10 to 11 am. New attendees welcome!

Participate online using Zoom. No cost.

Facilitated by Dementia Friendly Missoula.

Register online: <https://bit.ly/3ITnAsY>

VIRTUAL CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUPS

Second Monday of each month from 4 to 5 pm.

Third Tuesday of each month from 1 to 2 pm.

Participate online using Zoom. No cost.

Register online: <https://bit.ly/2YkyVPU>

IN-PERSON CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUPS

Fourth Wednesday of each month from 2 to 3 pm.

Missoula Aging Services

337 Stephens Ave., Missoula, MT 59801

Check in at the front desk when you arrive. No cost.

IN-PERSON TECH CAFE

First Monday of each month from 1 to 3 pm.

Missoula Aging Services

337 Stephens Ave., Missoula, MT 59801

Check in at the front desk when you arrive. No cost.

View a full list of events at

MISSOULAAGINGSERVICES.ORG