

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF MISSOULA AGING SERVICES

2025 CONNECTIONS

SUMMER

Share It Again, Wear It Again

Jewelry Sale Marks 10 Years of Community Sparkle and Support Thanks to Generous Volunteers and Donations

What began as a creative idea to turn gently used jewelry into support for older adults has blossomed into one of Missoula's most beloved traditions—and Missoula Aging Services' largest annual fundraiser.

The **Wear-It-Again Jewelry Sale** brings together an abundance of donated treasures, the energy of enthusiastic shoppers, and the tireless dedication of volunteers. It's a joyful, community-driven event where generosity sparkles just as brightly as the jewelry, and every purchase helps ensure older adults in Missoula can live with the dignity, independence, and support they deserve.

This year marks the 10th annual Wear-It-Again Jewelry Sale, happening **Saturday, May 17**, and **longtime volunteers say it's not just the gems and jewels that keep them coming back—it's the joy of friendship, the generosity of community, and the positive impact** of the fundraiser to support Missoula Aging Services programs.

"We see everything from diamonds to pop beads," laughs Jean Bardwell, a volunteer who's been involved since the early years. "We even created a 'Wild and Wonderful' category," adds Patti Thomas, "because we didn't know what to call some of the pieces that we received, which were interesting, to say the least."

The steadfast group of **volunteers meets every week nine months of the year to clean, sort, research, and price thousands of pieces**, including pins, brooches, earrings, rings, and statement pieces from around the world. Local jewelers and gemologists lend their expertise, helping to identify and appraise high-value items, ensuring shoppers find treasures at great prices.

"**It's a discovery every time**," says Kate Marshall-Nevas, who joined the team in early 2024. "I'll pick something up that looks like costume jewelry, thinking that it's not anything of real value, but then it's actually something quite valuable and it's really exciting."

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Volunteers (L to R) Patti Thomas, Carolyn McDonald, Sandra Morrison-Parris, Kate Marshall-Nevas, Jean Bardwell, Judy Whiddon, Linda Jensen, and Felicia Saunders meet weekly nine months out of the year to sort and prepare donated jewelry for sale. The 'J-Sale' crew is pictured with Katie Ghen-Simpson of Bathing Beauty Beads, who regularly contributes her time and expertise.

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337 Stephens Ave., Missoula, MT
59801-3816

T (406) 728-7682 F (406) 728-7687

To submit information, please contact
awilson@missoulaagingservices.org

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Standing Up, Speaking Out



Since I last wrote to you, the uncertainty around federal funding for aging services has only deepened. While some immediate threats were delayed, the long-term picture remains unclear—and troubling. **Proposed changes at the federal level signal reductions to critical programs** funded through the Older Americans Act, the programs that enable older

adults to remain safe, healthy, and independent at home.

At Missoula Aging Services, we are doing everything we can to prepare for what may come. But we also know that **preparation is not enough—advocacy is essential**. Now more than ever, we need your voice.

We hear every day from older adults and caregivers who are afraid. Some are worried they'll lose the meals they depend on. Others fear losing access to the guidance and resources that help them manage complex health and financial situations. These stories are powerful—and they can make a difference.

If you or someone you love has benefited from MAS programs, **I invite you to share your story with our elected officials. Let them know what's at stake.**

Contact your elected officials today:

- 📞 Senator Steve Daines - (406) 549-8198
- 📞 Senator Tim Sheehy - (202) 224-2644
- 📞 Congressman Troy Downing - (202) 225-3211
- 📞 Congressman Ryan Zinke - (202) 225-5628

Together, we can send a clear message: as Montanans we value our older adults. Let's protect the programs that help all Montanans age with dignity.

With gratitude,

Lisa Sheppard

Chief Executive Officer

Join the Board

Let's shape the future of aging together!

Missoula Aging Services is seeking Board applicants who are passionate about creating a more age-friendly community. As a board member, you'll help guide the mission and strategic direction of MAS, ensuring older adults and those who care for them have access to the resources they need. This is a unique opportunity to make a meaningful impact while collaborating with a dedicated team of local leaders. Board members are appointed by the Missoula County Commissioners for 3-year terms, and meetings are held five times a year. To learn more about MAS, visit missoulaagingservices.org. If you'd like more information about the Board position, contact us at info@missoulaagingservices.org. Applications can be submitted at Boards, Committees, Councils and Special Districts | Missoula County, MT by May 30.



(Continued from cover)

The event's popularity has grown along with its inventory. **Last year, more than 600 shoppers walked through the door, and this year's sale will feature 40 tables loaded with secondhand treasures.** Proceeds directly support vital programs and services and the funds raised are especially meaningful in a time when a growing number of older adults are facing challenges including rising costs and when MAS faces uncertainty around future federal funding. **Community support is more important than ever.**

"It's been amazing to see what comes in donated from the community—costume jewelry, also a lot of beautiful, fine, gold and silver pieces," says Felicia Saunders, who helped start the sale. **"We have a lot of help, and we have a lot of fun."** The sale is just really a blast. What we have learned is it's not about *our* taste. That's part of the fun."

The volunteers each have their own specialty—from sorting earrings to researching gemstones. But they are united by camaraderie and purpose.

"Some days I don't feel like leaving home," says Carolyn McDonald, "But once I get here . . . I feel good because I'm doing this."

This year's sale will be held May 17, 8 am to 3:30 pm, in the Home Arts Building at the Missoula County Fairgrounds. Whether it's your first time attending or your tenth, **the Wear-It-Again Jewelry Sale offers something for everyone**—sparkle, stories, and a shared commitment to helping older adults thrive. See you there!



Standing Strong After a Life of Service

Warren Little Wants Other Vets to Know How Veteran Directed Care Can Support Independence

At 95, Warren Lewis Little still begins each day in the same Rattlesnake neighborhood home where he was raised—a home filled with memories, where he once cared for his aging parents and now hopes to remain for the rest of his life. With support from the Veteran Directed Care (VDC) program, administered locally by Missoula Aging Services, that goal is within reach.



A retired FBI agent, Little has lived a remarkable life. From serving in the Air Force from 1954 - 1956, to training new FBI agents in Stockton, California, to founding Aikido of Missoula, his energy and independence are defining traits. He maintains a busy social schedule, with veteran events, get-togethers with members of his high school class, and sunny afternoons visiting with friends on his backyard deck.

A few years ago, a back injury brought new challenges for Little. His mobility and balance suffered and it was difficult to keep up with things around the house. “You don’t realize how much help you

Warren Little at home, with family friend Brenda Harrold.

need until you start getting some help,” Little says. **“My mother designed this house, Dad built it, and I couldn’t stay here if I didn’t have this help.”**

Brenda Harrold, a family friend, introduced Little to MAS Veteran Directed Care Coordinator Chris Larson and the VDC program—a lesser-known but life-changing resource for veterans.

“After Chris explained the program, we realized it would be a good fit,” said Harrold. “Chris has a really good way of talking to these very proud veterans. To ask for help is the hardest. **As Chris says, you already paid your dues. Let us give back to you for your years of service.**”

After enrolling in the VDC program, Little now has in-home help on weekdays, including some days when Harrold comes in as a caregiver. **The in-home help enables Little to maintain his routines—like his daily homemade breakfast, stretching exercises rooted in his Aikido practice, and rigorous physical therapy, which he calls the “pain train”.** Through these activities, Little stays strong and limber enough to maintain his mobility and independence. “I couldn’t do this without Brenda and Dale,” he said, referring to his other caregiver. “They keep me going.”

The support provided by MAS extends beyond health needs. Little also receives Meals on Wheels, which provides not only daily nutrition, but meaningful personal connections with the drivers.

(Continued on next page)

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION WEEK



Pictured (L to R) are Commissioners Juanita Vero (also a MAS board member) and Josh Slotnick, with MAS volunteers Bill and Linda Hall, Rick Hall, and Diane Filkins, with MAS Volunteer Services Coordinator Judy Douglas.

Missoula County Commissioners officially proclaimed April 20-26 as Volunteer Recognition Week, aligning with National Volunteer Week.

MAS is deeply grateful to the County and our entire community for helping us honor the incredible individuals who give their time, energy, and heart to strengthen Missoula. Hundreds of dedicated volunteers support MAS and partner organizations across the county—thank you for all you do!

(Continued from previous page)

Larson says, “Working with Warren and his caregiver, Brenda, is an honor. Brenda is a true Missoulian, with total commitment to this community. Warren is a wealth of local history, jokes, and stories. Their success shows how **VDC can empower veterans** to partner with the community and MAS to meet the goal of aging at home.”

Harrold adds: “**Even if you’re capable, it doesn’t hurt to ask for help.** It can make life a little better, a little easier.”



Warren Little with Federal Bureau of Investigations Director J. Edgar Hoover.

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Sue Talbot

Edward Walker

Steve & Carole Monlux

Klairaïne & Don Nichwander

Bobby Woomer

Nonda Beardsley

Bob Yocum

Deborah Trowbridge



Faith Meusey (pictured with MAS Development Director Allison Strekal) dropped off the donation check from Wagner's Furniture and Design. Wagner's collected 48 customer donations; their goal was to collect enough donations for 600 meals, and the Wagner's team was very proud to exceed the goal! Wagner's also contributed television advertising during March for Meals and a lift chair for a client in need.

March for Meals

Thanks to all sponsors and those who donated during March for Meals this year, **we surpassed our goal and raised over \$185,000 for the Meals on Wheels program!** Your generosity will provide nearly 20,000 meals to our older neighbors, enhancing their independence and health, and keeping them connected in our community through daily deliveries. **THANK YOU for making a meaningful difference in the lives of older adults in Missoula County.**

Thank you, too, to Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Montana for joining us as a March for Meals Golden Harvest Sponsor!



Friendship, Fun, and Freedom

MAS Companion Program Fosters Lasting Connection

Leona “Lee” DeGrandpre (91) appreciates the independence that has come with age—and a friendship formed with volunteer Marion Yates (86) through the Missoula Aging Services (MAS) Caring Companion program has sweetened the feeling of freedom.

As DeGrandpre puts it, “When you quit working, you miss the everyday connections. **Having someone to talk to, to get out with—it makes all the difference.**”

DeGrandpre first learned about the Caring Companion program through a neighbor who was getting some extra support. Coping with neuropathy and looking for ways to stay engaged, DeGrandpre reached out to Missoula Aging Services. **MAS In-Home Services Supervisor Nancy Kral puts intensive thought and effort into pairing companions who she thinks will be compatible.** Kral matched DeGrandpre with Yates, and the two women quickly became friends.

“It was instant—we liked each other right away,” Yates recalls. Now, every Thursday is an outing: shopping, lunch at Wheat Montana, doctor appointments, bookstore visits, and the two love to chat about their favorite TV shows.



Lee DeGrandpre with her first book, *Popsicle Creek*.

For DeGrandpre, their weekly meetings offer more than errands and entertainment. “When it’s Monday, I’m already looking forward to Thursday,” she says. DeGrandpre and Yates also enjoy chatting on the phone between meeting days.

Yates’s support helps DeGrandpre to live independently in her own home. DeGrandpre knows she’ll have groceries for the week and that she has a way to get to appointments, and she feels connected to the broader Missoula community.

But the benefits go both ways. Yates says volunteering enriches her life too. After moving to Missoula during COVID she felt isolated. She made an appointment with a Resource Specialist at Missoula Aging Services to address an issue with her health insurance and learned about volunteer opportunities at that time.

Although Yates was immediately attracted to the Caring Companion program, she’s still surprised at how quickly it helped her build meaningful friendships and rediscover a sense of community. “You don’t think about it being a

friendship you’re going to develop,” Yates says, “but that’s what happens.”

Yates has been able to celebrate a milestone with DeGrandpre too—the publication of her first book. DeGrandpre had no writing experience beyond correspondence for work, but she authored a

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“Usually our big thing is going out to lunch. I started meeting with Lee in 2022. And I’d say now we’re BFFs.”
- Marion Yates



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children’s book titled *Popsicle Creek*—an endeavor that Yates enthusiastically supported. The friends scouted colorful children’s books at local stores and discussed ideas together. DeGrandpre sold all the copies of the book she had at a recent book-signing in Missoula and is now working on a second book.

Yates is now busy in the community. In addition to volunteering in various roles, she teaches line dancing several days a week at the Missoula Senior Center. She urges others to find ways to stay active and connected, and to get support when it’s needed: **“You just gotta get up and do it. You’ve got to do what you feel, what you enjoy doing. . . . More people need to realize there’s somebody out there that will help you and that it’s okay.** I think people here in Missoula don’t realize what they have and how important it is.”

The connection that’s grown between DeGrandpre and Yates is a powerful example of reciprocity, where both lives are enriched. **The Caring Companion program is based on this simple power of connection to support health and happiness** —and the program strengthens the greater community, one meaningful bond at a time.

A Gift of Love, A Legacy of Care

August is Make-A-Will Month



Each August, National Make-A-Will Month offers a thoughtful invitation to pause and reflect—not just on our assets, but on our values, our loved ones, and the legacy we want to leave behind. It's a time to consider how we care for the people and causes closest to our hearts, both now and in the future.

I've had many conversations with people who've told me they've “been meaning to get around to it.” **I get it—thinking about the future can feel overwhelming. But creating a will is one of the most meaningful, empowering things you can do. It's not just a legal document—it's an act of love.** It allows you to care for the people and pets closest to your heart and ensure your wishes are honored.

It's also a beautiful opportunity to extend your care beyond your lifetime. Including a charitable gift in your will is a way to ensure your values live on. **A legacy gift to Missoula Aging Services helps provide meals, connection, and essential support for older adults and caregivers throughout our community. It's a deeply personal way to reflect your compassion and commitment to others.** Your legacy can be dignity, kindness, and support for those who need it most.

If you've been putting off creating or updating your will, I encourage you to take that first step this month. MAS offers a free, easy-to-use tool called FreeWill to help you create your will online in about 20 minutes. You can find it on our website at missoulaagingservices.org by visiting the Will Planning Support page.

No matter your circumstances, the peace of mind that comes from having a plan in place is invaluable—for you and those you care about.

To learn more about legacy giving, email me directly at astrekal@missoulaagingservices.org. I'd be honored to connect with you.

Allison Strekal

Development Director





Medicare Fraud Prevention Week

Fraud costs Medicare an estimated \$60 billion per year. It also costs Medicare beneficiaries time, stress, their medical identities, and potentially even their health.

Montana beneficiaries have reported Medicare fraud in the form of urinary catheters, genetic test kits, and durable medical equipment they didn't receive showing up on their Medicare statements. People have received phone calls asking them to confirm their Medicare number, which gives the scammer free reign to bill Medicare. Help yourself and others and learn how to protect against scams by joining the Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) for Medicare Fraud Prevention Week, June 2 - 8.

Everyone plays a part in the fight against fraud. People who can help to prevent, detect, and report Medicare fraud include:

- Medicare beneficiaries
- Caregivers
- Families
- Partners and professionals
- Health care providers
- Community members

Please call if you have any questions about Medicare fraud today. MT SMP can be reached at 1-800-551-3191 across Montana.

MAS Staff News

We appreciate the continued hard work and dedication of our staff at MAS. Delivering the programs and services our community relies on is possible thanks to our incredible team. This spring, we had the pleasure of celebrating two staff promotions that will provide additional services and resources available to our clients.

PROMOTIONS & POSITION CHANGES

JOAN BARTKOWSKI was promoted from Money Management Specialist to Money Management Team Lead in March.

NOAH PAULSON was promoted from Resource Specialist to Money Management/Resource Specialist in April.

EST. 1982

MISSOULA *aging* SERVICES

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MAS Events

IN-PERSON NEW TO MEDICARE WORKSHOP

Wednesday, May 28, from 12 to 1:30 pm.

Wednesday, July 23, from 12 to 1:30 pm.

Missoula Aging Services

337 Stephens Ave., Missoula, MT 59801

Register online: New2MedicareMAS.eventbrite.com

VIRTUAL NEW TO MEDICARE WORKSHOP

Wednesday, June 25, from 6 to 7:30 pm.

Wednesday, August 27, from 6 to 7:30 pm.

Register online: New2MedicareMASonline.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>

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.

Full calendar at MISSOULAAGINGSERVICES.ORG

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 COMMUNITY LUNCH BONNER

11:30 am, first Monday of every month,

Our Savior's Lutheran Church

LOLO

11:30 am, weekly on Thursdays,

KT's Hayloft

MISSOULA

11:30 am, Monday through Friday,

Missoula Senior Center

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12 pm, Monday through Friday,

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