

A Message from our Executive Director

By Geoffrey Birnbaum, Executive Director

I often notice when I greet someone that one of us asks the other “what’s new?” Sometimes this question stumps me. My first thought is “what news do I have that would capture the other person’s attention?” Then I realize it may just have been a “hello” similar to other greeting questions like “how are you?”

To start with an answer – we are fine. This means that the Youth Homes is solid, financially sound, has enough work, has great kids to help and has dedicated supporters who give generously as we move forward.

Instead of following up with “what is new at the Youth Homes,” I’ll tell you what is old. The group homes we started in the ‘70s are still operating and

are still relevant. We still see many kids who need a place to mourn their losses before they venture back home or into a new family. Of course, many things are new, from cultural competence to new labels for describing our kids’ issues and techniques in treating those problems. But thankfully, some things have stayed the same – and those things are what we had a vision of when we started, and are still insuring that they are in place.

Kids needed, and still need, to be safe. They deserve to have caring adults who are dedicated to their growth. Kids need a dream to grow toward. They should have opportunities to succeed and fail – to reach as high as possible. Kids need to be

in healthy relationships. They should take responsibility for their actions, and they need guidance in learning how to be a stand-up person. They need our attention, our time and our true interest in them as individuals. As I look back over the years I have been involved (yes, I am including myself in the answer “what is old here”), I can assure you we are as dedicated to these principles as I was when I walked through our doors in 1976. And, I hope just a little bit wiser.



Geoffrey Birnbaum
Executive Director



MISSION STATEMENT

To assist each child in finding security, a sense of belonging and a place to call home.

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A New Sponsor for the Missoula Kids Marathon - Youth Homes!

By Geoffrey Birnbaum, Executive Director

When dealing with teens, we always worry about “sex, drugs and rock and roll,” but probably the greatest threat to our young people today is obesity. From the beginning of our work with children, we have always put their physical development on par with their intellectual, spiritual and emotional growth. So, when we looked at our successful partnership with Run Wild Missoula, Missoula’s premier running club, and their amazing Missoula Marathon, we decided to give back.

This year we have joined with other businesses and organizations to sponsor the **Missoula Kids Marathon** on Saturday, July 10, the day before the Missoula Marathon. Our job is to run a small media campaign which encourages and supports kids to challenge themselves by running and charting 25 miles throughout the spring and summer. We will also have Youth Homes kids and volunteers on hand for the run’s last 1.2 miles to cheer on the kids as they finish their “marathon.” This event is a great investment in the health of our community, and we are pleased to join in this campaign. Watch for our ads and remember to congratulate any kid you know who is running – they can use your support.



Again this year we will also have our Run 4 Kids team for the Missoula Marathon, which helps get community members invested in running for our youth. Over the past two years, our team members have raised more than \$100,000 for our programs and services. So if you’re thinking of participating in the full or half marathon, please consider joining our Run 4 Kids Team. For more information or to join, call 721-2704 or visit www.youthhomesrun4kids.org.

Visit our New Website!

Over a decade ago, our good friends at Pyron Technologies donated their services to create our first website. This was a big step for us. Recently, they came back to us with new software that allows us to be more effective in our communication because we can easily update our Web content. This will help us maintain current, accurate information and be more creative in our presentation of this information. All this will serve two great purposes, one obvious and one a little less obvious. First, we will be better able to engage people and gain their support and involvement with Youth Homes through donating, volunteering, or fostering/adopting.

Second, by having all these opportunities to explain what we do to the public, we are also educating ourselves as to what we do well and what we could do better. The more we communicate what we do, the more we are forced to critically think about what we ought to do. This allows us to better focus on what is most important for our children. In the end, we accomplish the most important gain – knowledge in helping kids who need adults to care and help. **Many thanks to Dave Pyron and his great staff** for working closely with us and for bringing their broad experience in this field, to our staff who spent a lot of time editing and organizing the content, and to Chris Carey our marketing coordinator who kept us on task and put everything together in a artful package. Please visit us at www.youthhomes.com and let us know what you think.



Join the Youth Homes Run 4 Kids Team!

We are actively recruiting runners and walkers to join our **Run 4 Kids Team** who will participate in the Missoula Marathon on July 11th. Last year we had 117 members who raised nearly **\$60,000** and this year we want to do even better!

We want to congratulate our friends at the **Runners Edge** and **Run Wild Missoula/Missoula Marathon** for receiving the recognition of **“Best Overall Marathon”** from the readers at Runners World. What a huge and deserved honor!

As a team member your race registration and race training through Run Wild Missoula is paid for by our generous sponsor Montana Rail Link. We ask that in return you set a fundraising goal of \$500 individually or a team of two can partner up to raise \$750. We have great prizes for reaching or exceeding your goal including prizes for the top three fundraisers!

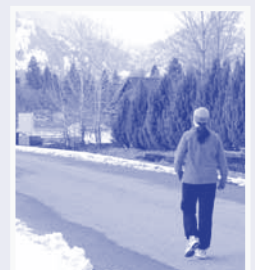
Team members receive weekly email support and motivation, a high-quality team running shirt for race day as well as pre-race and post-race events. This is a great way to accomplish a personal achievement while making a difference in the lives of kids in our community! **Please consider joining our team!**

This year Kim Anderson, our former Development Director, is blogging about Hannah, a 14 year-old girl, currently in care at one of our group homes. Kim is writing about Hannah’s experience in care as well as her own experience in training for her first half marathon!

Read Kim’s blog entry from Day 1:

“I’m going to do something kinda nuts for me. I’m going to run a half marathon in honor of a kid at Youth Homes in Missoula, MT. I am in awe of what this kid I have never met will need to do to get better. As I contemplate how hard it is to run 5 minutes in a row after a lifetime of never (not kidding) exercising into a real sweat. I know it pales in comparison to what kids struggle with each day as they try to get healthier with the odds against them.”

To check out Kim’s blog please go to: kim-thereluctantrunner.blogspot.com



Kim Anderson sets out on a training run.

To learn more about joining the Run 4 Kids Team please visit www.youthhomesrun4kids.org or give us a call at 721.2704 and ask for Ramey, Chris or Laura.



Thank you for m

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Thank you all for helping our children this past holiday sea

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ason with your generous gifts, volunteerism and kindness!

oliday season. If we missed you, please let us know at 406.721.2704.

Bitterroot Youth Home Moves Into a New House!

For the past eight years, the Bitterroot Youth Home has been serving the youth of Ravalli County in a small, four-bedroom house on South 2nd Street in Hamilton. Up to seven kids at a time have shared bedrooms, sat elbow-to-elbow at the dining table, and squeezed into the cramped living room to watch TV, with not a lot of privacy or space.

All that changed this March when the program moved into its new house on Providence Way. The new house, which is

four times the size of the old one, allows us to reach our program capacity of eight. Most of the kids will get their own bedroom and now have room to spread out their homework on the dining table or read a book in the corner without disturbing others.

The BYH board and staff first looked at the house two years ago when it came onto the market. However, the \$400,000 asking price was not feasible, so they kept looking into other options. With the downturn in the economy, the home went into foreclosure and the Youth Homes board approved buying it and renovating it to meet



The new Bitterroot Youth Home

the program's needs. Executive Director Geoff Birnbaum said "We are very excited about this opportunity and are blessed that we could take advantage of the current real

estate market to obtain a house of this caliber within our budget."

On March 13, volunteers from the Hamilton High School Booster Club, Trapper Creek Job Corps, Lone Rock Christian Church and staff spent the day moving furniture and other possessions to

the new house. The staff and kids have quickly adjusted to the new house and are ecstatic about the increased space. Kay Crowe, program manager, walked through the front door to find one of the girls doing cartwheels in the living room. "That's the best thing I've seen in years. Our kids never had the opportunity to do that in the old house", commented Crowe with a smile on her face.

Pigman Builders renovated the top floor of the house to accommodate six bedrooms and an office for staff. In the coming months, we will be asking for community support to complete the outside of the home – finishing the building's exterior, installing a driveway and parking areas and adding landscape.

If you would like more information on how you can help us finish the Bitterroot Youth Home, please contact Laura Henning at 721-2704 x 231.

Bitterroot Youth Home Gala A Resounding Success

On February 20, the Bitterroot Youth Home Gala hosted its 7th annual gala, Romancing with the Stars, at the St. Francis Pastoral Life Center. The evening was our most successful gala yet, raising **\$26,000** to directly benefit the youth in our care! We are delighted by the community's support and express our sincere gratitude to all the donors, attendees and volunteers who contributed to the event's success, especially our sponsors:

Lead Sponsors

Bitterroot B's, First Interstate Bank, Jani Summers at Exit Realty, Massa Home Center, Pigman Builders, Ravalli Family Medicine, Soroptimists International of Hamilton

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Just what have our kids have been up to?

- Ethan took the SAT, attended an awards ceremony hosted by UM President, George Dennison, to commemorate his success in his Chinese language class at Sentinel and got to go to prom.
- Caleb played the role of the school nerd in a production by his Sentinel drama class of Awesome 80s Prom.
- Noah's success in treatment has lead to overnight visits with his mother and brothers in advance of reunification this summer.
- Alex has steadily earned more 'alone' time in the community on weekends as a result of his hard work to build trust and has been doing overnight visits with his grandparents.
- Two of the Tom Roy Youth Guidance Home residents received outstanding student awards from Emma Dickinson.
- Bethany completed her GED and moved into her first apartment.
- Meredith turned 18 and moved into her first apartment through the Tom Roy Apartment site living program.
- Ronda participated in Sentinel High School's Dessert Show in which she performed in a number of group acts and did her own solo.
- Jeremy has been participating in an urban gymnastics class and had his best grades ever last semester – five A's and two B's.
- Billy bought his own mountain bike with money saved from a summer job and allowances. He received a bike light and lock from the home for his 16th birthday.
- Manny tried snowshoeing for the first time when the home went to Lolo Pass recently. He loved it!
- Angela has proven to be quite the artist, and one of her amazing drawings is displayed in the Program Director's office.
- Julie won second place in a state-wide VFW essay contest. Brandi received third place for Missoula in the contest as well.
- Arianna has been working on a science project at school for the past several months and seems to be enjoying 8th grade at Target Range.
- Jules played the flute in her middle school band.
- Cathy sang in chorus for the Sentinel High School Dessert Show.
- The Talbot girls rung in the New Year at the University of Montana by dancing away to the Drum Brothers.
- Thomas lettered in swimming and competed at state on the varsity swim team. He has also greatly enjoyed the ski season.
- Thad attended prom and got his driver's license.
- Briana acquired a full-time job and is will attend college this fall.
- Trinda received 'Student of the Month' of Flathead Youth Home.
- Alanna moved from the Flathead Youth Home into foster care and started to trust the stability of a safe home.
- The kids pitched in to prepare the soil for the Flathead Youth Home's first vegetable garden at the new location.
- Dylan has a steady job and got his own apartment.
- Susan will graduate in June and plans to attend tech school in Helena this fall to study aviation.
- The kids served dinner each week to the community at the South Valley Child and Family Services Center in Hamilton.



Congratulations to **Missoula County United Way** for **EXCEEDING** their fundraising goal of one million dollars by raising a total of **\$1,085,000 this year!**

It is **Legacy Montana** Month, an awareness effort to educate the public about planned giving. This effort was started ten years ago through the hard work of a collaboration of Missoula nonprofit organizations lead by Jean Bowman. To learn more, contact our Development Director at 721-2704 or visit the Legacy Montana website: www.legacymontana.org

upcoming events

- **July 10th:** The **Glacier Challenge** Multi-sport Race benefitting the Flathead Youth Home.
- **July 11th:** **Youth Homes Run 4 Kids Team** takes on the Missoula Half and Full Marathon
- **August 4th:** Youth Homes Annual **Summer Party** at Fort Missoula.

www.youthhomes.com

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Youth Homes collaborates with Garden City Harvest to bring an innovative project to Missoula!

By Melissa Arno, Program Director - Tom Roy Youth Guidance Home



Youth Homes teen works at the River Road Community Garden

The mission of the Youth Homes is **“to assist each child in finding security, a sense of belonging, and a place to call home.”** At the Tom Roy Youth Guidance Home, a home for youth transitioning into adulthood, I wanted to not only take care of the kids we serve, but also steward the one and a half acres of land that sits behind the home to mutually benefit both the young adults and the community we serve.

In the Spring of 2009 while milling about the vacant knapweed field with Tom Roy, an active Youth Home advocate for over 30 years, the idea of harvesting the land behind our home and the relative importance it could have in helping our young adults gain life skills came together. We discussed a vision for a beautiful garden. The garden would grow organic vegetables, provide fresh fruits and vegetables to other Youth Home children, employ some of our Tom Roy young adults through a youth employment program, and offer a community shares program to our neighbors and community. We will be giving our young adults the hands-on experience and tools to grow a garden that will bear far-reaching benefits—a sense of responsibility and confidence in being able to see something through from “seed to plant”. By Spring 2010, our young adults will be able to care and nurture their crops, giving back to the community that supports and provides for their needs.

Neither Tom nor I knew how to grow vegetables, so we turned to Garden City Harvest and other community resources for assistance. **Together we will be transforming not only our weed-infested eyesore into a viable farm, but also transforming the youth we serve.**

GET FRESH VEGGIES EVERY WEEK THIS SUMMER!

Becoming a member of our Youth Farm Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program allows you to receive a portion of the farm’s harvest every week, all summer long, for approximately 18 weeks. A share of vegetables will supply a typical household of four with a week’s worth of produce. The CSA’s are \$500 each and can be shared between 2 families (\$250 each).

Please call Ramey Kodadek at 406.721.2704 ext. 222 for more details.