

CORRECTIONS TO COMMUNITY

QUARTERLY NEWS FROM ALTERNATIVES, INC.

WINTER 2018



Mission Statement:

We promote public safety and challenge offenders to become responsible, productive citizens.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

1

An Apple for the Teacher

2

Bright n' Beautiful Project

2

United Way Day of Caring

3

Achieving Balance: A Lifetime Effort

3

Tis' the Season: Volunteer Projects

4

An Experienced Hand: Mike Sullivan

4

Alumni of the Quarter

5

Free Screening for Beta Clients

5

Distinguished Service and a Well
Deserved Retirement

6

Board of Directors

An Apple for the Teacher: Passages Students Working on High School Equivalency

By Gina Poor, Program Supervisor

Through a partnership with School District #2, Adult Education courses are now offered at the Passages Program to assist those in need of obtaining their HiSet certificate. This is a huge milestone for Passages, as it has been identified as a need for our residents for many years. Classes are held Monday through Thursday and are offered by three SD2 educators: Malt Galt, Val LaFrance and Suzette Fletcher. Courses include Math, Science, Social Studies, Work Skills and Career Planning and English Language Arts (Reading and Writing). The instructors are onsite 16 hours per week. Julie Draeger, an 11-year employee of Passages with a strong background in education, is the coordinator of this project.

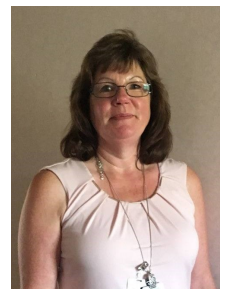


*Val LaFrance,
Math*



*Julie Draeger,
Passages Case
Manager*

Jay Lemelin, the Executive Director of Adult and Community Education, stated that the Billings Adult Education program receives funding from different sources including a grant received through the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA). The grant was to provide services for low-income clients and/or those with minimal skills who are "most in need". Emphasis is also placed on employment and career advancement along with preparation for post-secondary education.



*Suzette Fletcher,
Life Skills/
Employment Skills*

The HiSet consists of five individual tests. Once students have passed all tests, they earn their HiSet certificate. To date, four Passages residents have tested, and one has successfully completed all requirements. The results for the others are pending. There are currently five residents enrolled in classes at Passages. If a client begins her testing at Passages but transfers to another program/facility, she can continue with the program in the community they are located.

Passages is extremely grateful to our partners at School District #2 and we are looking forward to assisting more women in obtaining their HiSet.



*Mike Galt,
Language Arts*



Bright n' Beautiful Project

By Amanda Green, Beta Jail Alternatives Supervisor

Bright n' Beautiful is a non-profit, public service organization dedicated to litter prevention, recycling education, proper waste handling practices, and the beautification of Billings and Yellowstone County. One of their annual projects after the holiday season is to help the residents of Yellowstone County recycle their Christmas Trees. Collection sites are set up in several locations in Yellowstone County and thousands of Christmas trees are collected and chipped into mulch by Rocky Mountain Compost.



This fall, Beta Alternatives staff Eric Braun, two inmate workers, James Brown and Bruce Bittick, and community service workers including

Billings residents Nathan Kinsey, spent four hours collecting and distributing three truckloads of roughly 2,000 pounds of wood chips. As part of a cooperative effort under the direction of Dr. Norm Schoenthal from the Yellowstone River Parks Association, Two Moon Park received the mulch. The materials were distributed around bushes and trees in the park to replace washed out areas. Some remaining mulch was put into a compost pile to be used at a later date. What a great way to recycle and reclaim our local parks. Thank you to Norm, Bright and Beautiful, and Two Moon Park for your cooperation in this project!



United Way Day of Caring

By Justina Goldhahn, Pre-Trial Supervision Officer

September 13, 2018 marked the 25th Anniversary of United Way's Day of Caring. The Day of Caring is a community-wide day of service when volunteer teams from area businesses tackle large and small projects for local organizations that otherwise may not get accomplished. The day started with lunch and a concert for volunteers. Afterwards, teams were sent to their projects.

This year, the Alternatives team consisted of Yaritza Aguilar, Jen Bauer, Juanita Harman-Roach, Bethany Jackson, Susan Porter, and Megan Seeley (Alpha House); Craig Botnen and Matt Deutscher (Passages); and Justina Goldhahn (Beta).

The team provided services to Explorers Academy – A Head Start Program. Explorers Academy provides comprehensive services for young children and their families to achieve school readiness and lifelong success. Their services focus on family support, nutrition, health and wellness, education, and transportation.

Those who volunteered had their strength tested and learned to appreciate physical labor while working as landscapers for an afternoon. They removed lava rock, dead plants, and weeds from garden beds. Once they were drenched in sweat and had removed all the old landscaping, they shoveled and spread fresh woodchips over the garden beds. Normally, Explorers Academy would not have the time, funds, or manpower to complete this project. After seeing the smiling faces of the children who attend this program, they knew it was worth the effort (and the blisters).



Alternatives staff Bethany Jackson, Megan Seeley, Jen Bauer, Justina Goldhahn, Susan Porter, and Yaritza Aguilar



Achieving Balance: A Lifetime Effort

By Dianna Lewis, Passages Graduate

My name is Dianna Lewis and I graduated from the Passages Pre-Release Center on May 31, 2018, after spending one full year in their Mental Health Program. You see, at the age of 28 years old, I developed a serious mental illness, and I committed two violent offenses, after suffering a psychotic break. Fortunately, the courts saw hope for me, as my psychiatric providers testified that through effective psychiatric care, and intensive mental health treatment and rehabilitation, I could live a normal, productive life.

So, I spent 18 years at the State Hospital, an additional three years in a Mental Health Group Home here in Billings, and then another full year at the Passages Pre-Release Center. The rehabilitation and mental health treatment I have received over the years has better equipped me to be successful while transitioning back to society.

"...I have the capacity to be a powerful voice for my peers..."
Dianna Lewis

When I graduated from Passages this year, I had, for the first time in my life, achieved psychiatric, spiritual, and emotional balance in my life. Finally, I felt healthy, whole, and balanced; something that I had always wanted for myself. For the first time in 23 years, I am living in my own place, and I am a full-time, junior level, online student through Purdue University Global.

It has been my intention, for a great number of years, to be a Mental Health Advocate in the Criminal Justice System and the Department of Corrections. I would like to help write better Mental Health Laws and Policies for the effective treatment and rehabilitation of those individuals, who are affected by Mental Illness and have committed crimes.

Tis' the Season: Volunteer Projects

By Bobbi Jo Walla, Administrative Support Supervisor

Alternatives, Inc. staff, residents, and their families have worked together to give back to the community this holiday season. The season was started with staff and residents volunteering their time to help build 1,500 food boxes as a part of the 30th Annual Flakesgiving Food Drive event on November 16, 2018. Residents participating in the Flakesgiving event included Robert Yost, Ralph Deavila, Daniel Robbins, Donald Hamlin, James Brown, Raymond Legget, Aaron Williams, Ronda Fallsdown, and Ronnie Pease. In November, Passages and Alpha participated in the Family Tree Center's annual fundraiser, Festival of Trees, and brought trees that staff and residents had decorated to the Metra for auction. The trees were auctioned and raised a total of \$1,400 dollars for the Family Tree Center and their mission of child abuse prevention.



Flakesgiving was one of many volunteer opportunities staff and clients participated in this year

Staff and their families also attended the 20th Annual Billings Polar Plunge to benefit the Montana Special Olympics. The team took the plunge to freeze for a reason and raised \$1,040 in donations to benefit the Special Olympics. While some staff jumped in the freezing lake, other staff and residents volunteered at the Family Support Network in preparation for their 25th anniversary celebration by cleaning the building and waxing the floors. The Family Support Network project has been the culmination of a year long project to update their building to better support families in our community. Volunteers from the Agency painted the building and provided small repairs before participating in the cleaning days.

Alternatives still has projects underway as staff volunteer to raise money for Toys for Tots and the United Way. The staff continues to be excellent role models to the residents, the community, and each other as we continue to give time, money, and anything else that is needed to give back to our community.

An Experienced Hand: Mike Sullivan, LCSW

By John Williams, Alpha House Director

Alpha House and Passages are two of the few Pre-Release Centers in Montana that accept Sex Offenders. With nearly 1,300 registered sex and violent offenders in Yellowstone County, Alternatives, Inc. believes that it is important to do its part to ensure that these offenders are reintroduced in a structured and well supervised manner.

Our success in working with this population is due to our partnership with Mike Sullivan and South-Central Treatment Associates (SCTA). Mike Sullivan started SCTA with Maxine Jacobson in the summer of 1988. Mike was intrigued by the newness of Sex Offender Treatment and the challenges it represented. His partnership with Alternatives, Inc. began in 1994 when he was contacted by Alternatives' CEO Dave Armstrong and then Deputy Administrator Betty Ann Roan. Together they developed the framework for incorporating sex offender treatment into a pre-release environment and presented it to the Board of Directors in 1995.

Mike has continued to work with the local and state authorities to improve community safety, awareness, and treatment by looking at the reality of the problems posed in providing sex offender treatment in light of the emotions and politics surrounding this controversial topic. Through Mike's efforts we have seen changes in sex offender registration requirements, sex offender levels, and innovative ways to stay relevant with technological changes while still holding offenders accountable.

Although he sold his treatment business to Hal Lewis, Mike continues to conduct psycho-sexual evaluations and volunteers his time in an advisory capacity on Alternatives' Screening Committee. He reviews sex offender referrals, keeping Alternatives and the community in mind as he provides recommendations. Mike's thirty years' experience evaluating and treating sex offenders gives him a good understanding of which offenders pose a manageable risk. When asked what he thought the benefits of a pre-release center taking sex offenders were, he said, "it's a safe way to treat sex offenders in the community, while providing more effective treatment, beyond that it's a safe way for this population to transition to the community".



Mike Sullivan, MSOTA certified treatment provider

Passages' Alumna of the Quarter

By Susy Paddock, Supportive Housing and Re-Entry Supervisor



Alumna of the Quarter, Dawn Brokenrope (center) with her daughter and mother.

Four times a year, Passages recognizes a graduate of the program for her accomplishments in the community. Nominations may be made by Probation and Parole Officers, employers, community members, or staff. The winner is recognized at the staff meeting for her accomplishments and receives a plaque and gift certificate.

Dawn Brokenrope was chosen as Passages' most recent Alumna of the Quarter. Joining her in this recognition were her mother and daughter, as well as Human Resources Director for the Northern Hotel, Nicole Biondich. Nicole says that Dawn is an outstanding employee. She has taken a leadership role at work and they rely on her input. She was hired in 2017 while in the Passages Prerelease Program and has since been promoted into a leadership position. Dawn says she loves her job!

Free Screenings for Beta Community Clients

By Danielle Dunn, Clinical Supervisor

Alternatives, Inc. has begun offering 'SBIRT' substance abuse screenings to the Beta Jail Alternatives clients in an attempt to promote healthier lifestyles. SBIRT stands for Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral and Treatment and the screening does not have to be conducted by a licensed counselor. According to the Montana Addictive and Mental Disorders Division, these screenings are "an evidence-based approach to identify those individuals at risk for psychosocial or health care problems related to their substance use".



Danielle Dunn joined Alternatives, Inc. in June 2018

Select Alternatives staff, including Licensed Addiction Counselors and Jail Alternatives Managers, have undergone training to implement the screens. They start with a substance use questionnaire designed to identify whether a person has moved into 'unhealthy use' of a substance. Our agency is using the ASSIST (Alcohol, Smoking, and Substance Involvement Screening Test) developed by the World Health Organization. A brief intervention about 'unhealthy use' follows the screening, focusing on feedback and encouraging motivation for change. This approach uses the guiding principles of Motivational Interviewing (Miller and Rollnick): R-resist telling them what to do, U-understand what motivates them, L-listen with empathy and E-empower them to overcome barriers, encourages "change talk".

This screen can be used in a variety of settings including a doctor's office, hospital, or treatment program. If the screen identifies further assessment is warranted, staff then coordinate a referral for a chemical dependency assessment. The SBIRT is not therapy, but a health conversation used to promote awareness and motivation toward behavioral changes.

Distinguished Service and a Well Deserved Retirement

By Amanda Green, Beta Jail Alternatives Supervisor

In January, three people who were instrumental in the development and success of the Stillwater Jail Alternatives will retire.

Sheriff Cliff Brophy joined the Sheriff's Department in July of 1980 and became a fulltime deputy in December of 1981. He has been the sheriff in Stillwater County since December of 1989. During his tenure with the Sheriff's Office, he has been a tireless advocate for the expansion of services in Columbus and has served as an Alternatives, Inc. board member for almost 20 years. Cliff has two grown daughters living in the area and plans on keeping busy with a new job (TBD).

Commissioner Maureen Davey arrived in Montana from Illinois in 1970 to attend college in Bozeman, graduating in 1973. She moved to Columbus and taught school for three years before marrying. She said that she has always been involved in the community and that led her to run for commissioner in 2002. Like Sheriff Brophy, Maureen has been a supporter of jail alternatives services in Stillwater County. After her retirement in December, she plans on becoming a full-time farmer, spending more time with her five grandchildren, and working on her golf game.

District Judge Blair Jones is a Montana native. He held the position of Stillwater County Attorney from 1989 – 1997, after which he was staff council for the state and in private practice. As the County Attorney, Judge Jones worked to develop the Stillwater Alternatives Program from the very beginning. On January 1, 2000, he was appointed by Governor Racicot as District Court judge for the 22nd Judicial District. He has four daughters, three grandchildren, and another grandchild on the way. Following his retirement, he has been asked by the Chief Justice to continue to hear cases on a part-time basis. Judge Jones' first priorities will be enjoying his grandchildren, traveling with his wife, and raising a large garden.



Sheriff Brophy, Commissioner Davey, and Judge Jones to retire

Alternatives, Inc. is grateful for the contribution of these three pioneers of jail alternatives.



ALTERNATIVES

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