

A photograph of a woman with dark hair, wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt, smiling warmly as she holds a young child. The child is wearing a red headband with white polka dots and a patterned top. They are positioned in front of a light-colored stone wall. The overall mood is joyful and intimate.

# AMERICAN JOBS FOR AMERICA'S YOUTH MONTANA

ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2018-19



**Community-led  
collaboration to build  
life and work skills for  
the 21st century**





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# LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER

The launch of a new community project is always dicey. The folks behind it want to have an impact, and believe in the vision. But that hope is not enough. The ideas must work.

In the case of AJAY MT, our key concept is to address the serious problems faced by our youth—from cradle to career—by mobilizing untapped community energy, and by helping hard-working people step out of their professional silos in order to be more collaborative and effective.

## **A year after our launch, how is it going?**

**First: Our central idea is working: In each of this year's projects new folks have stepped up, and others have reached out to offer creative cooperation.**

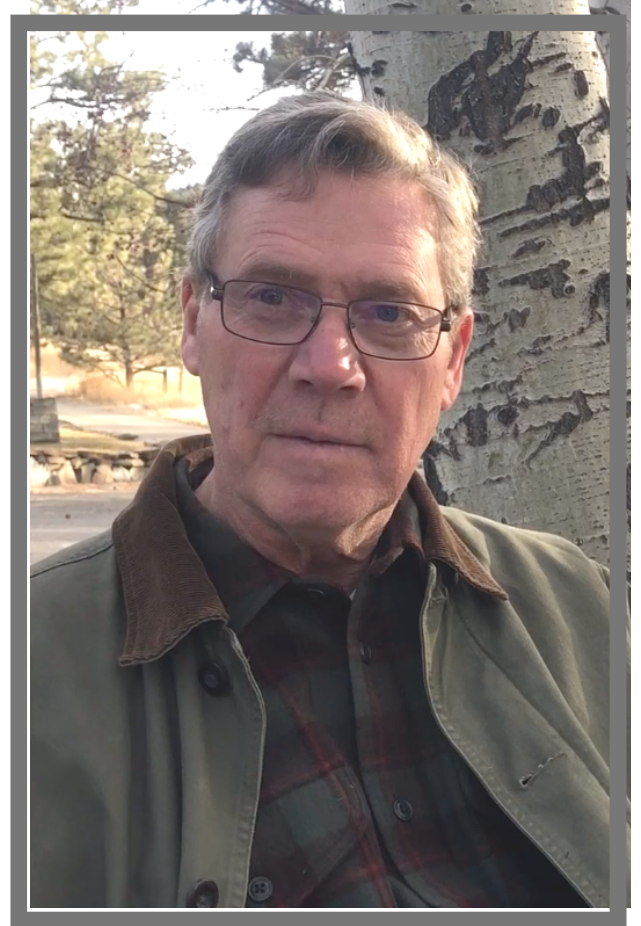
Members of our volunteer Core Team have pitched in, taking on or sharing in project leadership. The results are summarized in this Annual Report. I think you'll be impressed.

But a written report cannot adequately convey a key program ingredient – the power of human energy, relationships and interaction. And there we've been very lucky. Our Montana State Coordinator, Kristin Tessman, has proven to be exceptional—in strategic thinking, in communication skills, in energy and in outreach to our Montana community. Our list of successes is very substantially a reflection of her diverse talents and “get it done” mindset.

AJAY MT looks forward to your thoughts, ideas and most of all to your participation in enabling our community to do the best we know how for Montana's youth.

*Brian Kahn*

Helena  
National Coordinator (Volunteer)



# COORDINATOR'S REPORT



I recently took a trip with my family to New York City and on July 4, we visited Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty. Reading the stories of immigrant families and watching my own children run through the processing hall, I was reminded of the power of the American dream. For many decades, people from all over the world have endured great hardship to make it to America, many with the goal of giving their children a better chance at life.

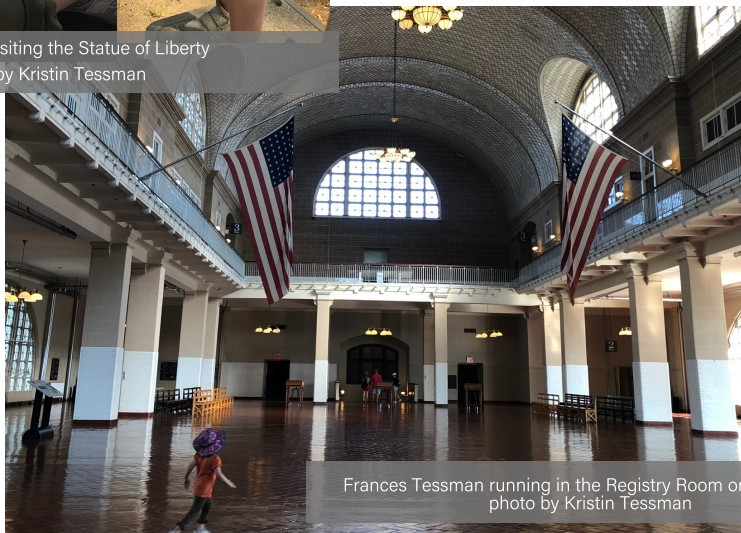
I was on vacation, but all I could think about was our work at AJAY MT. We have an obligation to the children of this great state and our tribal nations to make sure they have every tool they need to grow, learn, develop and prosper. I'm grateful to be working with AJAY MT toward this end.

It's been an incredible first year for AJAY MT. We've set the stage for our own success, and our second year will be equally important as we continue to test our ideas and strategy. Thank you for joining us on this journey.

AJAY MT is finding success because of the networks, ideas, passion and contributions of you, our supporters. Let's stick together and keep moving forward—I'm confident we'll all be better for it, but most importantly, Montana's children will know a better, more prosperous life.



Tessman girls visiting the Statue of Liberty  
photos by Kristin Tessman



Frances Tessman running in the Registry Room on Ellis Island  
photo by Kristin Tessman

*Kristin Tessman*

Helena  
State Coordinator, Montana



# OUR VISION

Every graduate of high school—with at least one year of military or civilian National Service, paid internship, apprenticeship or college—and every graduate of a two-year or four-year college or university, who is ready and able to work, shall be assured a full-time job opportunity at a living wage.

# OUR MISSION

- To enrich the lives of America's youth by collaboration among citizens, schools, organizations and communities to build a committed, sustainable and world-class student community and workforce.
- To connect and promote effective organizations as well as new initiatives that, from cradle to career, foster young people's social skills, self-esteem, optimism, and work ethic.
- And to promote and develop diverse work opportunities that can become the foundation of dignity for our youth and their communities.

# FEATURED PROJECTS

- **Helena Summer Jobs Program**
- **Hays/Lodgepole Weatherization Project**
- **Central Montana Cradle-to-Career Pilot Program**
- **Montana Youth Apprenticeship Partnership**



HSJP Intern, Sonja Severtson, meeting with mentor  
photo by Eliza Wiley



Mike, age 16, had never had a formal job and he was not sure what steps to take to break into the workforce. Lauren, age 18, has held numerous jobs but never in engineering, which is what she hopes to study in college. Both students applied to the Helena Summer Jobs Program (HSJP), and as a result were connected with a job, work skills training, and an adult mentor. Through HSJP, Mike began a job at the Home2Suites hotel, and Lauren has an internship at Morrison-Maierle, an engineering firm. These students' stories represent the diverse range of student participants and opportunities created by the Helena Summer Jobs Program.

HSJP is a collaborative project of Helena WINS, an initiative of the Helena Area Chamber of Commerce, and AJAY MT. HSJP expands access to high quality early work experiences for Helena area high school students by partnering with businesses and community organizations that want to support the healthy development of youth and the future of Helena's workforce. At a time of record low unemployment and an aging workforce, HSJP helps address the challenge of attracting and developing workforce talent. Importantly, students are introduced to potential career pathways and better understand local job opportunities.

# HELENA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

HSJP Intern, Kinzie Quintana, working at Morrison-Maierle  
photo by Eliza Wiley





In its pilot year this summer, HSJP matched 30 students with 17 HSJP employers. HSJP employers include governmental, nonprofit and for-profit organizations; they span the health care, engineering, hospitality, legal, retail, information technology, education, automotive and construction sectors.

HSJP also focuses on developing life and work skills that are necessary for success in the workplace. Student participants received four hours of soft-skills training, specifically designed to complement the hard-skills training students receive on the job. During the training, students engaged in activities around communication, teamwork, customer service, positive attitude, and time management. Upon completion of the training, students received a stipend and a Work Ready Certificate to show future employers. To cover the costs of the training completion awards, AJAY MT worked with Helena WINS to secure an iGraduate grant through the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation.

To support students in career exploration and work skills development, HSJP students are paired with an adult mentor. HSJP mentors help students think about current work experiences, contextualize their trainings, and explore future school and job opportunities. The volunteer mentors working with students represent varied professional backgrounds and are invested in helping HSJP students reach their potential.

Importantly, HSJP is a pilot program that will be expanded throughout the state thanks to a collaborative partnership with Reach Higher Montana. The organizations will work together to promote and implement the program in communities across Montana.

HSJP Student, Marshall Stewart, working at Capital Sports  
photo by Eliza Wiley





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# HAYS/LODGEPOLE WEATHERIZATION PROJECT

Launched during Summer 2019, the Tribal Weatherization project is a collaboration between AJAY MT, the Hays/Lodgepole High School, and the Foundation for Community Vitality.

The project combines summer school credit and financial compensation with meaningful student vocational skills training, as well as benefits for tribal elders and the community at large. Hays/Lodgepole students applied for positions through written applications and interviews. On acceptance, they received hands-on training in basic weatherization techniques for residential housing. Tribal elders were encouraged to apply for this service, which was delivered by a supervised team of high school students. Participants received \$10 an hour, plus benefits, and .5 credit in Industrial Arts for the four-week program. In addition, for each of the 17 dwellings weatherized, \$100 was contributed to the “Pep Bus” fund, which pays for transportation of tribal members to off-Reservation athletic events—a highly valued community activity.

The project is managed directly by the Hays/Lodgepole High School. AJAY MT’s initial role was to stimulate a brainstorming discussion with several tribal members about the prospect of a youth summer employment program with multiple benefits. With the concept and implementing entity agreed on, AJAY solicited the project funding. We are extremely grateful for the support given this innovative effort by the Foundation for Community Vitality, and others.



Hays Lodgepole Weatherization Project participants and instructor  
photo by Beth Kendall



# CENTRAL MONTANA CRADLE-TO-CAREER RURAL PILOT PROGRAM

In collaboration with the Fergus County Port Authority, AJAY MT is launching a pilot program for youth and workforce development in 2019. Based out of Lewistown, but serving the broader communities of Central Montana, this pilot is designed to identify and build the programs and services needed to ensure skilled, healthy, and hardworking youth who are prepared to thrive in the 21st century workforce. The program will have a “Cradle-to-Career” focus, serving young people aged 0-24. The 2019 launch is the culmination of a great deal of behind-the-scenes work by community leaders in Central Montana, work which AJAY MT joined in 2018.

Lewistown was selected in 2018 as an ideal site to implement an AJAY MT pilot program. With a population of roughly 6,000, Lewistown sits at the geographic center of Montana, and is an important regional hub for the rural communities of Central Montana. Lewistown has a diverse economic base rooted in agriculture, manufacturing, and construction. When AJAY MT’s involvement began, a dedicated core of community leaders was already meeting as a workforce board to discuss the workforce needs of the area, and identify potential areas of focus for future programs. After meeting with local leaders, it was clear that Lewistown had the local capacity, skills, and motivation to act.



## "AJAY MT will help in the work of finding and linking resources in novel and productive ways"

In terms of workforce development, Lewistown faces a host of challenges connected to a shrinking and aging population, a demographic trend that is playing out across rural America. Yet in Lewistown, unlike in so many rural communities, there are employers looking to hire young people for well-paid, long term and stable work. Still, these employers struggle to recruit qualified workers amidst the migration from rural areas.

The challenges that Lewistown sees are complex and invite an approach that considers the needs of young people beyond basic workplace training. Indeed, AJAY MT advocates a "Cradle-to-Career" mindset because a skilled workforce and healthy community are only possible in a context where education, childcare, mentoring, and other core services are accessible. AJAY MT's role in the Central Montana pilot has been and will continue to be a process based in the best practices of community mobilization. Lewistown and the communities of Central Montana already have many of the assets and resources to attract, maintain, and support a youth workforce; AJAY MT will help in the work of finding and linking those resources in novel and productive ways.

In this role, AJAY MT will co-fund the hiring of a Community Workforce Coordinator to be housed with the Fergus County Port Authority. This position has a tentative start date of August 2019, and will be tasked with engaging community stakeholders in the work of building responsive and grounded programs to serve Central Montana's young people. AJAY MT has developed trainings and reference materials to guide the workforce coordinator in this critical work. We will provide continued support to the coordinator and Central Montana in several ways, including trainings, professional development, and marshaling advice from the best programs statewide.

# MONTANA YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP PARTNERSHIP

A young woman with blonde hair tied back, wearing a red t-shirt, is focused on working on a laptop. She is in a computer lab or classroom setting. In the background, other students and a computer tower with a power drill on top are visible. The image is partially obscured by a large red graphic element on the left side of the page.

Selected from a highly competitive pool of over 220 applicants from 49 states and Puerto Rico, the Montana Youth Apprenticeship Partnership (MYAP) has been awarded a \$150,000 grant from the Partnership to Advance Youth Apprenticeship (PAYA). The grant, led by AJAY MT, will support local employers, educators, community partners, and policy leaders who are working together to build high-quality youth apprenticeship programs that promote inclusive economic development and create new opportunities for young people.

Montana Youth Apprenticeship Partnership is one of nine winners. With the grant, MYAP will develop and pilot youth apprenticeship programs in Billings and Helena, targeting health care and information technology as primary industry sectors. One of the key goals of the project is to develop strategies to expand youth apprenticeships to additional Montana communities and additional employment sectors.

The grant funding will support MYAP's strategy development and implementation activities over a 17-month period, beginning in May 2019. In addition to the funds, PAYA will provide MYAP with tailored technical assistance from PAYA's National Partners, cross-site learning, and opportunities to participate in national research, communications, and storytelling efforts.

Our PAYA-funded work taps into the heart of the AJAY mission and bolsters our conviction that we can do even more when we work together. We want to thank the team that, together, made our application stand out: BillingsWorks, Helena WINS, Reach Higher Montana, Offices of the Superintendents of Billings and Helena Public Schools, The Montana Department of Labor & Industry's Registered Apprenticeship Program, Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, Office of the Governor, , MSU Billings City College, UM Helena College, and Carroll College.

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# 2018-19 FINANCIAL REPORT

For our first Annual Report, we will be reporting financial information from the date of the first donation, April 1, 2018, until June 30, 2019. Future Annual Reports will report financial information on a July 1 fiscal year.

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## Revenue

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**100%**

PRIVATE SUPPORT

**\$135,635**

TOTAL REVENUE

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## Expenditures

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Contract Services	\$3,884.00
Operations	\$1,863.00
Project Contributions	\$13,143.00
Payroll	\$61,218.00
Travel	\$3,786.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$83,894.00</b>



# 2018-19 DONORS

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