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**ANNUAL REPORT**

American Jobs for America's Youth

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# LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



Warmest Greetings to all our Friends and Stakeholders,

As this year ends, we look back on 2020 and forward to 2021 with a mix of sadness and optimism. We are sad for the loss of so many of our citizens and loved ones to Covid-19, for the exhaustion of our caregivers, and for our businesses struggling to stay afloat during this difficult time. We are also particularly sorry to have lost our founder Brian Kahn, who died suddenly in October. His friendship and passion for AJAY's mission will be sorely missed. Yet we are optimistic about the opportunities ahead to build upon and expand AJAY's efforts to foster the life and work skills of Helena area youth.

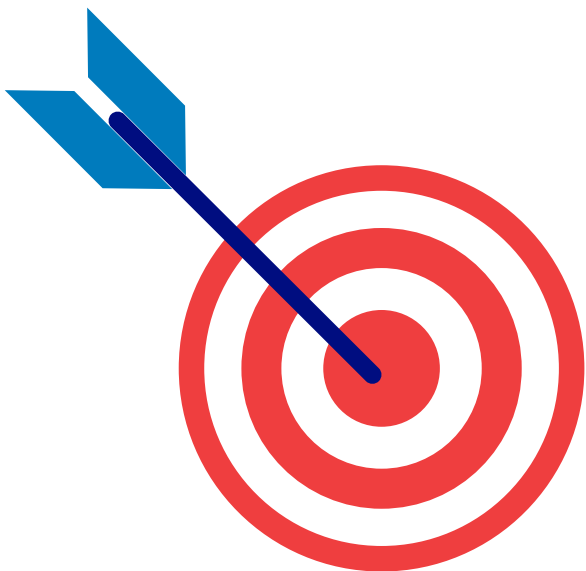
This past summer, the Board of Directors articulated a new strategic vision. We decided to narrow our focus to better concentrate on the very mission our name defines: bringing American jobs to America's youth. Our revised mission, focus, strategies, and our 2020 achievements are set forth in the following pages. With Brian's inspiration and given the exceptional efforts and outreach of our AJAY MT Executive Director Gabrielle Eklund Rowley, we have in the past year brought together many Helena area students, employers, mentors, and partners working together to nurture our youth's work and life skills and prepare them for a life of meaningful employment. We will be expanding these efforts and the communities we serve in the year ahead.

We wish to thank the many partners and collaborators without whom our successes and promise for the future would not be possible. Thank you for your interest in and commitment to AJAY and a better tomorrow for our youth. We look forward to working together again in 2021!

Sincerely,  
Pat Cotter  
AJAY MT Board of Directors Chairperson



Founder, friend, mentor  
Brian Kahn  
Jan. 22, 1947 - Oct. 29, 2020



## STRATEGIC PLANNING: AJAY MT'S REFINED FOCUS

To better serve Montana's needs, AJAY MT has refined the vision and mission. This past summer, the Board of Directors reflected on AJAY's foundation and accomplishments and articulated a strategic vision for the future. This plan will allow AJAY MT to more effectively and efficiently allocate the organization's resources. AJAY MT's collaborative programming continues to focus on developing work and life skills in young adults. In 2021, efforts will be concentrated on cultivating partnerships to connect students with mentoring and experiential education that will enable them to build 21st century skills. These skills - communication, teamwork, problem solving, and ethics among others - are essential for success in the workplace. To prepare Montana's youth for a sustainable, productive, and civic adulthood, AJAY MT engages with a variety of community and education partners. This work strengthens Montana's communities and ensures that youth truly are our greatest asset.





# MISSION

**FOSTER LIFE AND WORK SKILLS  
IN AMERICA'S YOUTH  
THROUGH COLLABORATION  
AMONG COMMUNITIES, SCHOOLS,  
CITIZEN MENTORS, AND EMPLOYERS.**

# VISION

**ALL YOUNG MONTANANS HAVE  
ACCESS TO MEANINGFUL WORK AND  
PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT**

Every high school junior, senior, and recent graduate who seeks improvement of social and life skills and employment prospects shall have access to a mentor-mentee relationship and the opportunity to obtain internships and jobs with community employers.

# STRATEGIES

**IN ORDER TO FULFILL OUR MISSION, AJAY  
MT EMPLOYS A VARIETY OF STRATEGIES:**

- Connect mentors and students who work together to nurture the student's social and work skills, self-esteem, and work ethic
- Collaborate with partners to provide students with meaningful early work opportunities
- Strengthen professional development opportunities for students in order to provide communities with a sustainable pipeline of valuable employees
- Build capacity in communities to educate, support, and mentor young Montanans

# FEATURED PROJECTS

ANNUAL OVERVIEW

**SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM**

**MYAP GRANT TRANSFER  
AND SUCCESS**

**FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING POVERTY  
WORKSHOPS**

**INTERNBRIDGE WORKSHOPS**

**CENTRAL MONTANA  
CRADLE TO CAREER PROGRAM**

*"Through the Summer Jobs Program, I learned how to present myself to the public and how to comfortably solve difficult problems on my own."*



# SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

## **HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS EARN AND LEARN**

Recently featured on [Home Ground Radio](#), the Summer Jobs Program helps students “earn and learn” through summer positions, mentorships, and professional development.

Anthony secured an internship in a local bank, and he said, “I learned how to work in customer service, and how an entire company can work together.” Anthony is now in his first year of college, and his Summer Jobs Program experience solidified his choice to study finance. The program enables students to develop their work skills and explore career options.

Another student, JoElla, had never held a formal job and was overwhelmed with the process of seeking and applying for jobs. Through the Summer Jobs Program, she had support creating a resume and practicing interview skills. JoElla was matched with a position that fit her skills and interests of working with people. Throughout the summer, she met with a volunteer adult mentor. The mentor guided JoElla through conversations about how to handle angry customers, work in a team, and gain confidence at work. JoElla said, “I would absolutely recommend this program because it gives you work experience while also giving you a mentor to help guide you through the process.”

Despite Covid-19 and high unemployment, the Helena Summer Jobs Program (HSJP) connected 32 Helena-area high school students with employment opportunities in 2020. AJAY MT collaborated with Helena WINS (Helena Workforce Innovation Networks, an initiative of the Helena Area Chamber of Commerce) and Reach Higher Montana to implement HSJP in 2019 and 2020.

The summer jobs program:

- connects high school students with a paid internship or job,
- provides a paid work skills training, and
- matches students with an adult mentor for the summer.



AJAY MT relies on volunteer community partners – schools, businesses, organizations, and citizen mentors – to implement the program and foster students’ skills. Employers offer on-the-job training and coaching. Mentors meet with students to discuss what they are learning at work and how it can serve them in their future academic and job options. One mentor said, “Sometimes you just need to listen to these young adults, and let them know that they will be successful if they put forth the effort...they are still pretty unsure of themselves.”

**“I LEARNED THAT COMMUNICATION IS VERY IMPORTANT IN LIFE AND YOU HAVE TO COMMUNICATE WELL TO GET YOUR JOB DONE. I ALSO LEARNED THAT YOU HAVE TO STEP OUTSIDE YOUR COMFORT ZONE WHEN WORKING AND IF YOU DO IT WILL MAKE YOUR JOB WAY MORE MEMORABLE.”**

The highly invested partners reinforce the work-skills training that students complete prior to the summer. The four-hour work-skills training focuses on fundamental job skills, also called 21st century skills, such as time management, communication, conflict management, and customer service.

iGraduate, an initiative of the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation, the Office of Public Instruction and the Montana Department of Labor and Industry, provided grant funding for the Summer Jobs Program in 2019 and 2020. The grant funded stipends, which students receive upon successful completion of the work skills training.

**“I WOULD ABSOLUTELY RECOMMEND THIS PROGRAM BECAUSE IT GIVES YOU WORK EXPERIENCE WHILE ALSO GIVING YOU A MENTOR TO HELP GUIDE YOU THROUGH THE PROCESS.”**

Both students and employers were very satisfied with the program - 100% of the students said they would recommend the program to others and over 95% of employers said they would like to host students again in the future! Partner employers include governmental, nonprofit and for-profit organizations. “Internships are important for our business and we love to help students,” said a supervisor from Lewis & Clark County offices.

In 2021 AJAY MT is expanding the Helena Area Summer Jobs Program to include the East Helena and Townsend communities, in partnership with the nonprofit STROKE. Additionally, AJAY MT received a Helena City of Service grant in partnership with Helena College and Reach Higher Montana which will support SJP initiatives this coming summer. The updated Summer Jobs Program tool kit has been shared with Montana communities and plans for expanding to other geographic regions are underway.

Thank you to all of AJAY MT’s partners in the schools helping to connect students with our program, thank you to the partner employers, and thank you to each of the volunteer mentors! We also appreciate Opportunity Bank of Montana Endowment of the Montana Community Foundation for their financial support.





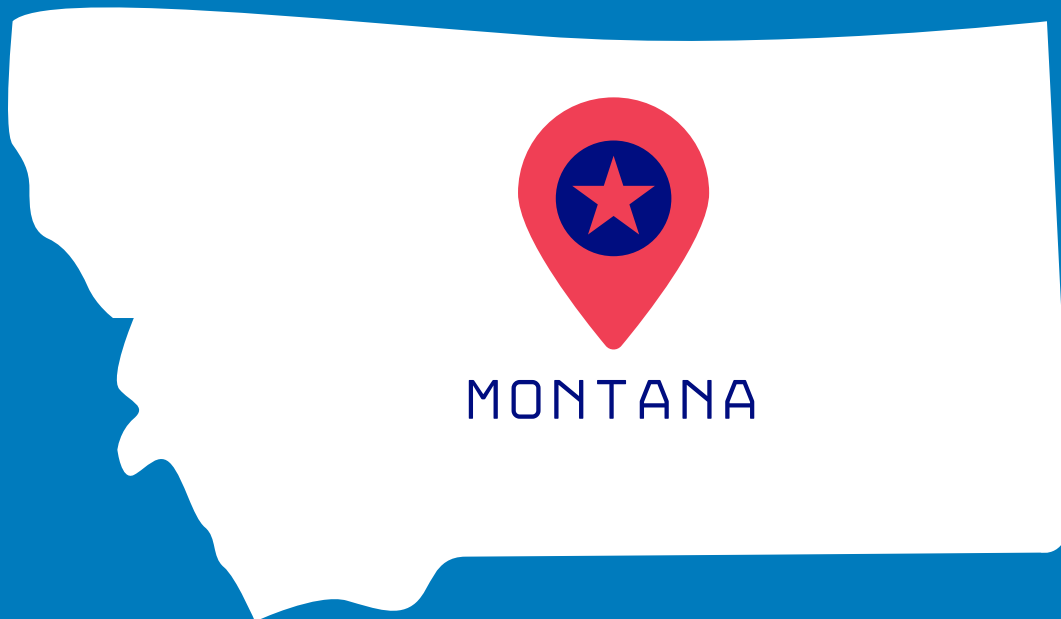
# MONTANA YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP PARTNERSHIP

***GROWING MONTANA'S OPPORTUNITIES***

The Montana Youth Apprenticeship Partnership (MYAP), created with a grant that AJAY MT helped secure in 2019, successfully implemented its initial programs and, due to this success, was invited to apply for and received five more years of funding through the Partnership to Advance Youth Apprenticeship (PAYA). Reach Higher Montana, one of AJAY MT's statewide partners, oversees the grant implementation and programming.

MYAP is a partnership of employers, educators, government agencies, and community partners working to increase opportunities for Montana's youth to prepare for in-demand careers through youth apprenticeship programs. MYAP is developing and piloting youth apprenticeship programs in Helena and Billings, targeting health care and information technology as primary industry sectors. Future plans include expansion of youth apprenticeship programs in more industries and more Montana communities. AJAY MT is proud to have served on the team building the foundation of this initiative.

This PAYA-funded work taps into the heart of the AJAY mission and bolsters the conviction that there is strength in joining efforts and we can do even more when we work together. AJAY MT would like to thank the team that is building statewide opportunities: Billings Public Schools, Helena High School, St. John's United, Workmosis, Helena WINS, Reach Higher Montana, The Montana Department of Labor & Industry, MSU Billings City College, and UM Helena College.



# A FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING POVERTY WORKSHOPS

## **BUILDING CAPACITY OF MONTANA'S EDUCATORS**

In Montana, an estimated 20% of children live in poverty (MSU Extension Poverty Report Card). Students who qualify for free and reduced lunch are 1.8 times more likely to drop out of school than the rate for all students (Montana Office of Public Instruction, Statewide Dropout & Graduate Report).

Students who do not graduate from high school face negative economic and social prospects and are more likely to live in poverty themselves ("Poverty and High School Dropouts", American Psychological Association). Educators play a critical role in helping students exit poverty through academic achievement, yet many educators do not fully understand how economic class impacts the behaviors and beliefs of their students and how class creates barriers to academic success.

AJAY MT delivers professional development workshops designed to expand educators' strategies and narrow the learning gap of under-resourced learners. A Framework for Understanding Poverty workshops, based on the work of Dr. Ruby Payne of aha! Process, Inc., focus on helping students of all economic backgrounds achieve academic, professional, and personal success.

A Framework for Understanding Poverty workshops discuss economic class differences regarding mindset, stabilizing factors, and resources. Interestingly, of the nine essential resources for success in school and in life only one is financial. The workshop then offers concrete strategies for student success professionals to implement, whether they work with elementary or college students.

In 2020, AJAY MT staff facilitated remote workshops for over 70 participants, including Montana educators attending the annual Montana Federation for Public Employees conference, Reach Higher Montana staff, and the GEAR UP Montana team. These workshops build the capacity of Montana's educators and student service professionals to better foster 21st century skills in all students.

Attendees said that the ideas, strategies, activities and materials are practical and useful, the session was a worthwhile professional development experience, and they would recommend the workshop for others.

**"THE CONTENT AND PRESENTATION WERE OUTSTANDING!"**

**"THIS SESSION WAS AMAZING. IT WAS ALL ABOUT HOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS INFLUENCE BEHAVIOR AND CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING, AND IT WAS SO ENLIGHTENING. THERE WAS SO MUCH PRACTICAL INFORMATION ABOUT HOW PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT ECONOMIC CLASSES BEHAVE AND INTERACT, AND HOW WE CAN INFLUENCE AND ENCOURAGE OUR STUDENTS IN ORDER TO GIVE THEM THE BEST CHANCE AT SUCCESS."**

**"EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TOPIC AND EXCELLENT PRESENTATION. GREAT PRACTICAL INFORMATION AND PERSPECTIVE."**

# INTERN BRIDGE WORKSHOPS

## **SUPPORTING EMPLOYERS AS THEY DEVELOP YOUNG EMPLOYEES**

We work to increase early employment opportunities for students around the state and we support employers who are invested in work-based learning. Therefore, AJAY MT co-sponsored a multi-week Total Internship Management workshop for employers interested in creating and maximizing the effectiveness of their internships.

Internships and other forms of work-based learning, or experiential education, help students make a seamless transition to the world of work.

AJAY MT joined Reach Higher Montana, Helena Chamber of Commerce, Carroll College, University of Montana and Missoula Economic Partnership in hosting a series of webcasts and interactive discussions with Dr. Robert Shindell from Intern Bridge, the nation's leading experiential education research and consulting firm.

Over 50 people across Montana attended the five-week series that covered best practices in research, structure, and strategies regarding in-person and virtual internships. Although focused on work-based learning, the material and discussions help employers design positions and strategies to maximize the learning and productivity of any employee. We will continue to work with InternBridge in 2021 as a means of supporting organizations, agencies, and businesses that invest in Montana's youth.



# CENTRAL MONTANA CRADLE-TO-CAREER PROGRAM

## *CATALYZING COMMUNITY ACTION*

In collaboration with the Fergus County Port Authority, AJAY MT launched a pilot program for youth and workforce development in 2019. Based out of Lewistown, but serving the broader communities of Central Montana, this Central Montana Program (CMP) identifies and then builds the programs and services needed to ensure skilled, healthy, and hardworking youth who are prepared to thrive in the 21st century workforce.

AJAY MT co-funded a Community Workforce Coordinator position housed with the Fergus County Port Authority. Scott Chauvet was hired in September 2019 to engage community stakeholders in the work of building responsive and grounded programs to serve Central Montana's young people. To support these efforts, AJAY MT developed and shared trainings and reference materials.

Through CMP, Fergus County has selected objectives for initial focus, development, and implementation: early childhood education, workforce talent supply, and affordable housing. For the past year, the CWC and Fergus County Port Authority, with support from AJAY MT, have been defining action steps regarding these priorities, building community networks, mapping assets, and laying the groundwork for these community-identified objectives.



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.

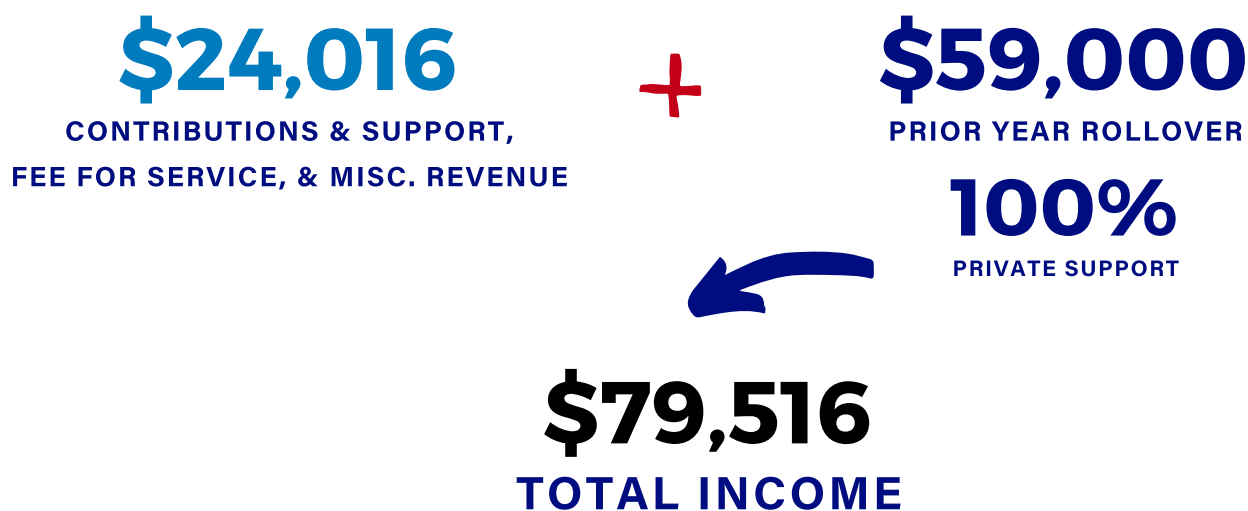
The challenges that Lewistown sees are complex and invite an approach that considers the needs of young people beyond basic workplace training. Lewistown and the communities of Central Montana already have many of the assets and resources to attract, maintain, and support a youth workforce. AJAY MT helped catalyze the work of finding and linking those resources in novel and productive ways through our support of the CMP.

While the work is long-term and ongoing, this project has and will continue to positively impact the people of central Montana. The Central Montana Program is a key example of AJAY MT's collaborative approach and investment in community-based programs to help strengthen our youth and our communities.

# 2020 FINANCIAL REPORT

AJAY MT reports on a January 1 fiscal year.  
This financial information is for January 1 - December 31, 2020.

## Revenue



## Expenditures

Contract Services	\$3,106
Operations	\$2,218
Program Expenses	\$3,631
Payroll	\$38,148
Travel, Conferences, Workshops	\$3,539
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$50,642</b>

AJAY MT began 2020 with 1.5 FTE employees. After assessing our overall objectives, we made the decision to continue forward with 1 part-time Executive Director who works in partnership with the board and community collaborators. Additionally, AJAY MT funds support a very part-time facilitator/communications staff. We will reassess staffing as needed to best serve Montana's youth and communities.

# 2020 DONORS

Bob and Carolyn Adams  
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# THANK YOU!