

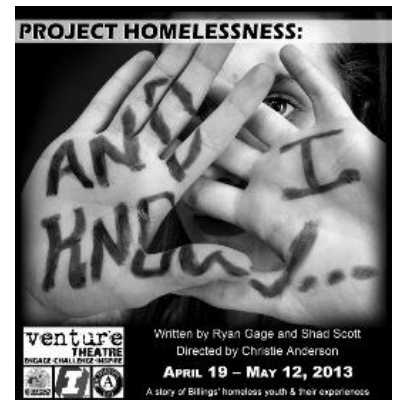
HOMELESS INITIATIVES

CUMULATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS OF APRIL 2013

In October 2009, the City Council adopted *Welcome Home Billings*; a ten-year plan to impact homelessness. The completed plan and supporting documents can be found [online](#). To date, over 300 cities across the nation have committed to implementing plans to impact homelessness. Over 50 local organizations and 600 individuals have been collectively working on implementing the plan to impact homelessness through the Mayor's Committee on Homelessness.

Homeless Play: And I Know...

The City sponsored Project Homelessness, in partnership with Venture Theatre, to create a play depicting true stories of children experiencing homelessness in the Billings area. The show ran for a total of four weekends in April through May 2013 and over 500 people attended. Proceeds generated through sponsorships supported Billings Community Connect and financial aid for underprivileged children to attend experiential learning programs. The play builds on the concept of an earlier production, *A Heart Without*, which was a series of monologue based on the stories of adults experiencing homelessness. *A Heart Without* was produced by Venture Theatre in December 2010.



Housing First Project

In 2009, the Community Development Division generated \$500,000 to fund a new, four-unit affordable housing project to serve families experiencing homelessness. The *housing first* model is based on the concept that a family's primary need is safe, stable housing and other issues can be addressed more effectively after securing housing. Interfaith Hospitality Network has provided services for over a dozen families to date.

Social Enterprise & Business Consortium Project

The Community Development Division awarded \$300,000 in financing to support a housing / social enterprise business for job training and employment of residents. Rimrock Foundation is providing housing combined with wrap around services to six chronically homeless men. The men are gaining vocational training and job experience through The Salvation Army's Bokashi Composting Center, located one block from the housing units.



Community Gardens & Food Security

This initiative aims to provide low-income residents increased access to fresh, nutritious foods and the skills to grow their own organic goods through an established community garden network. The following garden initiatives have been supported through the City's efforts:

- Whitetail Run Community Garden
- Veterans Garden at Independence Hall
- Youth Garden at the Salvation Army

The City's efforts also brought forth the establishment of a *Food Policy Council* to address issues of community food insecurity in both rural and urban areas. As the movement for local, sustainably produced foods continues to expand nationally, the prevalence of Food Policy Councils continues to grow at the state, county, and city level.



Downtown Resource Map & Notepad Guide

A portable, user friendly guide that quickly connects individuals and families experiencing homelessness with the community resources they need. The map illustrates access to shelter, food, clothing, health care, legal aid, restroom, shower and laundry facilities all within downtown Billings. The Resource Notepad guide is a tool for case managers, faith leaders, and service providers to easily make referrals to access needed services citywide.



Billings Community Connect, formerly known as Project Homeless Connect

This annual one-day, one-stop event is based on a nationally implemented best practice of offering comprehensive support and services for people at-risk or are experiencing homelessness. The City has supported this event for seven consecutive years; from 2007 to 2013 to date. The event provides immediate access to services such as housing, food, clothing, employment, medical care, legal aid and access to benefits.



Spare Change for Real Change & Purple 5K

Established as a fundraising and public education campaign, *Spare Change for Real Change* is an alternative to the short-term solution of giving to panhandlers. Donations to Spare Change for Real Change provide long-term solutions for those in need. The initiative has generated over \$20,000 to assist in service provisions for many organizations serving the homeless in Billings. For more information visit: www.purple5k.org



Billings Metro VISTA Project - AmeriCorps VISTA

Volunteers in Service to America members work to create or expand community based programs, services and systems to impact poverty and homelessness. Since 2007, **59 VISTA members** have served on the MVP specifically for poverty impact and homeless initiatives! These members have generated **\$1,265,530 in financial resources** to combat poverty and homelessness, in addition to **\$462,964 in resources** specific to Billings Community Connect, **totaling \$1,728,494! 20 organizations** have participated as Host Sites for the City's VISTA members:

*Family Support Network
United Way of Yellowstone County
Second Chance Homes
Mental Health Center - The HUB
Community Housing Resource Board
Billings Area Resource Network
MRM - Women & Family Shelter
Billings Public Schools - Summer Lunch Program
HRDC District 7
Billings Public Schools - Backpack Meals Program*

*Tumbleweed Runaway Program, Inc.
Housing Authority of Billings
Venture Theatre - Youth Conservatory
Boys & Girls Club
The Salvation Army
VOA - Independence Hall
Family Service, Inc.
Head Start
Friendship House
Downtown Billings Association*



Illuminate Poverty

The development of this campaign aims to raise social and public awareness about poverty and homelessness in the City of Billings. The initiative includes the creation of: Illuminate Poverty blog; YouTube channel; and video pieces depicting youth homelessness, housing conditions; and the experiences of people living outside. In addition, a number of printed materials have been developed to support **Welcome Home Billings**.

Should you have questions regarding this information, homeless initiatives or the Billings Metro VISTA Project, please contact Brenda Beckett at 406.657.8286, via email at beckettb@ci.billings.mt.us, or visit the following websites:

- www.ci.billings.mt.us/homeless
- www.ci.billings.mt.us/vista
- www.welcomehomebillings.org