

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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***George M. Dennison Civic Engagement Scholarships
Awarded to 11 Students Across Montana***



(Missoula, Montana) Montana Campus Compact (or “MTCC”), an eighteen member higher education network that advances the public purposes of higher education, has awarded eleven students across the state of Montana with MTCC 2020 George M. Dennison Civic Engagement Scholarships. The scholarship honors students at MTCC affiliate campuses who have volunteered significant time, energy and resources – while pursuing a degree or certificate – to projects that make a meaningful difference in the lives of others. Half of the funds for each \$1000 scholarship have been donated in memory of George M. Dennison by Jane Dennison and sons, Rick and Robert Dennison, and their families. George Dennison was a tireless champion of service and the co-founder of Montana Campus Compact. The other half of each scholarship is matched by the winners’ institutions.

This fall we had a highly competitive group apply for the scholarship. Every applicant is doing exemplary volunteer work and making significant differences in their institutions, communities and the world. Following are the winners

Following are the winners of the Civic Engagement Scholarship:

Lee Adler, University of Montana

Lee founded and runs the Safer Hometowns Project for Resources and Development (SHPRD), which focuses on providing free community safety and security resources such as active shooter resistance training, security analysis, and EMS instruction. He also donates his time as an Operation Blazing Sword (OBS) Self Defense Instructor offering free lessons in marksmanship and firearms safety, as well as basic EMS and martial arts skills. He is also active in suicide prevention work.

“I have a deep love for protecting and providing for my community ... I envision a world where kids won't be afraid of being shot in schools...a world where LGBTQIA+ folks aren't the targets of violence because of their sexuality or identity...a world where authors can expose racism in the religious community and not receive death threats...a world where 22 veterans don't take their lives every day in America.”

Danny Lynn Eder, City College MSU Billings

Danny volunteers for the Native American Club as well as cultural events hosted at MSUB and on the Fort Peck reservation, his home. But Danny mainly volunteers his time helping others – from assisting his fellow students in electrical, welding and math to volunteering his help in working with farmers and ranchers in Western Montana. He wants everyone to succeed.

“I would like to return to my hometown and help the small town by bringing businesses and jobs to my area to help it prosper.”

Sharleen Gilham, Blackfeet Community College

Sharleen volunteers for several organizations including Cowboys for Life Circle of Hope, which assists cancer patients travel from the Blackfeet reservation to their doctor appointments that can be 100+ miles away; Pikuni Youth Rodeo which provides healthy outlets for kids through horsemanship and teamwork; the local humane society; and as the Blackfeet Community College Nursing School class representative, she helps students who are struggling with their studies.

"I want to create a family-based program within our community that makes mental health a less taboo and easily attainable resource. Blackfeet people (and Natives as a whole) are less likely to ask for help with mental health issues because it is seen as a weakness. I aim to change this and offer mental health care that is empowering and fulfilling on a holistic level."

Ashly Graham, MSU Northern

Ashly a non-traditional student, wife and mother, volunteers her time with the Hill County Community Foundation, assisting with event planning, social media management and building their website. She also volunteers her time helping other students with photography, one of her passions.

"My vision for the community of Havre is to build a community that promotes arts and culture, addresses the needs of the less fortunate and supports the unique and valuable resources that are currently available... In a small rural community such as Havre, these resources have a large, and sometimes life-changing, impact on families."

Connor Hague, Carroll College

Connor's volunteer service includes everything from answering the crisis line to accompanying survivors in their road to recovery through the Friendship Center; through ExolorationWorks she introduces girls to the STEM fields, her passion and area of study; and she advocates for and connects with seniors through Compassus Hospice, Palliative Care and Home Health.

"I want to live in and contribute to a global community that is adamantly meeting everyone's basic needs...Survivors of domestic abuse often have to flee with nothing, and start their lives anew. But when scaled down to a community, these basic needs can often be met with basic solutions. I can't give every survivor a home, car, and job - but I can provide one pair of shoes and food for the night."

Caitlin Holzer, Montana State University

Caitlin is passionate about helping those who are struggling with mental illness and barriers to healthcare as well as helping vulnerable youth to develop positive coping skills through outdoor adventures and community service. She created an annual MSU event, the Montanathon, to raise funds for Shodair Children's Hospital for youth battling mental illness and genetic disorders. She has also been intimately involved in fundraising for the Swifty Foundation, raising \$8500 by leading a head-shaving campaign. Currently, she is helping to start Bozeman's only broad-based community nonprofit organization to bring together community members and organizations to make holistic and sustainable changes to improve healthcare in Bozeman and Montana.

"I imagine and create a world where everyone can find their voice and ability to make positive change. My vision is for no person to deny themselves healthcare because of mental health stigma or lack of healthcare coverage. Having a mentor and an entire community rallying behind you can make the world's difference in leading a happy and healthy life, and I work to do exactly that."

Ian Issaia McRyhe, Salish Kootenai College

Ian is a passionate ambassador for wildlife and conservation. As the SKC SEEDS Ecology President, he is helping to build awareness and raise funds for a memorial for a beloved teacher, and a native plants restoration project. Through the Natural Resource club he educates others about waste and recycling with a goal of getting rid of all single use plastics on campus. He has also helped build homes for the homeless in Mexico.

"My vision is that we learn to be mindful of others. Mindful of our waste. Mindful of our actions and of the health of our planet....I would love to be part of teaching new generations about the history and impact mankind has had on the animal kingdom. One of my biggest dreams is to be able to go to the land of my ancestors, the Jicarilla Apache Nation, and help my community through land management and wildlife conservation."

Willow Peterson, MSU Billings

Willow is President of the MSUB HEROES organization (part of the BACCHUS Peer Education Network), which works to educate and inform student, faculty, administrators, and staff about health issues that affect the campus community, including: alcohol use, abuse, and misuse; HIV/AIDS; tobacco awareness and cessation; fitness, nutrition and sexual health; and to increase awareness and communication within the academic community regarding health-related matters for college students.

“My vision for my community at MSU Billings is that students will be comfortable to ask questions about their physical, mental, sexual, and emotional health as well as make healthier choices for themselves despite college pressures.”

Roy Savage Jr, University of Montana

As a veteran, Roy’s mission in life is to help those suffering from trauma to heal. His volunteer efforts include a founding and building Heroes Therapeutic Outreach Program, a non-profit that provides free mind/body/spirit programs for veterans at the Red Willow Learning Center. He is also a founding service provider and volunteer for Joining Community Forces – Missoula Region.

“Every day I get the opportunity to see people achieve amazing results in their life by changing their state of mind. I believe in a multi-faceted approach to wellness that incorporates a slow but steady change from habits that do not support them in their lives to habits that propel them forward.”

Keaton Sunchild, University of Providence

Keaton has a passion for making the world a better place, and believes that he can best do that through politics. At the age of 18 Keaton ran for a seat in the Montana House of Representatives. Despite his loss, he is running again in hopes of giving young people a voice in the direction of our state and our country. Keaton also volunteers with Great Falls Rising, representing high school to college aged people in Great Falls. His goal is to give his generation the best possible chance to succeed.

“I want to get involved at a young age because I think that is the only way for us to get the world back on track, and have everyone start to get along again. This generation is better about seeing each other as people first, and not a political party first. I think that we need more of that.”

Sarah Swingley, Carroll College

As a volunteer for Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM), Sarah helps freshman students learn effective methods of tackling life’s stressors through role play and group discussion. As a YAM instructor, she also teaches her peers about depression and suicide. As the co-founder of the Niceness is Priceless Club, Sarah helps spread kindness through small random acts of kindness and working with high school and elementary students to help them develop emotional intelligence, empathy and kindness skills.

“I have always had a heart for the little, the least, and the lost. I truly believe that every person I interact with has value and worth which deserves to be recognized and appreciated...My vision for my community is that no one would ever feel alone, but rather that they would have someone in their life who cherishes them.”

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