

# Missoula County Media Release

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## Healthy Start Missoula to Host State of the Young Child This Week

Healthy Start Missoula will raise awareness and discuss solutions to issues affecting young children and families in Missoula at its State of the Young Child luncheon this week.

The community coalition, led by the Missoula City-County Health Department, will host the “State of the Young Child 2019: Connecting for Missoula’s Children” luncheon from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Thursday, May 23, at the Phyllis J. Washington Education Center at the University of Montana.

The luncheon will highlight advancements in early childhood in Missoula and feature the following speakers:

- Dr. Bonnie Stephens, Community Medical Center, will discuss advances in supporting families impacted by perinatal substance use
- Clint Burson, Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce, will address business interest in supporting early care and education
- Caitlin Jensen, Zero to Five Initiative, will present on new funding for early childhood systems in Montana

The luncheon will also include the Early Childhood Champion Awards honoring the following community members:

- Kelly Rosenleaf, Child Care Resources, Early Childhood Leadership Award
- Natalie Stern, Watson Children’s Center, Direct Service Award
- David Watt, Missoula Aging Services Foster Grandparent Program, Community Volunteer Award

“Early childhood, from birth to age 8, is quickly gaining attention as a critical time for development, setting the stage for health and wellness of individuals and communities,” said Anna Semple, Healthy Start Missoula coordinator. “Early education, health care and parent-support organizations must coordinate to support families during this fleeting time. These systems are all too often disconnected from one another, and the hard work of early childhood professionals often goes unrecognized.”

The luncheon is part of a day-long training session that will bring together leaders in early child education and care, health and parent support. The training will be held from 9 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. in the same location. The training will include professional development opportunities on using the CONNECT Electronic Referral System, maternal mental health, trauma-informed organizations and innovative approaches to the childcare shortage. Participants can also access an early childhood resource fair between sessions. The complete agenda is available at <https://conta.cc/2VI72iE>.

State of the Young Child 2019 is sponsored by the Headwaters Foundation, the UM Phyllis J. Washington College of Education and Human Sciences, the Montana Association for the Education of Young Children and Child Care Resources.

For more information, call Semple at 406-2583021 or email [asemple@missoulacounty.us](mailto:asemple@missoulacounty.us).

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