

# YELLOWSTONE COUNTY INSIDER

SEPTEMBER 2024

ISSUE 428

MONTANA



Bitterroot

Montana State Flower

## Board of County Commissioners

John Ostlund  
Chair

Mark Morse  
Member

Donald W. Jones  
Member

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- BCBS Mobile APP 2
- New Hires & Recognition 2
- Sunshine News 2
- Change Deposit 3
- 2025 Insurance Changes 3
- Election Period 4
- Mammogram Coach 5
- Shift Work 6
- Lighten Load 7
- Medicare 101 Class 8
- Social Security Class 9
- Wellness Screening 9
- September Recipe 10

## Commissioner Corner



August is already over and the first day of fall is September 22<sup>nd</sup>. I hope everyone had a great Labor Day weekend.

Thank you to everyone who attended MontanaFair making it another great year. Thank you, Metra, for all your hard work in making our fair successful.

### Employee Spotlight:

This month I would like to introduce everyone to our new Disaster & Emergency Services Director Derek Yeager.

Derek joined Yellowstone County as the Director of Emergency Services after serving almost 22 years in the professional wildland fire service. Derek began as an entry-level wildland firefighter and progressed through the ranks ultimately to the position of Fire Management Officer, while holding certifications as a nationally recognized Incident Commander and Montana State Fire Warden. He was an integral leadership figure in the development of the local wildland fire response and operational dispatch network as their coordinator. Derek has worked wildland fire positions for local, state, and federal agencies across 22 states and 3 countries (USA, Mexico, and Canada), including time spent on fire engines, fire hand crews, aerially delivered specialty crews, specialty teams, and various fire command and general staff positions. Derek was a key member in multi-agency coordinating groups and led numerous multi-discipline coordinating efforts across the area for nearly 10 years. Derek also recently worked for 3 years as the Director of the City/County Emergency Communications Center. Derek spends his free time enjoying his family and the great outdoors.

MetraPark has some great events and shows coming up this month.

406 Consignary	September 13 <sup>th</sup> – 14 <sup>th</sup>
Gun Show	September 13 <sup>th</sup> – 15 <sup>th</sup>
Fusion Fight League	September 13 <sup>th</sup>
Relay for Life	September 14 <sup>th</sup>
MT Country Creations Craft Show	September 21 <sup>st</sup>
Wrangler Team Roping Championships	September 24 <sup>th</sup> – 29 <sup>th</sup>
Saturday Live	September 28 <sup>th</sup>

Thank you all for everything you do for Yellowstone County and its citizens.

Sincerely,  
John Ostlund, Chairman



New Employees



- Rachel Brown
- Erik Rios
- Alexander Fisher
- Devaney Eichel
- Caitlin Grusing
- Detention Facility
- Jessica Britton
- Justyce Beagle
- District Court
- Patrick Kiesow
- Lauren Emineth
- Youth Service Center
- Caleb Music
- Weed Department
- Kory Rice
- Road & Bridge
- Joshua Wilmeth
- Travis Brewington
- Sheriff Office
- Andrea Kondracki-Gause
- Nevaeh Chandler
- Motor Vehicle
- Marti Burroughs
- Finance

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“Everyone must make time to sit and watch the leaves change.”

ELIZABETH LAWRENCE

# Download the BCBS Mobile App!

## It's Easy to Use!

It's easier than ever for members to stay connected with the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Montana (BCBSMT) mobile app\* from wherever they are.

### With the BCBSMT App, members can easily:

- ◆ Access their claims, coverage and deductible information
- ◆ Find a doctor, hospital or urgent care facility
- ◆ Access a temporary digital member ID card
- ◆ Have the opportunity to provide feedback on their mobile experience

**Get the app:** Members can text\* BCBSMTAPP to 33633 or search for BCBSMT in the [iTunes App Store](#) or [Google Play](#)

\*Messages and data rates may apply. [Terms and Conditions and Privacy Policy.](#)

## Sunshine News



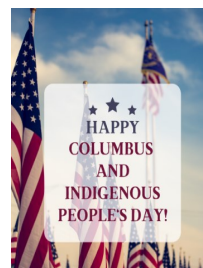
September will be a busy month for the Sunshine Committee.

The week of September 23 will be our parking raffle.

We will have a fun event with Apples vs Pumpkin Treats on Sept. 27 from 11:30-1:30 pm.

It should be a fun time!

The Yellowstone County Courthouse will be closed on October 14, 2024 in observance of Columbus Day & Indigenous Peoples Day



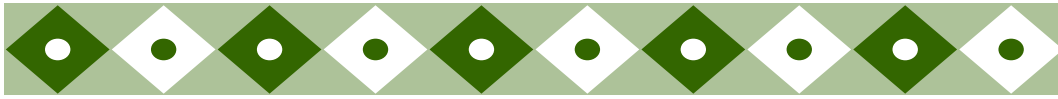
## Do you have a KIT?



Preparedness means being equipped with the supplies you may need during an emergency or disaster.

Keep them in an emergency kit you can use at home or take with you in case of an evacuation.





## I need to change my direct deposit.



You can change your direct deposit, change your W-2, Montana withholding, and more on your NeoGov Dashboard.

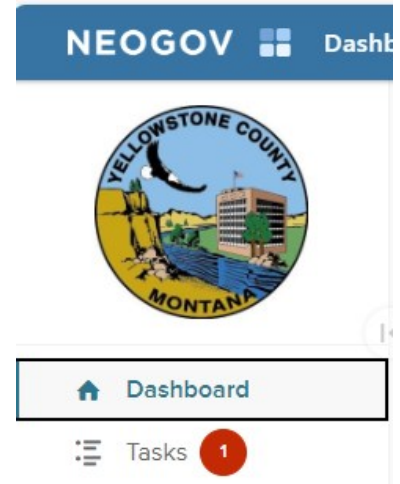
On your NeoGov Dashboard you can:

- ◆ Watch safety videos such as Run.Hide.Fight, and How to use an AED
- ◆ Check out your union contract
- ◆ Look over your benefits in the Benefits Summary Booklet
- ◆ Add a new baby to your insurance plan within the first 31-days
- ◆ Change your address and phone number
- ◆ Update your Emergency Contact information
- ◆ See the holiday dates for 2024 and 2025
- ◆ View your job description, and more!

It's all at your fingertips on your NeoGov Dashboard.

The web site is this: <https://login.neogov.com/signin>

You can access your Dashboard at any time from your work computer, home computer, laptop, phone, or iPad. Your "login" is your county email, and if you forget your password, you can reset it. Please take the time to go out on your Dashboard and get familiar with the site. Click on "Onboarding" on the left to access County information.



**The Annual Election Period will be October 21 through November 1, 2024. You will make your insurance elections for 2025 through your NeoGov Dashboard. You will receive an email from info@neogov...so, be watching for this email.**

## IRS Announces Spike in 2025 Limits for High-Deductible Health Plans & Change to the Traditional Out of Pocket Maximum

Effective January 1, 2025, there will be a change in the single and family deductible rates.

**For single, the limit is rising from \$3,200 to \$3,300 and for family, the limit is rising from \$6,400 to \$6,600, effective January 1, 2025.**

Additionally, there will be an increase in the "maximum out of pocket limit" for the Traditional plan from \$2,000 to \$2,500. There is no change in the \$500 deductible.

Please be aware of this change when selecting your benefits in October for the upcoming 2025 year. Watch for more information in the October newsletter.



## *Work Comp Claim FREE - Congratulations!*



Congratulations to the following departments for **August**: Clerk & Recorder/Auditor, Commissioners, County Attorney, District Court, Disaster & Emergency Services, Elections, Extension, Facilities, Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology/GIS, Junk Vehicle, Justice Court, Motor Vehicle, Public Works, Road & Bridge, Sheriff Office, Treasurer, and Weed. **In August there were 4 claims filed: 2-YCDF, 1-Youth Service Center, and 1-MetraPark**



## Health Plan Election Period Open October 21 – November 1, 2024 For January 1, 2025 effective date

### ALL EMPLOYEES MUST MAKE AN ELECTION



All medical, vision, and FLEX/HSA plan election forms are online on your NeoGov Dashboard at: [www.neogov.com](http://www.neogov.com)

The Yellowstone County Health Plan Election Period will be from October 21 through 11:59 pm on November 1, 2024 for coverage beginning on January 1, 2025. You will be electing your benefits for the 2025 year.

Please keep in mind that Yellowstone County does not have annual open enrollment, this is not an Open Enrollment. In order to add family members to the plan, the employee must incur a family status change to be eligible for a "Special Enrollment Period" to add dependents. You have 31-days from the date of the event to enroll new members on the Yellowstone County Health Plan.

The Yellowstone County Health Insurance Plan offers employees two (2) health insurance options with claim administration conducted by BCBS:

- 1) The Traditional Plan with a \$500 individual / \$1,500 family deductible  
80/20 coinsurance & \$2,500 individual MML / \$7,500 family MML

OR

- 2) High Deductible Health Plan (HSA) with a \$3,300 individual / \$6,600 family deductible  
100/0 coinsurance & \$3,300 individual MML / \$6,600 family MML

Note the change in the deductible for the HDHP Plan.

The HDHP plan has limited eligibility. Please check with HR if you have questions.

ALL employees must make an election.

A Kiosk is set up in HR for your use. When using the kiosk, you will need bring your "Duo fob".

If you do not have a "Duo fob", you must contact the IT Help Desk at 256-2713 to get the following: 1) a user ID, 2) a password and, 3) a "Duo Code". This code is only good for the day it is issued.

If your election is not received by 11:59 pm on November 1, 2024 you will default and will remain in your current health insurance plan for 2025, *BUT* all voluntary deductions such as Vision, FLEX and HSA will be turned off on January 1, 2025.

Department Heads: Please forward and share this information with those individuals without email access.

HR will assist you if you need help with the online election forms.

Please call 256-2737 or 256-2732 for assistance.

# Get On Board

*Awareness. Detection. Survival*



## Yellowstone County Employees

**September 25, 2024**

7am-3pm at YC Courthouse

**September 27, 2024**

6:30 am-10am at YC Detention Facility

**September 30, 2024**

7am-3pm at YC Courthouse

Please have your insurance information available at your appointment

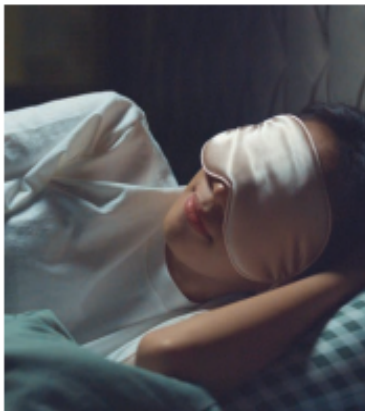


## Say goodbye to excuses and hello to good breast health with the St. Vincent Healthcare Mobile Mammography Coach.

On the Mobile Mammography Coach, a mammogram takes just 15 minutes, is covered by most insurance plans and is completed by a team focused on helping you feel at ease.

We use the same 3D Mammography imaging equipment used in our on-campus site, and your confidential results are mailed directly to you and your healthcare provider. Mammograms can also be performed at Yellowstone Breast Center, 2900 12th Ave. N. Suite 276W, Billings, MT 59101.

**To schedule your appointment call 406-237-4373.**



## Effective Shiftwork Sleep Strategies

More than 22 million Americans work nontraditional hours, including rotating, night or on-call shifts. This can be challenging in many ways — especially when it comes to getting enough sleep. Here are some strategies for getting productive shut-eye:

**Maintain consistency in your sleep schedule** even on your days off if you work a constant shift schedule. If you work a rotating shift, use a gradual plan to adjust your sleep time before a scheduled change to give your body time to adapt.

**Create an environment conducive to sleeping.** This can mean sleeping in a darkened room with an eye mask or using a sound machine to drown out noises.

**Turn off your phone at least 30 minutes before going to sleep** unless you're on call. Blue light can keep you from falling asleep and constant noise from your phone can interrupt your much-needed rest.

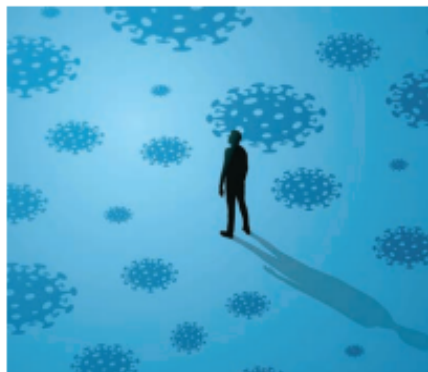
**Practice relaxation techniques to wind down.** These can include taking a hot shower or bath, practicing meditation or reading.

**Establish a bedtime routine.** This prepares your brain and body for rest.

**Eat three regular, nutritious meals throughout the day. Important:** Don't eat your largest meal within three hours of your bedtime.

**Avoid alcohol and caffeine before sleep.** Alcohol disrupts sleep patterns and causes fragmented sleep. Intake of caffeine less than four to six hours before bed can make it difficult to fall asleep.

**Talk to your health care provider about taking melatonin supplements. Caution:** It is unknown whether long-term melatonin use is safe.



## STUDY: Long COVID

There's new evidence multiple COVID-19 vaccinations can prevent long COVID. Long COVID is an often debilitating condition. It's associated with fatigue and muscle and joint pain, which can continue for months after COVID infection. But a growing body of evidence not directed at long COVID research shows being vaccinated and boosted regularly can help prevent both a serious COVID infection and ongoing long COVID.

Early in the pandemic, UK researchers found the risk of developing long COVID was 50% lower in those who were double vaccinated. And now a huge University of Hong Kong study of almost 1.2 million people has documented the protective effect of multiple COVID-19 vaccinations against long COVID.

The new research, published in *Nature Communications*, found that when vaccinated people did contract COVID, the study participants who received three or more doses of vaccines had the highest protection against experiencing any ongoing long COVID symptoms.

"Our findings provided real-world evidence supporting the effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccines in the prevention of long-term health consequences following SARS-CoV-2 infection," the researchers concluded.

## BEST bits

**September is Cholesterol Education Month.** Do you know your cholesterol score? Cholesterol isn't all unhealthy. In fact, your body needs it to build healthy cells. But too much LDL (low-density lipoprotein) cholesterol raises heart disease risk while a healthy level of HDL (high-density lipoprotein) may help protect your heart, according to the American Heart Association. If you don't know your cholesterol score, schedule a simple blood test to find out. Your health care provider can explain the findings and advise any dietary and medication changes.

**Women's Health and Fitness Day on September 25** is a day for women to focus on feeling their best. Overdue for a mammogram, Pap test, HPV test, or physical? Make those appointments. Need to up your fitness level? Explore ways to fit regular exercise into your life. The Office on Women's Health offers practical ways to increase your fitness with activities to fit your needs based on your age, stage of life, and physical abilities. Learn more at [womenshealth.gov](http://womenshealth.gov).

**Flu shot reminder: September and October are good times to get your flu shot.** Flu season is right around the corner and it takes about two weeks after vaccination to build immunity to the virus and lower your risk of experiencing the fever, cough and body aches of seasonal influenza. Although the vaccine doesn't always provide total protection from the virus, it's the best way to reduce the odds of serious complications from the flu. Also, ask your health care provider if you're up to date for COVID vaccination.

**September is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month:** a good time to learn about even more evidence why you should continue to increase your cardiorespiratory fitness. A recent Swedish study concluded that men who experienced an annual improvement in cardiorespiratory fitness of at least 3% were found to have a 35% reduced risk of developing prostate cancer compared to men whose fitness declined by 3%. To increase your cardiorespiratory fitness, experts recommend exercising aerobically — walking, hiking, swimming, dancing — for at least 150 minutes a week.

## Backpack Safety: It's Time to Lighten the Load



When you move your child's backpack after he or she drops it at the door, does it feel like it contains 40 pounds of rocks? Maybe you've noticed your child struggling to put it on, bending forward while carrying it, or complaining of tingling or numbness.

If you've been concerned about the effects that extra weight might have on your child's still-growing body, your instincts are correct. Backpacks that are too heavy can cause a lot of problems for kids, like back, neck and shoulder pain, as well as poor posture.

While it's common these days to see children carrying as much as a quarter of their body weight, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a backpack weigh no more than 5% to 10% of a child's weight.

The problem has grabbed the attention of lawmakers in some states, who have pushed for legislation requiring school districts to lighten the load. While we wait for solutions like digital textbooks to become widespread, there are things you can do to help prevent injury.

### Start With an Ergonomic Backpack

When selecting a backpack, look for:

- An appropriate size: A backpack should not be wider than your child's torso or hang more than 4 inches below the waist
- Padded, adjustable shoulder straps to help distribute the weight on your child's back without digging into their shoulders
- Padded back to protect against contents inside the backpack poking into your child's back
- Waist and chest straps to help distribute the weight of the backpack more evenly across your child's back
- Multiple compartments to help position the weight more effectively

- Compression straps to stabilize the contents
- Reflective material to allow your child to be seen when walking to and from school

### Use the Backpack Correctly

Check the fit of the backpack:

- Make sure your child uses both straps when carrying the backpack; using one strap shifts the weight to one side and causes muscle pain and posture problems
- Make certain the shoulder straps are tightened so the backpack is fitted to your child's back; a dangling backpack can cause spinal misalignment and pain
- Encourage your child to use the chest, waist and compression straps, and to adjust them to the load

### Pack Smartly

A roomy backpack may seem like a good idea, but the more space there is to fill, the more likely your child will fill it. Help your child determine what is absolutely necessary to carry. If it's not essential, have them leave it at home, in their locker or in the classroom.

Teach your child to load the backpack with the heaviest items first closest to the bottom and the center of the back of the backpack and to make use of the multiple compartments to distribute the load.

### What about Backpacks on Wheels?

Rolling backpacks offer some benefits, but they should be used cautiously. They are difficult to carry up and down stairs and they clutter school corridors, replacing a potential back injury hazard with a tripping hazard.

So, pick up that backpack from time to time, and let your children know you've got their back.



## Medicare 101 Class October 16<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 pm

Are you getting close to Medicare age or are already 65? Do you have older parents that need help with Medicare? Then this class is for you!

Learn the A,B,C's of Medicare and be able to navigate the alphabet soup of plans.

- ◆ When should I sign up for Medicare?
- ◆ My parents are eligible for Medicare, what do I need to know?
- ◆ I have the high deductible health plan and an HSA...how is that affected by Medicare?

Learn the answers to these questions and more.....

**When:** October 16, 2023

**Time:** 2:00 pm

**Where:** Room 212, County Courthouse (by the skybridge)

## Walking Montana Mileage Logs Did you reach 300 miles by August 31st ???

Turn in your mileage log to Human Resources no later than **September 10th** to be entered into the Grand Prize Drawings!

Remember you can earn awesome awards from our sponsors:

**100 Miles - Intermountain Healthcare**

**200 Miles - Blue Cross Blue Shield**

**300 Miles - Marsh-McLennan Agency**

**\$100 Gift Cards for Grand Prize Drawings -**

**Alliant Consulting**

**Thank you to our sponsors who help to make this program possible.**

## Trendy Tests to Skip



**Full-body scans** can reveal countless things to worry about needlessly and cost thousands of dollars.

Many clinic and medical imaging facilities market whole-body CT (X-ray computed tomography) screening to the public with claims they can spot signs of heart disease, blood clots and cancer to stop potentially deadly health problems at the earliest stage. But the FDA says CT scans involve significant radiation exposure and there's no scientific evidence that whole-body scanning of symptom-free people offers more benefits than harms.

**You can also get a full-body MRI (magnetic resonance imaging).** One company selling the test says their scan can image more than 500 different health conditions, including cancer. But doctors warn that they're not always accurate. A recent report in the *American Journal of Roentgenology* concluded the average person is far more likely to be harmed on some level by a whole-body MRI scan than benefited by detecting a disease extremely early.

**What about a "simple, painless, ultrasound screening"** of your carotid arteries in a van or recreation center? Ultrasound is used to image the arteries that run up each side of your neck. These arteries can become clogged with plaque, causing neurological symptoms or stroke. But screening for this problem (carotid stenosis) is best done at a medical center with the most advanced equipment. Even if the screening supposedly shows something worrisome (which is unlikely, if you have no symptoms), you'll be out a couple of hundred dollars and still need to have another scan at a medical facility.





# Social Security 101

October 22 @ 11 am  
Room 212-Courthouse

Are you getting ready to retire or  
at that age to start taking Social Security benefits?  
Or do you just want to learn more about Social Security...  
**Then this class is for you!**

**Sign up today! Class size is limited to 20**

Contact Human Resources to register:  
Mariea at 406-256-2705 or  
Email – [mreinke@yellowstonecountymt.gov](mailto:mreinke@yellowstonecountymt.gov)



## Wellness Screenings

The Wellness Screenings are currently on hold.

Watch your emails and the newsletter for updates.

## Congratulations on 40 Years!

Leslie Sanchez with the Clerk & Records office was recognized for 40 years of service with Yellowstone County. Leslie started employment with the county on August 23, 1984. Thank you for your service to the County!



**40 YEARS**  
**480 MONTHS**  
**14609 DAYS**  
**350632 HOURS**  
**21037968 MINUTES**  
**1261440000 SECONDS**  
**OF BEING AWESOME**



## Disney's Ratatouille Recipe

This Disney Ratatouille recipe makes the beautiful dish served up in the movie of the same name. Long and narrow vegetables work best. Serve with crusty bread or over a bed of brown rice, couscous, or pasta.

Prep Time: 45 mins  
Cook Time: 45 mins  
Total Time: 1 hr 30 mins

Servings: 4

### Ingredients

1 (6 ounce) can tomato paste  
½ onion, chopped  
¼ cup minced garlic  
¾ cup water  
4 tablespoons olive oil, divided  
salt and ground black pepper to taste  
1 small eggplant, trimmed and very thinly sliced  
1 zucchini, trimmed and very thinly sliced  
1 yellow squash, trimmed and very thinly sliced  
1 red bell pepper, cored and very thinly sliced  
1 yellow bell pepper, cored and very thinly sliced  
1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves, or to taste  
3 tablespoons mascarpone cheese

### Directions

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C).

Spread tomato paste onto the bottom of a 10-inch square baking dish or round deep-dish pie baking pan. Sprinkle with onion and garlic. Stir in water and 1 tablespoon olive oil until thoroughly combined. Season with salt and pepper.

Arrange alternating slices of eggplant, zucchini, yellow squash, red bell pepper, and yellow bell pepper, starting at the outer edge of the dish and working concentrically towards the center. Overlap slices a little to display colors.

Drizzle vegetables with remaining 3 tablespoons olive oil; season with salt and pepper. Sprinkle with thyme leaves. Cover vegetables with a piece of parchment paper cut to fit inside.

Bake in the preheated oven until vegetables are roasted and tender, about 45 minutes. Serve with dollops of mascarpone cheese. Serve with crusty bread or over a bed of brown rice, couscous, or pasta.



Submitted by Juli Warfel-Bitler – All Recipes