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UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

Missoula Regional SBDC

Girls Run Missoula

Missoula, MT



"The SBDC supported the transformation of my business plan into a successful, COVID-19 operational, and highly functioning program for young women in Missoula."

Angela Bridegam, *Owner*

After working decades in the field of domestic and sexual violence, Angela Bridegam returned to school at the University of Montana to pursue her Master's in Public Administration and Nonprofit Management. While in graduate school, Angela created a business plan for Girls Run Missoula to give young girls the skills and confidence to avoid adverse experiences throughout their lives. The business plan focused on teen dating violence, suicide, substance abuse, eating disorders, and mental health challenges to name a few.

The Missoula community was experiencing its first full swing of the COVID pandemic when Angela graduated. With high anxiety, fear of the unknown, and the stress of both teaching and mothering her children, Angela looked to her Girls Run Missoula (GRM) business plan as a response to growing challenges around safe childcare and made an appointment with the Missoula SBDC.

Her interaction with the SBDC started at a very basic level. This included referrals to legal support, tax information, processes to register through the state as a business, insurance and budget creation. Further assistance included cash flow projections, options for hiring employees, and suggestions for how to move through transitional periods as the business grows. The SBDC provided moral support when addressing the uncertainty of running a business in a pandemic.

Knowing she needed to act fast, Angela created a pilot program to see if her dream could become reality. With the support of COVID Specialist Christine Littig, Angela has successfully completed a pilot program and fully launched Girls Run Missoula. In a short time GRM has seen 200% growth in participation numbers between the 2nd and 3rd season, and again between the 3rd and 4th season. The assistance in fine-tuning GRM marketing strategies drew the attention and support of a year-long sponsorship by Toyota and other individual donors.

By many measures, girls are excelling like never before, and yet their anxiety and depression levels are higher than ever. Girls Run Missoula creates an opportunity to change this trend by instilling protective factors such as social connection, concrete support networks, and social and emotional competence. While GRM is still focused on those initial business plan goals, GRM is also aware that the program is creating an environment and support system that is helping young women find focus, strength and mental fitness (as well as physical) during the COVID pandemic.