



Contributor

Support women's and children's healthcare with your contributions to the Benefis Women's and Children's Center. Just return the enclosed giving envelope or donate online.

'Every Breath Is Celebrated': Donors Come to Aid of Family of Micropremies

As she held her vocal, 6-pound baby son Beckham in her arms, Brittany Meyer considered the "miracles on miracles, a million little miracles," that brought her family to this point.

"This whole journey has been eye-opening to what miraculous beings these babies are," Brittany said. "There's no way to prepare for something like this. It's been humbling and horrible and just a unique experience."

The generosity of donors has been a cozy blanket of love wrapped around the Meyer family during the high peaks and low valleys of micropremies, who were born shy of 26 weeks and came into the world between 1 and 2 pounds. That was too soon for Caden Carter, who slipped away two days after he was born. Beckham, Trustin, and Gracelynn faced brain, heart, lung, and eye issues that at times terrified their parents.

"Every breath is celebrated. Every milestone matters," Brittany said. "When they were first placed on our chests on week three, we saw their heart rates calm. It was incredible, and nerve-wracking, and beautiful. It's what we have been praying for."

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“Everyone's generosity and kindness is helping us through this.”
Brittany Meyer





Donors who back **Mercy Flight** were with Trustin as he flew to Seattle for two neurosurgeries to remove spinal fluid and pressure around his brain after brain hemorrhages. Angel Fund supporters helped Brittany ship breastmilk to feed Trustin despite the miles between them and helped her husband, Carl, travel with his tiny son to Seattle.

Donors to the **Benefis Women's and Children's Center** are creating a medical home for future care as the children grow through wellness checks and beyond.

The **Neonatal Intensive Care Unit** cameras above the incubators gave the babies' parents and grandparents peace of mind when they're not in the room, a comfort possible because of donors.

"To everyone who donates, thank you. Everyone's generosity and kindness is helping us through this," Brittany said. "It really does make a difference."

The NICU room itself, specially designed for multiples, is a gift from donor Delores Seay and her husband, Kenneth. When Delores was born in Miles City as one of Montana's first quadruplets in 1947, the hospital had to request incubators from Minnesota and Billings. The smallest baby and Delores' identical twin, Donna, was barely 1 pound and succumbed within a few days.

Nearly 75 years later as a new set of quadruplets arrived in the world, they had the state-of-the-art **Seay Triplets Room**, donated in memory of Delores' parents, Edward and Esther Randash. The family moved to Great Falls in 1961.

"I'm thrilled the room is there," Delores said. "We hope it's a place of comfort where the babies can all be cared for in one room."

Without the triplet room, the Meyer babies would have needed three separate rooms to accommodate their incubators and monitors.

When Delores and her siblings were born, news of the quadruplets spread quickly around the country, and support poured in.

"It was unreal, but multiple births were very rare then," Delores said. Quadruplets are still rare; the odds of having them are only about 1 in 571,787.

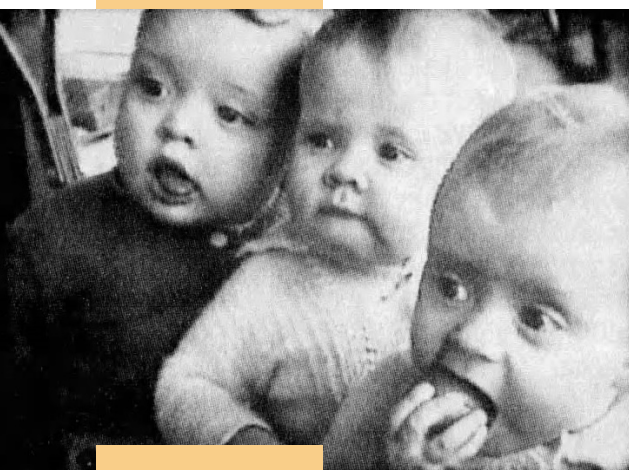
"Miles City folks put cans in the bars and grocery stores and collected \$1,500 to pay the hospital bill," she said. "Baker, where our parents lived, wasn't going to be outdone and collected \$1,500, too."

Delores reached out to the Meyer family and sent baby blankets. Brittany called her a "wonderful advocate and gentle voice. It's very neat we get to be part of the story of those quadruplets born so long ago."

The generosity of bar patrons and distant newspaper readers when she and her siblings were born inspired Delores throughout her life. Now it's rippling through her own generosity into the lives of the Meyer babies. **That's the power of philanthropy.**

Every breath is celebrated.
Every milestone matters.

Brittany Meyer



Women's and Children's Center on Track for December Opening

Perhaps you've seen the stunning transformation as an empty car lot along 10th Avenue South has given way to the building of the Benefis Women's and Children's Center.

"You look at the plans on paper and think through, how are we going to do that? One day you have a hole in the ground and practically the next a building," Jeff Arndt, carpenter foreman for Dick Anderson Construction, said as he worked on the center.

As the outside of the building takes shape and rises before our eyes, there are still plenty of **opportunities to show your support for this endeavor**, which will help women and children for generations.

If you are interested in a naming opportunity, please contact Benefis Foundation. And if you are a young professional, your money can go even further with our Young Professional Donation Match Program. Every dollar up to \$100,000 donated by those born from 1978-2000 will be matched by a generous donor. Learn more at Benefis.org/DonorMatch.



Save the Date: Mayfaire 2021 Will Be in August

Each year, we celebrate the joy of giving with Mayfaire, Benefis Foundation's signature fundraising event. This year, we are pushing the event to August to give time for the COVID-19 vaccine to make a widespread impact on the pandemic and to protect our friends and neighbors.



Mayfaire 2021 will be Aug. 6-7 and will support equipping the Benefis Women's and Children's Center.

We will begin with a golf tournament on Friday at the Meadow Lark Country Club, with a wine tasting to follow – a new event this year. The Mansfield Center will host the Mayfaire Gala on Saturday. We look forward to a great night of inspiration, dining, and dancing to the Downtown Band.

Want to get involved? We would love to have your support. To volunteer, purchase wine tasting tickets, order raffle tickets, donate auction items, or sponsor a golf team, please contact Jami Wald, senior director of development, at (406) 455-5844 or JamiWald@benefis.org.

Sletten Cancer Institute Marks 15 Years as a Light in the Darkness



The five months of chemotherapy and three weeks of radiation were “horrid” for Barb Byrne as she battled breast cancer, but through it all she could count on compassionate care and a soothing environment at Benefis Sletten Cancer Institute (SCI).

“It was a relaxing place,” she said. “It’s hard to go in knowing how sick you’re going to be, but with the fountain and art you had distraction from the upcoming misery.”

Having oncology care in Great Falls also meant Barb didn’t have to travel for excellent care from the talented team of nurses, oncologists, and surgeons.

“In other places, you’re just one of a thousand,” she said. “Here you don’t feel like there’s a huge crowd.”

At Benefis, we’re celebrating 15 years of Sletten Cancer Institute this year. It’s a chance to honor the impact donors have made and continue to make through what can be a patient’s biggest health challenge.

SCI opened in December 2005 thanks to generous donors inspired by the capital campaign’s theme of “Lighting the Path with Compassion and Care” and especially by the people they’ve loved who have been touched by cancer.

The spirit of the campaign is evoked by the SCI tower, which remains a beacon of hope.

The project began in 2003 with a study on the cancer program and included a wide range of providers, nurses, representatives from other organizations, and cancer patients.

They advocated for a free-standing cancer center that would centralize services in a way that’s easy to navigate during a stressful time. They wanted a supportive environment that addressed the complete person, body, mind, and spirit. They wanted travel outside the area for treatment to be unnecessary except in rare cases.

That’s what SCI delivers. The “extras” like support groups, counseling, massage, the appearance center, family assistance, Gift of Life Housing, and other resources are central to caring for the whole person.

Above the door to SCI, writing on the wall reads: **“Dedicated to all the courageous people who are fighting cancer. May you and your families find inspiration, caring, healing and hope within these walls.”**



For 15 years, that aspiration has been a reality for thousands of Montanans. Please join us in keeping the SCI flame burning for future generations.

Support cancer patients through your donation to Sletten Cancer Institute via Benefis Foundation. Please donate **online at [Benefis.org/Foundation](https://www.benefis.org/Foundation) or use the enclosed giving envelope.**

For Choteau Mayor, Gift of Life Housing is ‘Godsend’

As he counted down to the final days of his cancer treatment, Choteau Mayor Chris Hindoien reflected on the team that carried him to the finish line, which included the neighbors who drove him to radiation and chemotherapy and the friends who shoveled his walk when it was 20 below. Then there are the people who helped him heal at Benefis Health System.

Chris, 55, noticed a lump in his throat in September, but priorities are priorities. He had to get an elk first.

After the freezer was full, Chris went in for a scan at Benefis Teton Medical Center, where he saw Dr. Jeffrey Baker, a Benefis otolaryngologist who specializes in head and neck surgery. Dr. Baker did a biopsy, and two minutes later, Chris was on the phone with Sletten Cancer Institute.

Chris had chemotherapy in three-day runs at Sletten Cancer Institute. That’s when he turned to Gift of Life Housing.

Because of the generosity of donors, cancer patients who travel to Benefis for treatment can stay at Gift of Life Housing at no cost.

The atmosphere is homey, peaceful, and welcoming, with donated homemade quilts and a house of people in a similar situation.

“It tells you you’re not alone,” Chris said. Gift of Life Housing “is a godsend.”

With Chris staying at Gift of Life Housing, his wife, Tammy, could stay home with their little one and pets. Meanwhile, Chris could walk to his treatment next door. If he’d stayed at a hotel, someone would have had to stay with him to drive him to and from his treatments.

Chris praised SCI’s caring radiology and infusion teams plus oncologists Dr. Carolyn Rutter and Dr. Bryan Martin.

“There’s none better than SCI,” he said. “It’s a lovely place. Closer to home, there’s a comfort in that.”



Can you help?

The generosity of Benefis Foundation donors keeps Gift of Life Housing free for patients from across northcentral Montana as they go through cancer treatment, care for a NICU baby, have wound care, and more. If you can support these patients in their time of need, please contribute online at Benefis.org/Foundation or use the enclosed giving envelope.



Community's Caring Spirit Shines During COVID-19 Pandemic



After the shocking and sudden loss of her daughter, Tanisha, 48, to COVID-19, florist Christell Benson turned her grief into generosity.

Christell didn't just bring bouquets for the frontline healthcare workers at Benefis. She recognized that every employee has played a role in caring for patients and supporting those who do, and she delivered flowers to all departments.

"I am so thankful for all your hard work and for all you've had to endure," Christell told employees. "You will always be essential workers."

As she presented flowers to Amber Mort, supervisor of Environmental Services at Benefis, Christell asked her to share her gratitude to all the housekeepers, many of whom provided vital care for COVID-19 patients during the worst of the pandemic.

"You all worked hard when you didn't know what would happen next. Look at us. We survived! I just wanted to say thank you," Christell said.

Amber was surprised and humbled to have her department recognized, and she shared the flowers in the break area.

"It is very meaningful that a family would recognize the departments in that manner even in their time of loss," she said. "It has made all the staff that I have spoken with feel important and acknowledged for their part in caring for patients' health and well-being during the very difficult time of COVID-19."

The fine folks of Great Falls and northcentral Montana came through for Benefis employees through the pandemic with fabric for masks, meals and sweet treats, messages of encouragement, discounts, donations, services, and more. **We will always be grateful.**



Benefis Patients Say Thanks With Doctors' Day Tributes

"Understanding," "knowledgeable," "compassionate," and "friend."

Those were the most used words when we asked Benefis patients to describe a provider who has made a difference in their lives.

For Doctors' Day, many Benefis supporters shared stories of lifesaving diagnosis, patience through endless questions, a steady manner, and good listening skills.

They helped us celebrate those doctors who have stayed the course during the COVID-19 pandemic, who bring babies into the world, who fix knees and backs and hearts, who listen and encourage and explain, and who work tirelessly for their patients.

For Ramona Boyton-Logan, the compassion Dr. Kevin McCrea, a Benefis family medicine doctor, showed her husband inspired her to submit her message of gratitude detailing his care and the way he's inspired her to improve her own health.

"His office touts individual healthiness and because of that, he inspired me to start walking," she said. "I'm going to enter the Ice Breaker as my very first walk/run."

When Ramona learned Dr. McCrea also cared for COVID-19 patients, she paid homage to his courage with a quilt, which he donated to the hospital.

"He teared up," she said. "He is such a humble man. He changed my life for the better."

"How wonderful," Dr. McCrea said. "We get the privilege of getting up in the morning and helping people. I am humbled by this, truly."

Some people also chose to honor their favorite provider with a contribution to Benefis Foundation in their honor – a gift that makes a profound impact on our ongoing efforts to build a healthier tomorrow for northcentral Montanans.



Good Reasons That Gifts of Appreciated Securities Are a Smart Idea

Do you own stock that has appreciated in value? Making a gift to one of the many programs and services of Benefis Foundation with appreciated assets, such as stock, offers several advantages.

- Make a meaningful, lasting gift without impacting your cash flow.
- Receive income tax savings, both federal and state, and if you give to one of our many endowment funds, you can be eligible for the generous Montana Endowment Tax Credit.
- Avoid capital gains tax on the sale of your appreciated stock and other securities.
- Giving appreciated securities in place of cash is a smart, philanthropic, and ztax-wise alternative.

For more information on the benefits of gifting appreciated securities, please contact Marilyn Parker, COO, at (406) 455-5836 or marilynparker@benefis.org.

Is there a Benefis doctor who has made a special impact on your life? It's not too late to honor him or her with a message of thanks. **Go online at [Benefis.org/doctorsday](https://www.benefis.org/doctorsday).**

Campers Celebrate Camp Francis' Return

As he grieved for his mother, Nellie, who died in a car wreck, Matt Strissel, then 12, found comfort and hope at Camp Francis.

"The big thing for me was on the first day realizing I'm not the only one who lost a parent. There are other kids who shared the experience," he said. "Camp was learning the ways to grieve and get through the loss and that life can still be good and be OK after the loss."

Matt's favorite moment is the camp dance because "It's so fun to see first-time campers transformed from sad and shy to happy and joyful. By the last night, they're beaming and having the greatest time."

Every year, Benefis Peace Hospice's beloved Camp Francis provides a sanctuary for children who have lost a loved one. Last year, camp was a virtual affair amid COVID-19, but this year campers again gathered in person.

Matt became a teen camp counselor and then adult volunteer. This summer, Matt attended his 20th Camp Francis.

"Helping other kids through their loss helped me with my own," he said. "You get just as much out of it being a counselor."

When Matt lost his dad, Bill, a few years ago to cancer, his Camp Francis community rallied around him.

"It really helped me get through that," he said. "Before I was 30, both my parents were gone. Camp basically saved my life."

Though camp lasts just a few days, Matt said the ripple effects are felt throughout a child's life.

Your gifts will make a child's grief easier to bear.

Your support for the Children's Bereavement Program at Benefis Peace Hospice helps the children cope all year long.

Please accept my Children's Bereavement Program gift:

- in the enclosed giving envelope.
- as an online donation given today at Benefis.org/Foundation.