



# June 2023 Newsletter

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*Our end-of-year appreciation picnics were especially joyful this year! WCM's coaching impact has never been bigger, so there was a lot to celebrate. (left: Missoula & Ravalli coaches; right: Flathead coaches)*

# Coaching update

We are amazed at the impact our coaches made during the 2022-2023 school year!

- **132 volunteer coaches** gave 1,290 hours of service, which equates to **\$35,190** of in-kind service!
- Coaches worked with **3,469 students** for **3,788 sessions**.
- We partnered with **49 amazing teachers** across fifteen schools.
- We coached every 4th grader at Muldown Elementary in Whitefish and every 8th grader in the city of Missoula!
- **17 Montana businesses** invested in WCM's mission through financial and in-kind donations.

We expect to make an even bigger impact next year, ask WCM grows literacy mentorship across the state.

Questions regarding coaching in the Flathead can be directed to Jeanne Wdowin (jeanne@writingcoachesofmontana.org) or in Missoula/Ravalli to Kat Jackson (kat@writingcoachesofmontana.org).

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## Missoula & Bitterroot Gives success!

You helped us raise **\$13,776** for Missoula & Bitterroot Gives!

Because of your generosity, we will be **cutting our school sliding scale fees in half** beginning in fall 2023. Now we can support Montana students from all backgrounds for years to come.

Thank you, WCM community, for your continued support!

[DONATE HERE](#)

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## WCM Board of Directors transitions

It's a bittersweet time for the WCM Board of Directors. Four of our long-time Directors are moving on to focus on family and enjoy retirement. We are also excited to add a new Board Director, [Shelley Jared, and transition to new leadership!](#)

Please enjoy a reflection from our outgoing Vice President, Linda Whittlesey (Missoula), and our incoming President, Jay Shaver (Whitefish).

*From Linda:*

As I prepare to step away from the Writing Coaches of Montana Board of Directors, I find myself experiencing a number of emotions. One, of course, is a bit of sadness. I have served on this board for several years and have enjoyed my interactions with the many dedicated members who have steered this ship so deftly. I will miss their wit and wisdom.

I also feel a tremendous sense of pride in the contributions WCM has made to so many student writers over the past two decades. We have changed with the times, we have grown and expanded boldly and wisely, and we have stayed true to our mission. We've come a long way from the days when we were a drop-in, after-school program in a single Missoula high school.

Change is always good, as well as necessary. I feel extremely optimistic about the future of this organization I love so much. Our current Executive Director, Cassie Sheets, is a bold visionary. She will bring her own strengths and leadership style to this organization as she carries it further into the future. Our new Executive Committee is made up of members who are enthusiastic and ready to work hard. I know I am leaving WCM in very good hands indeed.

And finally, I leave the WCM board with a deep sense of gratitude. It has been a great privilege to serve so many students and teachers across Western Montana, and to participate in this program I believe in so completely. I look forward to continuing to coach, and to helping out in any way I can. Onward!

*From Jay:*

It's a winning recipe for success—a great concept, fueled with visionary and expert leadership, passionate coaches, dedicated teachers and receptive schools' administration. It's pretty easy to understand why Writing Coaches of Montana continues to demonstrate yearly growth.

We are currently experiencing the passing of the leadership baton as numerous members of our board are retiring. We will see a loss of 43 years of experience next year as four key members of our leadership depart. Is our glass only half empty now—or half full?

Half full and filling up. Our veteran board has laid down the principles that have been successful. They left us with a solid foundation to continue to thrive and be consistent with our vision—to bring our program across Montana.

Our new board is younger but with no less enthusiasm and passion. And as important as establishing a foundation is, new ideas and perceptions are equally important to have continued growth. Our new board reaches across different generations, level of professional experience and world views that will enable us to navigate and prosper in an ever-changing environment.

We say goodbye to our veteran board with a heavy heart and an abundance of gratitude. But our new members are more than up to the task of leading Writing Coaches of Montana into the future. And there is always room for new ideas and perspectives. If you have some time on your hands and are passionate about our mission, let us know—we will find a place for you to be part of the team!

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## **Abundant generosity from local grantors & small businesses!**

We are delighted to announce that WCM has received two \$6,000 grants--one from Whitefish Community Foundation and one from Bill & Rosemary Gallagher Foundation. These grants go a long way in making impact for young writers in Montana.

We also received generous gift card donations from Good Food Store in Missoula and Fleur Bake Shop in Whitefish, as gifts for our amazing volunteer coaches. We're so appreciative of these local businesses!

Generosity from fellow Montana citizens is the reason we can make such a big impact, together--thank you!





## WCM rising stars

Writing Coaches of Montana has had three outstanding interns since we established the program three years ago. All of them are building impressive new trajectories since their internship days:

Our Missoula & Ravalli Coordinator **Kat Jackson** (2020-2021 intern, *above left*) recently received one of University of Montana's prestigious Bertha Morton Scholarships! Her graduate research focuses on providing accessible

environmental education through creative expression. As our inaugural intern, Kat helped to build WCM's lifelong learning programming and communications.

**Shasta Hecht** (2021-2022 intern, *above middle*) graduated from University of Montana last month. She was accepted into the L'académie de Normandie next year to teach English in France! Growing up in a bilingual household, Shasta helped our coaches understand how to [support multilingual students](#).

We would like to thank **Julia Wynne** (2022-2023 intern, *above right*) who just finished her internship with WCM. One of the highlights of her experience was leading a meetup about the importance of [diverse representation](#). Julia has one more year at University of Montana and is planning for a career in publishing after graduation.

We are excited to announce that WCM will partner with TWO interns during the 2023-2024 school year! One intern will continue to focus on programming, while a marketing intern will help us expand communications about the impact of community collaboration in the classroom.

Contact Executive Director Cassie Sheets at [cassie@writingcoachesofmontana.org](mailto:cassie@writingcoachesofmontana.org) with questions about WCM's internship program.



## Growth Mindset: A Coaches' Blog

*This year Whitefish coach Jake How got the thrill of a lifetime when he coached his 4th grade granddaughter at Muldown Elementary. Every 4th grader works with coaches for several weeks as students build a multiple-paragraph biography project. (Pictured above: Coach Jake works with his granddaughter on her "Wax Museum" project.)*

What a bonus! The reward I received from a Writing Coach experience this spring eclipsed any of the awards I've received as a newspaper reporter, newspaper editor, freelance editor, and fiction writer.

I always feel grateful when helping the kids with their writing projects in the area schools. To experience a clear window into their young world is a true gift. The enthusiasm and vibrancy are contagious, and I always walk out of the school with an additional spring in my step.

I was especially intrigued when an assignment listed at Muldown Elementary School in Whitefish. I have a granddaughter in the 4th grade there. As things worked out, the 4th grade students were working

on their “Wax Museum” project and I ended up not only coaching my granddaughter, but also several of her friends. Students pick a well-known person, usually historical, and do a five-paragraph report on them. Then they create exhibits, costume up, and give a presentation to their parents and other school kids, reading aloud their reports.

I attended the “Wax Museum” event and had the opportunity to listen to the presentations of the five kids I coached through their articles, including my granddaughter.

What a rich experience to be able to share my love of writing and follow my granddaughter’s project from inception to presentation.

Go coaches!

--Jake How

### *Contact us:*

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