



May 2025 Newsletter

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Welcome WCM's new director & coordinator!

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MISSOULA & BITTERROOT GIVES IS TODAY!

RSVP: End of year appreciation picnics, May 13 & 15

Growth Mindset: The Next Era of WCM



Above: Coach Katherine works with a student on his "favorite animal" research report. This was the first time coaches worked with students at Potomac Elementary!

Welcome to WCM's new executive director & Missoula/Ravalli coordinator!

Writing Coaches of Montana is thrilled to announce the hiring of two new employees!

Shan Rao (left) will be joining WCM as the incoming executive director. Shan has spent the past decade focused on community-based nonprofit work. Originally from rural Minnesota, she created an initiative offering local opportunities for Southern Minnesota students in the literary, visual, and performing arts. She then spent six years in New York City, where she worked at a variety of literary and arts organizations, spearheading fundraising efforts and community-centered programming. Shan has worked with students in public school and performing arts settings. She holds a degree in English and Creative Writing from Fordham University. She is thrilled to be stepping into the role as Executive Director of Writing Coaches of Montana and to support this community-focused, student-centered approach to literacy work. Shan calls Missoula home and enjoys spending time in nature, scouring the local events page for exciting happenings, and writing poetry and fiction. (shan@writingcoachesofmontana.org)

Becca Escobedo (right) is the new Missoula & Ravalli coordinator. Becca has spent her career working with a diverse population of youth participants and their caregivers in a variety of nonprofit settings. Most recently, she served as Community Engagement Director for Girl Scouts of Alaska, where she worked to expand the organization’s reach across the state. Becca is passionate about building a community that empowers the next generation with the tools, confidence, and support they need to thrive. She holds a B.S. in Geography from Arizona State University. Her husband’s career as a U.S. Air Force pilot has taken them across the country, and they, along with their rescue husky, now call Florence home. In her free time, Becca can be found fly fishing, reading, and traveling. (becca@writingcoachesofmontana.org)

Please help us welcome Shan and Becca into the WCM community!



Coaching opportunities

Trained coaches, please help us round out an outstanding year of coaching by signing up for our last 2024-2025 coaching opportunities!

MISSOULA

Seeley-Swan High School

Laird

Thursday, May 15, single draft: Email kat@writingcoachesofmontana.org directly to register.

7:50-8:50am, 8 coaches needed

(Carpooling available with staff for Missoula-based coaches)

Hamilton High School

11th grade, College Prep, College Application Essay, Carmody

Wednesday, May 22, single draft: Email kat@writingcoachesofmontana.org directly to register.

2:00-3:30pm, 1 coach needed

FLATHEAD

Muldown Elementary

4th grade, informative essays, 4th grade teacher team

[Wed. May 7](#), 5 paragraph essay with bibliography

12:30 - 1:40, 4 more coaches needed

Whitefish Middle School

6th grade, informational essays, Meta Barnes

[Thurs. May 8](#), 5 paragraph magazine article

12:10 - 1:44, 1 more coach needed

Columbia Falls HS

12th grade, research project, Jaimé Bell

[Mon. May 19](#), 5 page paper

8:15 - 9:05, 9 coaches

12:33 - 1:22, 7 coaches

Not a trained coach yet?

For folks interested in Missoula and Ravalli, contact coordinator Kat Jackson (kat@writingcoachesofmontana.org) to get signed up for our [new coach training on Friday, May 16](#).

For individuals in Flathead, email coordinator Jeanne Wdowin (jeanne@writingcoachesofmontana.org).

Missoula & Bitterroot Gives is TODAY!

[Double your impact by donating to Missoula & Bitterroot Gives TODAY!](#)

Help WCM unlock matching funds from the following donors:

- For Ravalli students:
 - \$500 from Ravalli County Credit Union
- For Missoula students:
 - \$1,000 from an anonymous Missoula donor
- For Missoula & Ravalli students:
 - \$1,000 from Clearwater Credit Union
 - \$1,000 from Marsh McLennan Agency

Thank you to these sponsors for [supporting local student literacy](#)!



MISSOULAGIVES

May 1 & 2

“I liked how I could take quick notes [during my coaching session] to make my essay better on my own time. It made me feel really ready to turn in the paper and that was appreciated!”

--Sentinel HS student

Please RSVP: end of year appreciation picnics!

It's time to celebrate our wonderful volunteer coaches, donors, and teacher partners at end of year picnics!

PLEASE RSVP TO CASSIE@WRITINGCOACHESOFMONTANA.ORG IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND (and have not already RSVP'ed).

Missoula & Ravalli: Tuesday, May 13, [Meadowlark Pavilion in Missoula](#), 6-8pm

Flathead: Thursday, May 15, [Bias Brewing in Kalispell](#), 6-8pm

Corporate sponsor: Good Food Store

Thank you to the Good Food Store of Missoula for supporting Writing Coaches of Montana!

We appreciate community-centered businesses like GFS!



Above: Rita Braun has been with WCM for over a decade, first as the Flathead coordinator and now going into her fifth year as a board director.

Growth Mindset: A WCM blog

The Next Era of WCM

Have you ever worked with someone who seemed to instinctively know the right moves to make and the intuition on how to implement them? And then grew the organization in leaps and bounds? We at the Writing Coaches of Montana have had five years of that luxury through our work with Cassie Sheets, our present but soon-to-be-departing ED. What's a nonprofit to do?

Continue that tradition.

We introduce to you our new Executive Director Shan Rao: Missoula-based, creative thinker, community focused, deft at juggling multiple projects, an experienced fundraiser, and someone with a brain invigorated by dynamic working environments.

Anyone who experiences the hard work of nonprofits has an inkling of the talents required to do the job. At the top of the list: deep listening, successful fundraising, strategic planning, effective project management, an ability to prioritize—and then reprioritize—tasks and projects and, in the case of WCM, a knack for seeking volunteers who love working with students on their writing assignments.

Shan is all this. It's her nature to respect the work others have done, then embellish and strengthen it, all with the goal of helping students become confident and competent writers, and ultimately, think critically and communicate effectively through writing.

With an extraordinary appreciation for Cassie’s work in evolving our program beyond our wildest dreams, the WCM board is thrilled to welcome our new Executive Director, Shan Rao.

But there’s more! Thank you to Kat Jackson, WCM’s outgoing Missoula & Ravalli Coordinator (and before that, WCM’s inaugural intern!) of four years, who will depart at the end of this school year. She was pivotal in helping to grow Missoula & Ravalli programming, not to mention grant and fundraising efforts, all while gracing our organization with her creative thinking, storytelling, and innovative approaches to her work. Kat, you will be missed!

In her stead, we welcome Becca Escobedo, WCM’s new Missoula & Ravalli coordinator! Becca’s passion for volunteerism and K-12 programming will be pivotal in continuing the strong relationships WCM has established in Missoula and the Bitterroot Valley.

And thank you to Jeanne Wdowin, our Flathead coordinator, always going above and beyond, who will continue her effective and caring work, and whose snack basket for coaches keeps us all coming back for more.

As always, WCM’s staff is supported by a dedicated board of directors. Together, we look forward to sustaining coaching’s impact on Montana students for years to come.

--Rita Braun, Writing Coaches of Montana Board Director

Writing Coaches of Montana is proud to be endorsed by the
[Montana Association of Teachers of English Language Arts](#).

Contact us:
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