2025 Annual Report

50 years of AWARE

A beacon of light. A legacy of hope.

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We are now one of Montana's largest employers, with a robust team of over 1,000 employees, serving all 56 counties.

As I reflect on last year, I am incredibly proud of our teams' resilience and their ability to adapt to changing circumstances. I am encouraged by our unwavering commitment to our clients and our efforts to ensure they can live full, rich, and independent lives. We continue to set the standard for excellent care delivery.

The changing healthcare and financial landscape has challenged many healthcare providers. For years, AWARE has stepped up where others couldn't to ensure services continue in communities across Montana. We know that our size is an advantage, allowing us to add services and programs and helping us maintain, and even improve, access and quality.

In 2025, we integrated the brain injury services from Liberty Place in Whitehall and the behavioral and mental health services from Western Montana Mental Health Center (WMMHC).

We are now one of Montana's largest employers, with a robust team of over 1,000 employees, serving all 56 counties. Together, with our staff, community partners, donors, and families, we are creating a brighter future for Montana.

As we look forward to 2026, I am excited about what lies ahead. We will celebrate 50 years of impact and work toward an even brighter future for AWARE, our staff, our clients, their families, and the communities we serve.

Thank you for taking the time to read AWARE's annual report. We hope you will join us in 2026 as we celebrate our 50th Anniversary.

Sincerely,

MATT BUGNI
CEO

A beacon of light.
A legacy of hope.

New in 2025

Joining Forces with Liberty Place and Western Montana Mental Health Center

Last year, AWARE made changes to our service lines by combining forces with Liberty Place and Western Montana Mental Health Center to ensure the long-term sustainability of services for those seeking behavioral and mental healthcare in Montana. Adding Liberty Place expands the reach of people affected by brain injury. It was a natural extension of our mission, allowing us to provide even more comprehensive support to individuals striving for greater independence while honoring Liberty Place's legacy.

In May, AWARE and WMMHC announced the acquisition of WMMHC's services to build a stronger organization that will offer a comprehensive range of mental health, disability, and early intervention support. Although some aspects of our original plan changed, AWARE's dedication to WMMHC's staff and clients remained unchanged.

In 2025, we onboarded nearly all of WMMHC's staff, clients, and programs. Some transitions occurred quickly, while others are taking more time to ensure we do things at the highest quality. We understand the urgent need for mental health, substance use, and behavioral support, and we remain committed to doing what we can to maintain and even expand access across the state.

New Services

Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH)

PATH is a program we adopted from WMMHC to offer outreach, mental health services, and housing support to individuals with serious mental illness who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. We now operate 21 clinics across eight counties, from Libby to Bozeman and Hamilton.

Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Services

We operate a residential treatment center in Missoula and outpatient programs and treatment options for adults with addiction to alcohol or drugs in Missoula, Helena, and Kalispell.

Jail Diversion

AWARE received a grant to provide mental health and medication management services in Ravalli County, aiming to divert individuals from jail.

Crisis Stabilization Homes

AWARE acquired four crisis stabilization facilities in Hamilton, Missoula, Polson, and Kalispell to provide short-term, intensive inpatient support for adults experiencing a life-threatening crisis.

Adult Foster Care

AWARE adopted contracts to provide Adult Foster Care for individuals experiencing mental health symptoms.

Brain Injury Services

Through our newly acquired residential facility in Whitehall, individuals living with traumatic brain injuries receive 24/7 personalized care, skill-building programs, and meaningful activities such as art, gardening, and community engagement as we support them on their journey to recovery and independence.

System of Care

AWARE and partners in Missoula County received a federal grant to help youth transition between services more quickly, keep kids in the community, involve youth and families in care planning, and lower the chances of crises and hospital stays.

Crisis Diversion

AWARE received a grant from WMMHC in Missoula County to identify and assist adults in accessing community treatment who are at risk of hospitalization for mental health needs

Mental Health Adult Day Treatment

AWARE expanded services to include day treatment, offering group and individual therapy to help people manage their mental health symptoms and develop skills and knowledge to achieve or maintain independent living.

Who We Are & What We Do

AWARE is Montana's trusted nonprofit leader for community-based care.

Many identify AWARE as an organization serving individuals with disabilities, serving children, adults, and families, guiding them through life's challenges and celebrating their victories, and that is a big part of what we do. But we've also grown and expanded our services because the path to independence affects people of all types in every community.

We've never wavered from our mission to help people live independent lives. Whether mental health services, Early Head Start, homeless support programs, vocational programs, or early intervention, AWARE provides a place where all are welcomed, supported, and empowered.

CELEBRATING 1976 2026 FIFTY YEARS

Our Services

- **Adult and Youth Residential Services** provides community-based living services, group homes, and supported living programs for adults with developmental disabilities, mental health challenges, and medical needs. We also offer residential care for children and teens with mental health challenges, developmental disabilities, or autism.
- **Applied Behavior Analysis** supports individuals facing behavioral challenges, autism spectrum disorder, emotional disturbances, and developmental disabilities.
- **Brain Injury Services** provides residential settings in Whitehall, for individuals who receive 24/7 personalized care, skill-building programs, and meaningful activities.
- **Care Coordination and Case Management** coordinates physical and mental health care, assesses individual needs, creates care plans, and connects individuals to services.
- **Center for Excellence** is a private school in Anaconda, helping children of all ages and abilities reach their full potential.
- **Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic** provides mental health and substance use services, ensuring high-quality care for underserved populations.

- **Children's Advocacy Center** in Lewis and Clark County provides a safe, supportive space and a multidisciplinary group of experts who evaluate cases of abuse and support affected children and families.
- **Crisis Intervention** provides immediate, compassionate support to access urgent mental health care, crisis counseling, or connection to resources.
- **Developmental Disability Services** helps individuals build independence and achieve goals with personalized support and guidance.
- **Early Head Start** provides early childhood education for underserved children and their families from birth to age 3 in Butte, Whitehall, Helena, Belgrade, and Billings.
- **Individual, Group, and Family Therapy** are outpatient services that include case management, home support services, applied behavior analysis, and therapy.
- **Home Support Services** assists individuals in finding and maintaining stable housing while receiving the treatment they need.
- **Medication Management and Psychiatric Services** for adults and youth, supporting individuals with mental health concerns, our team develops a personalized treatment plan through in-person visits or telepsychiatry.
- **Mental Health Adult Day Treatment** helps people manage their mental health symptoms and develop skills and knowledge to achieve or maintain independent living.
- **PACT - Program for Assertive Community Treatment** offers 24/7 community-focused care for adults with severe mental illnesses who struggle with traditional outpatient treatment.
- **PATH - Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness** offers a range of support to individuals with serious mental illness who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
- **School-Based Services** provides school-based mental health services to help children overcome challenges, build confidence, and succeed academically and socially.
- **Social Skills Squad** is a school-based program in Helena guiding enrolled children through life's social challenges with care and compassion.
- **Substance Use Counseling** provides licensed addiction counselors who offer individual, group, and family support, ensuring you get the care you need.
- **Therapeutic Recreation Services** provides a supportive, evidence-based approach to improving your physical, mental, and social well-being.

Our Impact

AWARE proudly served **5,772 individuals** in 2025.

Outpatient Offices

- Anaconda
- Belgrade
- Billings
- Butte
- Great Falls
- Hamilton
- Helena
- Kalispell
- Libby
- Missoula

AWARE serves all **56 Counties**.

* Unable to report the exact number of people served

- 1-9 SERVED
- 10-24 SERVED
- 25-49 SERVED
- 50-199 SERVED
- 200-499 SERVED
- 500+ SERVED

AWARE OFFICE

How We Deliver Services

Support in Schools

AWARE works with 40 schools to provide school-based services, including 48 Comprehensive School and Community Treatment teams (CSCT) that support 783 students.

BRAIN INJURY SERVICES

Janelle's Journey of Resilience

Success looks different for every person we serve. For some, it means maintaining as much independence as possible with the right supports. For others, it means moving into more independent living or returning home and reconnecting with their community. Regardless of the goal, we measure success by everyone's progress, growth, and quality of life.

In 2009, Janelle was a high school junior when she experienced a traumatic brain injury. Six years later, she started AWARE's program at Liberty Place. Initially, the transition was tough. Being far from her family and familiar surroundings made it challenging to adapt to a new routine and reality.

With patience, time, and steady encouragement, Janelle found her footing. She began to realize that rebuilding her life was possible. Reflecting on her journey, Janelle shares, "Liberty Place helped me know that I could and would come back better than I ever was."

Through meaningful relationships with peers, staff, and her family, Janelle kept building confidence and independence. In 2020, she reached a major milestone by moving back to her home community.

Today, she lives independently, works part-time as a CNA and Activity Assistant, and continues to build strong relationships. Her journey is a shining example of how AWARE strives every day to help people achieve their highest level of independence and enjoy a better quality of life.

*** Liberty Place supported 20 residents in 2025.**

PACT SUPPORT

Karen Grows Stronger through Art

*** In 2025, PACT served 114 people. 92% found housing, and 98% participated in community activities.**

When Karen started with AWARE, she faced challenges with social skills, self-esteem, depression, and mania. She lost her motivation to pursue artistic endeavors and to embrace her identity as an artist.

Through the PACT program, she was able to access therapists, case management, medication management, and peer support. She worked hard on her treatment and mental health, and with support, she regained the self-esteem and strength needed to build a meaningful relationship with her partner, Pablos.

Karen has become a key member of our weekly Art Group, always motivating both clients and staff to explore their creative sides. She describes herself as “creatively pushy,” inspiring those around her to discover their artistic potential.

Sometimes, Karen struggles to stay motivated to paint. When that happens, she works with her case manager to process her feelings and regain focus, and they set small, achievable goals together.

Recently, Karen showcased her artwork in her first gallery exhibition. She also presented her art at the Helena Open House with AWARE staff, clients, and community members.

Reflecting on her journey, Karen shared, “I would not have had the support I needed without the PACT team. They respected my decisions and offered help whenever I needed it. My support staff has been instrumental in helping me reach my goals.”

Karen hopes others will see more of who she is, a fantastic artist, community member, partner, and more.

We are so proud of Karen and the progress she has made.

THE CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE

Dan Dan's Next Chapter

Dan's journey is one of determination, creativity, and growth. He was a trailblazer as the first graduate of AWARE's Center for Excellence (CFE) after it became a private school, and his transition to AWARE's adult services marks a new and exciting chapter in his life.

Dan Dan has been part of AWARE's youth group homes for over a decade and maintains strong connections with staff and peers. The transition to adult services was initially difficult, especially being away from family and having to follow new rules. Nonetheless, Dan Dan gradually found a second family among the team members who supported him, some of whom have been with him from the start.

Dan Dan's creativity thrived, as shown in his detailed cityscapes for science fairs and his unique Ghostbusters-inspired drawings. His artistic talent and passion for dance highlight aspects of his personality and inspire those around him.

Graduating from high school was one of Dan Dan's proudest accomplishments, and he considers it a major achievement. "It feels like being honored, kind of like a mayor," he said, beaming with pride.

*** In 2025, the Center for Excellence supported 45 students.**

RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

Jack's Journey to Stardom

We all have our dream goals in life, those aspirations that fuel our passions and keep us motivated. Jack had dreams too – he wanted to become a famous singer.

Jack's journey started a few years ago when he courageously enrolled in singing lessons, opening up a world of possibilities. With the help of instructors, he worked to expand his vocal range. The progress has been remarkable, as he can now hit notes much higher than he ever thought possible.

But Jack's determination doesn't stop there. He embarked on an exciting journey of songwriting. Creating his own songs has been a deeply personal and creative process. It allows him to express his thoughts, emotions, and experiences in a way that reflects his unique voice.

For Jack, singing is more than just a skill he's developing. It's a powerful way to boost his self-confidence. Through this musical journey, he's learning to manage his anxiety and fully embrace his natural singing ability. Yet he's resilient, and with his instructors' support, he's making significant progress toward leaving his difficulties and past hardships behind.

*** AWARE helped 224 people through a variety of residential services for individuals with developmental disabilities, mental health challenges, and medical needs.**

INDEPENDENT LIVING SUPPORT

Jean's Persistence Pays Off

Sometimes it takes time to reach your goals. But if you keep going, you will succeed.

Jean Lozard came to AWARE at 11 to live in an AWARE youth group home. In the spring of 2022, Jean graduated from high school and moved into an AWARE townhome. Here, he has the necessary supports in place to help him live as independently as possible.

He leaves a lasting impression on everyone around him and was even honored with AWARE's "Independent Spirit" award at the Unconditional Care Award Banquet a few years ago. He continues to do well and is living a full life. We are very proud of Jean and honored to be part of his journey.

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Executive Leadership

Matt Bugni
Chief Executive Officer

Leighann Fogerty Knight
Chief Operating Officer

Francine Cooper
Chief Financial Officer

Celebrating 50 Years of AWARE

In 2026, AWARE is celebrating 50 years of transforming lives, fostering independence, and keeping people in their communities rather than in institutions.

AWARE's history is defined by moments of transformation, resilience, and unwavering commitment to ensuring access to services. We see our progress and impact every day from the smiles and breakthroughs of the people we serve. There are also larger organization milestones that show how we've risen to meet the challenges ahead, grown, touched lives, and shaped a brighter future for individuals, families, and communities across Montana.

OUR JOURNEY

1974
A group of parents in Anaconda wanted to develop employment opportunities for their children with disabilities.

1976
AWARE is officially incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

1980
Achieved CARF accreditation, a testament to our commitment to providing the highest quality care.

1990
Expanded to serve youth in residential care, making a broader impact in the lives of Montana's children.

1998
Awarded Early Head Start funding and opened the first center in Butte, providing families with the support they need for healthy early childhood development.

2000
Began offering case management services, supporting individuals and families on their journey toward independence

2010
Pioneered Montana's first residential autism services, ensuring no family feels alone.

2014
Opened the Center for Excellence in Anaconda, a space dedicated to education, support, and growth for those with developmental disabilities.

2018
Launched Program for Assertive Community Treatment (PACT), bringing intensive mental health support directly to those in need, fostering stability and well-being in the community.

2023
Earned Cognia accreditation for the Center for Excellence, a symbol of our dedication to providing exceptional educational opportunities and care.

2024
Began Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic pilot project located in Helena, expanding barrier-free services to those in need of mental and behavioral healthcare.

2025
Acquired Liberty Place and Western Montana Mental Health Center's services and programs to ensure critical services remain for the people who need them.

2026
Celebrate 50 years of transforming lives and fostering independence for those with disabilities.

50 years of AWARE

2021
Started Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (FACT) services to empower families to heal, grow, and thrive together, providing strength and resilience in challenging times.

AWARE's growth demonstrates the strong partnerships we've built in local communities.

We are stepping up where others cannot to fill a critical gap for families by expanding our services and outreach.

As we reflect on our history, AWARE is more committed than ever to championing independence and connection. Together, we can illuminate the future for our families and communities across the state, ensuring our work resonates for the next 50 years.

AWARE 50TH ANNIVERSARY

What's Next in 2026

As we look ahead to 2026, we feel a sense of pride and anticipation.

Throughout the year, we will celebrate our history and every life touched by our efforts, working toward brighter futures for generations ahead.

We will host events throughout 2026 to celebrate with friends, donors, community leaders, past and present staff, and many others who have been part of our 50 years of service, and who will help us build the next 50.

We are especially excited for our Anniversary Gala, so mark your calendars for an event you don't want to miss.

50 years of AWARE Annual Gala

AWARE 50th Anniversary Gala

MAY 1, 2026
6:00 PM

Butte, Montana

GOLF SCRAMBLE

Of course, we will also have our UCC Banquet in June, the Annual Golf Scramble at Old Works Golf Club in July 2026, and the Festival of the Trees in November.

To learn more or become a sponsor for any of our events, contact Allyssa Gapinski at **agapinski@aware-inc.org**.

2026 will be more than just celebrating.

We are setting our sights toward the next 50, ensuring our work supports future generations.

We will focus on deepening community partnerships. A fundamental part of our work is to keep people out of institutions and instead in the communities they know, close to friends, family, and support systems. It's the most cost-effective way to deliver services and achieve the best possible outcomes for individuals.

We also understand that external factors such as Medicaid reimbursement rates, market fluctuations, and workforce shortages will always influence our ability to sustain our work. However, innovation is usually generated locally. Creating and applying effective and creative solutions is best done within communities.

For 50 years, AWARE has been part of community-based solutions. As we introduce new services and expand into more towns across the state, these partnerships will become even more essential. You will see us participating in coalitions, engaging with local leaders, and bringing together families and individuals to listen, learn, and build the trust needed to offer stability and hope to those who need it.

Together with donors, partners, family, state and local agencies, elected officials, staff, and many others, we can shape a bright future for Montana.

To support this work, you can:

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JOIN OUR TEAM

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