

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 19, 2021

Making Montana Wins Montana Library Association's Program of the Year Award 2020

Kalispell, MT – In November 2020, ImagineIF Libraries' *Making Montana* collaborative project was selected as winner of Montana Library Association's Program of the Year Award 2020. Making Montana is a free two-day event designed to inspire the next generation of innovators and highlight 21st century skills. Last year's event took place February 28-29, 2020 at the Flathead County Fairgrounds. This celebration of invention and creativity is a result of a collaboration between ImagineIF Libraries, Flathead Valley Community College, Kalispell Chamber of Commerce, Job Service Kalispell and Montana West Economic Development.

The Program of the Year Award is conferred on a project, program, or innovation run by a Montana library, library system, or library network that is not a K-12 school library, which demonstrates excellence. The award is based on activities or accomplishments executed in the previous year (Jan 1-Dec 31, 2020) and demonstrates the following:

- Fosters relationships and networking either within a given community or across multiple communities
- Addresses a special need or challenge in a community
- Represents exemplary service or programming
- Has a measurable impact
- Demonstrates good project planning and development
- Introduces a new approach or expands a current practice
- Engages the community in planning, sponsorship or active participation

ImagineIF Libraries' Senior Librarian, Megan Glidden, accepted the award on behalf of ImagineIF due to her role as lead event coordinator. Megan told the Montana Library Association upon receiving the award, "Making Montana is more than a job or career fair, it is about inspiration for the future through hands-on learning."

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, Making Montana has been discontinued in 2021. ImagineIF Libraries and their partners regret this change of events, but feel positive about the four years in which the team was able to bring Making Montana to the community. At Making Montana's launch in 2017, the two-day event drew in 2,312 people in attendance. The project continued to draw in more people, with 2,934 total people in attendance in 2020.

ImagineIF and its partners observed that the project also created new economic development opportunities in the community, including the *Pathfinder* program, a partnership between ImagineIF Libraries and Job Service Kalispell. People seeking job assistance can now book a time with Job Service staff by filling out a form on ImagineIF's website at www.imagineiflibraries.org/jobservice. This partnership addresses the need for more job skill development and career coaching for the emerging workforce, a gap in services that became apparent during Making Montana. Program partners will use the valuable lessons learned at Making Montana to improve workforce conditions in Flathead County long into the future.

ImagineIF Libraries encourages exploration, fresh ideas and self-discovery. ImagineIF offers activities and services for all ages. For more information, visit www.imagineiflibraries.org.

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