



MONTANA LEARNING CENTER

at Canyon Ferry Lake

Dear Friend,

As we wrap up another incredible year at the Montana Learning Center (MLC), we have much to be thankful for, most especially you and MLC's other financial supporters.

Thanks to your generosity, 2022 was another banner year for MLC! This past summer, we hosted a record 550 campers, added another telescope to our state-of-the-art observatory, held three well-attended public stargazing events, expanded our outreach efforts across the state and, for the second year in a row, hosted "One Rockin' Weekend," our adult science camp.

We have always known that we employ the finest teachers in Montana for our programs, but it's great to see those teachers recognized more broadly for their outstanding work. Two of our NASA/NESSP-funded educators, both of whom teach our online standards training programs for Montana K-12 science teachers, earned national recognition this year. Fifth grade teacher Chris Pavlovich of East Side Intermediate School in Livingston earned the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST). The PAEMST is the highest honor bestowed by the United States government specifically for K-12 science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and/or computer science teaching. In addition, Arlee High School science teacher Bill Stockton was named the 2022 Montana Teacher of the Year. Stockton teaches high school science on the Flathead Indian Reservation in Northwestern Montana. Both teachers have been instrumental in growing MLC's teacher training programs, and we hope you'll join us in congratulating them for their well-deserved recognition!



As a part of our NASA/NESSP programming, Montana Aerospace Scholars (MAS) is a program hosted by MLC in partnership with the University of Washington and the Museum of Flight. The MAS program provides high school students free, online aerospace training. Upon successful completion of the online portion of the program, students are invited to a summer residency at MLC. To further encourage Montana students to participate in and complete the MAS program, MLC is now partnering with Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University to offer scholarships exclusively to graduates of the MAS program.

Our astronomy program—a relatively new program area for MLC—dramatically expanded in 2022. We are reaching more students than ever before with our cutting-edge telescopes and added a new robotic telescope to our observatory. The new telescope is a wide-field astrograph to give us broader, more detailed, color images of the night sky. And MLC's astronomical expertise is getting noticed! When the James Webb Telescope started sending its stunning images back to Earth this summer, we were honored that media turned to us to help interpret the pictures.

This summer, we reopened our observatories to the public in the form of three "Beyond the Big Sky" public observing nights, which included lectures by astronomy experts. Each event sold out, with nearly half of the attendees coming from outside the greater Helena area. Based on our 2022 events, we plan to host six such evenings in 2023 to accommodate more people. If you haven't joined us for one of these very special events, we invite you to come experience the wonders of the night skies over Canyon Ferry Lake! Keep an eye on our Facebook page for more details.





You have been instrumental to building our outstanding programming, and, while that will always remain paramount to our mission, we now need your help with some practical matters to keep our camps running smoothly and open to all who want to attend, regardless of their financial need.

Our camper numbers continue to break records, and, while that's wonderful news, that growth also raises a variety of challenges. Our current kitchen is one such challenge. The kitchen was built in the late 1990s to serve 20-30 campers each week. Thanks to our dedicated staff, we managed to serve, on average, nearly three times that number of campers each week, but it's extremely clear that we cannot continue this way. **We desperately need to remodel the kitchen before camps resume in June of 2023!** We simply can't serve the best camp food around with our existing facility! We have generous donors who have offered to **match donations dollar-for-dollar, up to \$12,500**, towards this remodel. That means for every dollar you give, MLC will get two dollars towards remodeling its kitchen.

Our camper scholarship program is another challenge tied to our growth. As camper attendance increases, so do our scholarship needs. Currently, roughly 10% of our campers receive some level of scholarship funds to attend our camps. That translates to about \$30,000 each summer. But that is just a fraction of the need. Because we never want finances to be a barrier to students who want to attend our premier science education camps, we want to expand the number of scholarships we can offer. That's where you come in.



Would you consider supporting us in meeting these two challenges? Gifts can be made to MLC using either the enclosed envelope or through our website, www.montanalearning.org/donate. If you want to support either the kitchen remodel or the expansion of our camper scholarship program, please write that on your check or indicate that during the online donation process. Or, if you prefer to allow MLC to use your donation where the need is greatest, a gift to our general fund would be most appreciated. Recurring gifts or planned gifts, such as a bequest in your will or trust, have an even farther-reaching impact. If that is of interest, please contact me by phone or email to discuss the available options.

Thanks to friends like you, our exceptional programs and outreach will continue to have a broad and lasting impact on Montana's students as they explore the possibilities their futures can hold.

Sincerely,

Ryan Hannahoe
(406) 475-3638
Executive Director

