

# *Our Path Forward*

*2021 Annual Member Report*



**Blackfoot**  
Communications



# 2021 Board of Trustees

*Pictured left to right: Butch Friede, Stuart Morton, Cindy Lewis, Tom Eggensperger, Geoffrey Wilson, Jim Newberg, Les Iverson, John Teague, Jim Blush.*



**Tom Eggensperger**

*President*

District 8:

Noxon, Heron,  
Thompson Falls,  
Trout Creek

**Geoffrey Wilson**

*Vice President*

District 9:

Haugan, De Borgia,  
Saltese, St. Regis, Superior

**Cindy Lewis**

*Secretary/Treasurer*

District 1:

Condon, Seeley Lake

**Jim Blush**

District 7:

Charlo, Moiese,  
Plains, Paradise

**Ross 'Butch' Friede**

District 2:

Drummond, Gold Creek,  
Hall, Philipsburg

**Les Iverson**

District 3:

Avon, Elliston, Potomac,  
Greenough, Ovando

**Stuart Morton**

District 5:

St. Ignatius, Ravalli

**Jim Newberg**

District 4:

Arlee, Dixon

**John Teague**

District 6:

Alberton, Alberton South,  
Alta, Clinton, Powell (ID)

# Ahead of the Curve

## A Message from Tom Eggensperger, Board President

### *Greetings,*

We hope 2020, despite all the challenges, has ended with you healthy and optimistic for the future.

At Blackfoot, despite the many challenges of the pandemic, we had another strong year! Thanks to your cooperative's strong leadership, team members maintained essential services, met the new challenges of education which relied heavily on remote learning and helped many businesses change their networks and systems to allow workers to stay at home.

A top priority was the safety of our employees and our customers. Starting from day one, Blackfoot initiated measures to ensure safety and also provide a productive work environment. I'm thankful that a large number of our employees quickly transitioned to a work from home setting. At the same time, we made significant progress in our plan to deliver fiber optic connections to members. All of this was no small feat; I am proud of the stellar leadership of CEO Jason Williams, and the dedication and skills of all of the Blackfoot team, that we were able to stay ahead of the curve in meeting all of the challenges of 2020.

As your board of trustees, we began meeting remotely and that extended in to 2021. Our immediate focus was to help our communities, with donations to food banks, free broadband hot spots and free laptops to students in need to ensure they stayed up to date in their school work. We also had to make the difficult decision to cancel last year's annual meeting so we look forward to seeing all of you this year on October 9th, please save the date as together we have much to celebrate!

On behalf of your Board, I want to thank you for your continued support of your cooperative. Blackfoot continues to be one of the best run cooperatives in the nation and your support and loyalty is the key element in maintaining those high standards.



**Tom Eggensperger, Board President**





*Construction team members help with a neighborhood community project.*



**In 2020:**



**592**  
CONSTRUCTION  
PROJECTS COMPLETED



**20,723**  
IT HELP CALLS  
RESOLVED

# Mapping the Future

## A Letter from Jason Williams, Chief Executive Officer

*Dear Cooperative Members,*

The COVID-19 pandemic made access to reliable, affordable broadband Internet a priority more than ever before! Whether it is working from home, home-schooling your children, or streaming movies and your favorite TV shows, broadband is an essential component of our everyday lives. I am pleased to report that despite the challenges created by the pandemic, Blackfoot plowed hundreds of miles of fiber cable and connected hundreds of cooperative members to its fiber-based broadband Internet services. In addition, we added nearly 800 new cooperative members in 2020 (bringing total active membership up to more than 13,000)! We invested nearly \$20 million in broadband infrastructure assets in 2020 as we continue to fulfill our vision of connecting every cooperative member to fiber-based broadband Internet!

While remaining financially strong, we continued to make a difference in our communities. Whether it is sponsoring community events (virtually or in-person), awarding scholarships to deserving students, or supporting anchor

institutions (like hospitals, schools and community centers), Blackfoot continues to find ways to support the communities we serve. At the same time, we continue to strive to provide better products and services. For example, we have deployed thousands of new WiFi modems over the last two years. These modems provide a better in-home connectivity experience for our customers, enabling you to connect to the Internet wirelessly and seamlessly no matter where you are at in your home or business.

As we head into 2021, "Our Path Forward" is more clear than ever: invest in fiber for our future, grow the cooperative membership, and provide amazing

customer experiences to our members! We look forward to continuing to serve you.



*Best,*

**Jason Williams, CEO**



**257**

MILES OF FIBER



**1,027**

FIBER DROPS



**~800**

NEW MEMBER-OWNERS



# Serving our Community



## LOCAL HOSPITAL DONATIONS:

Our trustees partnered with Co-Bank to give \$15,000 to medical facilities to help ease the financial strain of COVID-19.



## REIMAGINING RURAL:

Blackfoot was pleased to support the Seeley Lake Community Foundation participate in the Reimagining Rural program through a grant they received to help create a stronger community.



## HELMVILLE LABOR DAY RODEO:

The biggest little rodeo in Montana was a welcome respite this year. One of team Blackfoot's favorite sponsorships every year, it is a don't miss event.



## OPEN AIR SPONSORSHIP:

Thanks to the Philipsburg Arts Fund for hosting a local artist through the Open Air Program this year. Blackfoot's sponsorship was a great opportunity to support local arts and enjoy the fresh air.

In 2020, Blackfoot was proud to contribute more than **\$350,000** to the **communities** we serve. Together, we faced the impact of COVID-19 and navigated to **keep community traditions intact** and to help those **most in need**. We continue to be inspired by the many stories we hear about **neighbors helping each other** in unique and special ways. It's been a year to remember for all of us and we look forward to 2021 with great anticipation on **connecting** and **building relationships** with you, our member-owners.



### **FREE HOT SPOTS:**

We turned up free service in Philipsburg and St. Ignatius for access to reliable high speed broadband.



### **MUSIC EDUCATION:**

Blackfoot is the inaugural sponsor of the MSO family concert aimed at introducing students to music education.



### **ZOOM TRAINING:**

Blackfoot made a significant contribution to the 22nd Annual August Institute to ensure our dedicated teachers had free access to learn tips and tools for success in the digital classroom environment.



### **EDUCATION IS KEY:**

Education remains a top priority and this year we proactively reached out to educators and students to ensure they had the tools for success. Thanks to all of you who went above and beyond to help understand and meet the needs of our future generation.

Team members celebrate  
National Co-Op Month in October.



**250**

TEACHER SCHOLARSHIPS  
TO THE AUGUST INSTITUTE

**2 FREE**

HIGH SPEED  
HOT SPOTS

**\$31,500**

IN LOCAL  
SCHOLARSHIPS

**EDUCATION IMPACTS**



# Financial Performance

We are pleased to inform the members of Blackfoot Telephone Cooperative, Inc. that we have completed the 2020 audit of the cooperative and its subsidiaries. We have issued an unmodified opinion dated February 24, 2021, that states that the audited consolidated balance sheets as of December 31, 2020 and 2019, and the related consolidated statements of income, comprehensive income, members' equity and cash flows for the years then ended, present fairly, in all material respects, the consolidated financial position of the cooperative in conformity with accounting

principles generally accepted in the United States of America. The audited financial statements are available at the cooperative office in Missoula for inspection by members of the cooperative.

We also have the responsibility to report on various matters to the Board of Trustees that include any discovery of material errors, irregularities or possible illegal acts. We did not have any such findings in the course of our 2020 audit.

*Olsen Thielen & Co., Ltd, Roseville, Minnesota*

## Summary of Financial Results

**Blackfoot Telephone Cooperative, Inc. produced solid financial results in 2020.**

Cooperative  
Assets Grew to

**\$153M**

Liabilities  
Decreased to

**\$49M**

Member Equity  
Grew to

**\$104M**

Net Income  
Produced

**\$12.3M**

Plant Assets  
Invested

**\$19.3M**

Capital Credit  
Distributions Paid

**\$1.1M**

Debt  
Payments

**\$2.9M**

Increased  
Member Equity by

**\$11.5M**

# Here for You

Blackfoot Communications is more than your local broadband provider. We are here to support local business, unite our communities and collaborate to provide growth in ways that matter to you, our member-owners. In some ways, technology took a giant step forward during COVID-19 and we were pleased to offer our guidance in addition to our suite of products and services. Our consultative approach to serving customers is what sets us apart and honors our cooperative spirit.

## Let us know how we can help.

Here are a few services trending right now:

### **Residential Services:**

Learn more at [Blackfoot.com](https://Blackfoot.com)

### **Blackfoot Smart Home:**

Control your home from anywhere with ease.

[GoBlackfoot.com/App](https://GoBlackfoot.com/App)

### **Robocall Blocker:**

A free home service that blocks annoying calls that are generated from computer auto dialers, spammers, fraud calls and telemarketers.

### **Business Services:**

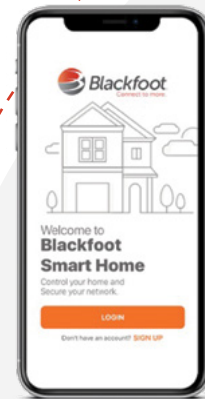
Learn more at [Blackfoot.com](https://Blackfoot.com)

### **Hosted VoIP Phone System:**

Upgrade your office phone system with no upfront cost. We make it easy to stay current and we handle all the upgrades and maintenance.

### **Managed Network Solutions:**

Let us engineer a solution to meet your unique business needs. Fiber, SD-WAN, Hosted Server, Remote Data Back Up and much more, all with 24/7 support.



## Our Mission:

We connect people,  
places and businesses

Sign up to receive regular news and  
tech tips from Blackfoot at:

[blackfootcommunications.com/subscribe](https://blackfootcommunications.com/subscribe)

## Connect with us:





Combining our **resources**,  
**expertise** and **innovation** for a  
**better future for all**



*Kris Sweeney*  
*Business Account Executive*

**\$8,000+**  
IN LIBRARY  
GRANTS

**\$15,000**  
TO LOCAL  
HOSPITALS

**\$350,000+**  
TOTAL COMMUNITY  
IMPACT

**COMMUNITY IMPACTS**



**Connect with us**



[GoBlackfoot.com/AnnualMeeting](http://GoBlackfoot.com/AnnualMeeting)