



# COOPERATIVE CONNECTION

SUMMER 2021 NEWSLETTER

Save  
the  
Date

## Blackfoot Annual Meeting Saturday, October 9, 2021



## Education Matters; A Top Priority Year-Round!



- **Scholarship Program:**

Blackfoot Trustees awarded \$32,500 to 32 local high school graduates for college tuition. To date, we have given more than \$530,000 to students who are making a difference already in the communities we serve.

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

- **Teacher Training:**

Registration is open and free for Blackfoot service area school teachers who sign up for the 23rd Annual August Institute Educators' Conference. The conference focuses on digital tips, and tools, mental health support and much more.

[wmplc.org](https://wmplc.org)

- **Library Support:** In June, Blackfoot awarded more than \$5,000 in grants to local libraries. We also celebrated the opening of the Blackfoot Communications Boardroom on the top floor at the new Missoula Public Library.

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



- **Customer Learning:**

Please visit our website for on demand videos free to members with timely topics such as password tips, cybersecurity information, what is fiber and much more.

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

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## TECH TIP

### STAY CYBER SAFE

#### Ransomware Protection Tips:

You can't turn on the news today without hearing about the perils of ransomware; a type of malware that infects your computer, accesses your personal information and asks for payment to have your files restored.

Here are tips to protect your home and business:

- **Stay up to date on your antivirus software and firewall protection!**  
It's key to maintain a strong firewall and to keep all software current.
- **Click Carefully!**  
Think twice before opening emails from an unknown sender and never open an attachment before verifying sender email.
- **Enable your pop-up blocker!**  
Pop-ups are often used by cyber criminals to infect computers. A pop up blocker will minimize your chance of accidentally clicking an infected ad.
- **Back up your files regularly!**  
Keep your photos, files and contacts safe by regularly backing up to an external hard drive or an online file storage service.

**Get more tech tips at**  
**[GoBlackfoot.com/TechTips](https://GoBlackfoot.com/TechTips)**

## Community Impacts



### FEDERAL ADVOCACY FOR OUR MEMBERS

Blackfoot is proud to participate in several federal programs devoted to serving community members who need a little extra assistance in staying connected. Please help us spread the word to ensure everybody has access to broadband services. Enrollment for the temporary Emergency Broadband Benefit is now open to help members struggling to stay connected. Blackfoot also participates in the Lifeline and E-rate programs.

**[GoBlackfoot.com/EBB](https://GoBlackfoot.com/EBB)**



### HELPING CAMP MAK A DREAM

Camp Mak A Dream turned 25 in 2020 and while we could not celebrate due to the pandemic we are helping them continue their mission to assist families battling cancer. The Camp, located in the beautiful Gold Creek area has served thousands of families. We were honored to lend our support to their Annual Lip Sync Battle fundraiser that brought in nearly \$50,000!

**[campdream.org](https://campdream.org)**

Need help for your community event  
or to request a donation?

**Visit [GoBlackfoot.com/Community](https://GoBlackfoot.com/Community)**



# United in Community



## OUR MISSION:

We connect people, places and businesses



## TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

*Kris Sweeney: your Business Account Executive.*

**Tip from Kris:** Did you know our amazing Technical Assistant Center (TAC) is open 24/7?  
"Customers have thanked me many times for our TAC team's help!"

**To reach the TAC team, call (406) 541-5072**



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## A Message From Jason Williams

**BLACKFOOT CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

### ***Dear Cooperative Member,***

As we head into summer, it is great to see life in Western Montana returning to normal. Not only do we have all the amazing outdoor activities, but with the COVID-19 pandemic hopefully behind us, we are able to once again enjoy the many parades, rodeos, fairs and festivals throughout our cooperative service territory. As you will see in this newsletter, we are busy carrying out our mission of connecting people, place and businesses, which includes Blackfoot supporting community events.

As with last summer, we continue to make good progress on replacing our aging copper network with fiber-based services, ensuring a better phone and Internet experience for you, our customers. This summer we are continuing to focus our construction efforts on the Thompson Falls/Trout Creek area as well as in St. Ignatius and portions of Charlo. We have plans to begin

building Plains in the summer of 2022, and many more cooperative areas in the years to come. Importantly, as Congress discusses a federal infrastructure package, Blackfoot is advocating that fiber-based broadband be included. If successful, this will enable us to bring fiber-based services to more of our cooperative areas sooner!

Lastly, I'm excited to have an opportunity to meet with you, our member owners, at our Annual Meeting scheduled for October 9th in Missoula. It

will be wonderful to reconnect with all of you and conduct important cooperative business.

***Enjoy the summer!***

