

# VALLEY NEWS

## 20 and done United Way chief retires



After nearly 20 years at the helm of the Gallatin United Way, Carol Townsend is calling it quits.

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Carol Townsend always wanted to retire at the top of her game. In three weeks when she leaves her post at the Executive Director of the Greater Gallatin United Way, she will be doing just that.

Still full of vim, vigor and a little vinegar, Townsend will say goodbye to the job she has known for almost 20 years on May 1.

"I always wanted to be the first one to know when I should leave," she said. "I wanted to go out with grace and dignity."

Just as she knows when to leave, Townsend knew decades ago that being the director of the Greater Gallatin United Way was

a post perfect for her.

"I was sitting in a United Way board meeting in 1993 when the director said she was going to retire in three years," Townsend said. "It was this total blast of an 'aha' moment. I want this job, I thought."

Everything Townsend did for those next three years was to make herself the perfect candidate for the job. She already worked as the director of Galavan. She served as a United Way board member. She also had tenacity, business savvy and a philanthropic heart.

In 1996, Townsend landed her dream job. Right away she introduced an atypical perspective to the non-profit world.

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"In my interview and ever since, I said if you don't run a good business first, you can't run a good non-profit," Townsend said.

That's a principle Townsend learned running a restaurant with her husband and opening a Patagonia store in Bozeman. Her business backbone grew the United Way from a \$200,000 non-profit in 1996 to currently operating with a \$1.4 million budget. That money is raised by annual gifts, grants and parent fees for after school programs.

A blossoming budget won't be Townsend's only legacy.

According to her board of directors, "Carol was especially gifted at recognizing emerging social needs in the community and connecting them to resources. Her talent helped build partnerships and her passion for collectively addressing issues proved effective."

In Belgrade, the Greater Gallatin United Way secured a \$115,000 grant for funding afterschool programs, one of

the paramount social needs Townsend identified.

Belgrade, Townsend says, is a prime example of how United Way has changed during her career.

"We've become much more intentional in how and where we invest," she said. "The other thing is there are seven people here who are working or volunteering on a regular basis instead of the original two. We're doing an awful, awful lot of things with the people we do have."

Townsend is a connector. The Early Childhood Community Council, for example, is a collaboration of teachers, administrators, daycare providers, health department

and mental health employees Townsend assembled to help families get their children ready for school.

"This is not easy work having all those partners together," Townsend said. "But it's the best work we could do. It's building the foundation for the next two or three decades."

Investing in kids in an investment in economics, too. Education is key to building a strong community. Accountability, transparency and trust are the three pillars of the

Greater Gallatin United Way.

Those are pieces of wisdom Townsend has been sharing with her successor, Danica Jamison, for the last

four months. Before being hired as the new Greater Gallatin United Way CEO, Jamison worked as the 4-H extension agent in Belgrade. Townsend says she is confident Jamison will be a strong, capable leader.

As for Townsend, she will stay busy in retirement. Her first job will be mother of the bride. In June, she will travel to California to see her daughter get married. Once she returns to Montana, she will work on her vegetable garden and perennial beds. And after a few months of personal time, it will be time to get back into the community.

"I can become a community volunteer and share whatever it is I have to share," Townsend said. "I'm going to take care of me for awhile. I'm overdue in that job."

Taking care of herself will be easier with the knowledge that she's leaving behind a thriving United Way.

"We have built a such a strong reputation in the community," Townsend said. "That's not changing with my retirement. Change is exciting. Change is good and healthy."

In honor of Townsend's service to the community, the Greater Gallatin United Way Board of Directors has established the Carol Townsend Legacy Fund.

The purpose of the fund is to provide long-term sustainable funding to address emerging needs and initial funding for unanticipated opportunities. Income generated from the Legacy Fund endowment will allow Greater Gallatin United Way to continue working on emerging, complex and significant issues today, tomorrow and well into the future.

To find out more about donating to the Carol Townsend Legacy Fund, call 587-2194