



Big Hearts Beat

WINTER 2024

Bezdicek Family Adventure of a Lifetime



As the first Big Hearts trip recipient of 2024, Maddy Bezdicek, accompanied by her parents, Bryan and Jami, and her brother Garrett on a 6-day Big Hearts under the Big Sky adventure with MOGA outfitter members Triple J Ranch in Augusta, MT.

Maddy was 17 when she was first diagnosed with an extremely rare form of liver cancer, and for the next two years she would be in and out of hospitals across the country for tests, chemo treatments, ultimately a full liver transplant in March of 2023, hospitalized recovery and more testing and chemo treatments. During this difficult period, Maddy relied on her Faith, love of the family, and her warrior spirit to see her and the family through these challenging times. A favorite verse of hers and one she draws strength from is Matthew 28:20 "Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Maddy and her family had been nominated for the Big Hearts trip when she was 17, but it would be two long years, and many trips in and out of hospitals, before she was able to take the trip. Drawing from the family's interest in all things outdoors, their trip centered around horseback riding (Maddy connected with a large sorrel, Rooster, and rode him every day), fly fishing, trap shooting and travels along the Sun River. MOGA members Kim and Ernie Barker with Triple J Ranch hosted the trip and provided a great experience. Some of the best moments came around the campfire while enjoying summer evenings along the Sun River.

If you want to hear more about Maddy's story and her experience with Big Hearts, join us at the 17th Annual Big Hearts Benefit Auction on January 18, 2025 where she will be a guest speaker.

Matthew 28:20 "Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

A Year of Making a Difference

Additional trips for this year included Staff Sergeant Christopher “Doc” Wright and Sergeant Major Charles “Chuck” Ritter, along with their families, on memorable elk hunts in appreciation of their dedicated service to our country. These deserving veterans shared the experience of Montana’s breathtaking outdoors and the camaraderie of the Big Hearts community at the West Creek Ranch in Emigrant, MT.

SSG Christopher “Doc” Wright



Hailing from Arkansas, SSG Wright, 44, served as a combat medic for nine years, deploying multiple times during the Global War on Terror. Throughout his career, he provided vital medical support under intense conditions, ensuring the well-being of fellow soldiers in combat zones. After sixteen years, he retired with a medical discharge due to injuries sustained in service. His commendable record notably includes a Purple Heart for wounds received in combat and the Army Commendation Medal with Valor, awarded for his bravery in the line of duty. Chris remains active in the veteran community, participating in service organizations and youth programs. He continues to inspire others with his resilience and dedication.



On this Big Heart’s trip, Chris was joined by his wife Brandy, and their son Jasper, for a 5-Day Guided Elk Hunt, a visit to Chico Hot Springs, horseback riding and shooting clays at the ranch, and a trip to Yellowstone National Park.

SGM Charles “Chuck” Ritter



SGM Ritter has dedicated over two decades of his life to the U.S. Army, enlisting in 1998 as a light infantryman. His commitment led him to pass the rigorous Army Special Forces Assessment and Selection in 2001, launching a prestigious career within the elite 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne). SGM Ritter’s career is marked by extensive experience, having deployed seventeen times, with twelve deployments involving combat operations. His valor and service have been recognized through numerous commendations, including the Silver Star Medal, Bronze Star for Valor, and an Army Commendation Medal for Valor. Additionally, he has earned three Purple Heart Medals among many other military honors.

SGM Ritter joined the Big Hearts family this October along with his wife Ines and son Ben, for a 5-Day Guided Elk Hunt, a visit to Chico Hot Springs, fishing, horseback riding and shooting clays at the ranch. They also enjoyed a day exploring Yellowstone National Park.



A Special Thank You!!

A special thank you to the MOGA Outfitters and Partners that contributed to the Big Heart's trips this year.



Montana Hunting Co. has been heavily involved in the Big Hearts program for years and 2024 was no different. For both SSG Wright and SGM Ritter's trips, Wayne Wilcox of Montana Hunting Co. served as the Outfitter of Record as they were each hosted by West Creek Ranch in Emigrant, MT. West Creek Ranch is a 6,600-acre working ranch that is bordered

by the Yellowstone River and Gallatin National Forest. Only 22 miles from the north entrance to Yellowstone National Park, West Creek's location offers the unique opportunity for the Big Hearts' trip recipients to not only enjoy prime hunting access on the ranch, but to also venture out to Yellowstone and Chico Hot Springs Resort if they wish.

JJJ Wilderness Ranch was a new contributor for Big Hearts this year hosting the Bezdicek family in July. Located in Augusta, Montana with easy access to the Bob Marshall Wilderness and the Sun River, Triple J offers scenic horseback rides and fishing access along the river, private views of Mortimer Peak, which stands at 5200 feet elevation, and is surrounded on 3 sides by Lewis & Clark National Forest. With additional opportunities to trap shoot, swim and so much more, Triple J provides the ultimate Montana getaway for these families.



Big Hearts' trips would not be possible without the generosity of MOGA's outstanding outfitters. The unmatched camaraderie and hospitality they provide for these deserving families, make these trips truly once-in-a-life-time experiences and imperative to the Big Hearts mission.



Fast Facts

- Big Hearts under the Big Sky was created in 2008 by Montana and Outfitters and Guides Association
- Big Hearts has served 98 families/groups totaling 500 people
- Involving 56 MOGA Outfitter businesses
- Accounts for over \$1.15M in donated Montana Outdoor activities and in-kind goods
- Only fully licensed, professional outfitters deliver Big Hearts Trips

Big Hearts Staff:

Mac Minard

Executive Director of Big Hearts

Will Israel

Executive Director of MOGA

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Operations Manager

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For more information:

Visit: bigheartsmt.org



OFFICIAL AMBASSADOR TRAINING

Send resumes
to
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**CHEVROLET GMC
OF HELENA**
A LITHIA STORE



Lithia

Partnership



Big Hearts under the Big Sky is excited to announce a new collaborative partnership with Lithia Chevrolet GMC of Helena.

Ryan Tuttle, General Manager of Lithia Chevrolet was quick to jump on board in support of the Big Hearts' mission, "Being that our workforce has multiple veterans, parents and outdoorswomen and men, Big Hearts was an obvious choice when it came to choosing an organization to lock arms with. We look forward to fostering this relationship long into the future and to help support these veterans and children in any way possible. We are grateful for all that the Big Hearts team does as they are truly the ones putting in the work for a wonderful cause!"

Not only has Lithia pledged their continued support for Big Hearts, but they have become a preferred partner with MOGA as well. "We love taking care of those who take care of our Montana community and are excited to provide savings to members of MOGA and Big Hearts as well as to their friends and family." This collaboration has fostered the opportunity to offer exclusive discounts for Big Hearts affiliates, MOGA members, business partners, and their family and friends. This discount will offer unmatched savings on new and used vehicles to everyone that is a part of the MOGA and Big Hearts community.

To kick off this extraordinary partnership, Lithia has also generously donated a 2006 Chevrolet Silverado 1500LT to be raffled in support of Big Hearts. For \$100 per ticket and only 300 tickets being sold, one lucky winner will become the new owner of this awesome truck. Fully inspected and with less than 100,000 miles, this is an incredible deal and opportunity for supporters to not only contribute to a great cause, but to have a 1 in 300 chance of leaving the Big Hearts Banquet in a new ride. The winner will be drawn at this years benefit Auction on January 18th, 2025. A special thanks to Lithia Chevrolet of Helena for going above and beyond with this contribution. Their support and commitment to this organization helps to ensure that more deserving individuals can continue to join the Big Hearts family.

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OF HELENA**
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See next page for details

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under the **BIG SKY**
MONTANA OUTFITTERS & GUIDES ASSOCIATION

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Winner will be drawn on
January 18, 2025
at the
Big Hearts Benefit Auction

ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT MONTANA OUTFITTERS AND GUIDES EDUCATION INSTITUTE

"BIG HEARTS UNDER THE BIG SKY" 501(C)(3) PROGRAM

For more information: visit www.bigheartsmt.org

*Terms & conditions apply



Volunteer Spotlight: *Capital High School*



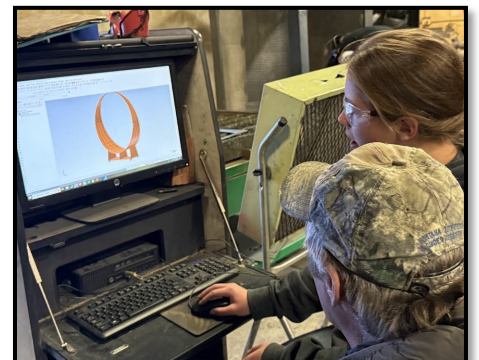
2025 will mark the 11th year of collaboration between Capital High School and Big Hearts. The partnership started in 2015, when Capital High's welding and machining students made 15 custom fly rods to present to Big Hearts trip recipients. The students' work not only gave them an opportunity to practice their fabrication skills, but allowed deserving individuals to benefit from their efforts.

Nationally-recognized Welding and Machining instructor Jim Weber has cultivated several classes of hardworking and philanthropic students, some of which, that continue to give back to Big Hearts long after graduation. "It's always a win-win," says Weber. "So many of our kids love to hunt and fish, and appreciate the opportunities the outdoors offer. They want to bless other people with the same things they've been blessed with." Since then, the relationship with Capital High has continued to grow and is an essential part of the Big Hearts' mission.



Throughout the years, Weber's students have created everything from knives, signs, and fly rods, to firepits and porch swings. These items are auctioned off at the annual Big Hearts Benefit Auction and bring in thousands of dollars for the organization each year. "Big Hearts is so grateful to the Capital High School students for the dedication and generosity they have shown the program. They have donated their time and talents and been a critical component in the success of the program. It's an honor to partner with them" says Executive Director, Mac Minard. These donations are not

only valuable in themselves as an auction item, but even more significantly in the time each student dedicates to designing and fabricating every detail. From garnering support from local businesses to cover the cost of materials to grinding and polishing every imperfection, these labors of love become much more than a school project. This commitment to give back to the community has made Jim Weber and his Machining and Welding class a staple of the Big Hearts Family.



Leave a Montana Legacy through Planned Giving

Planned giving provides you the opportunity to have a lasting and meaningful impact for years to come. During this season of giving, please consider including *Big Hearts under the Big Sky* in your charitable gifts. Your contribution will leave a legacy that will provide outdoor guided trips for military service men and women who provided extraordinary service and children who face life threatening illness for years to come.

There are multiple ways for you to be a part of Big Hearts:

Montana Endowment Tax Credit. Known as the Montana Endowment Tax Credit (METC) this gift option enables donors to pay less in Montana state income taxes when giving a planned gift to a qualified Montana charitable endowment. The year-end tax benefits from METC can be significant. Big Hearts under the Big Sky works closely with the Montana Community Foundation to manage your contributions to the endowment and ensure the right fit for each individual, family and organization's unique interests and financial circumstance.

Charitable Gift Annuity. With a charitable gift annuity, you make a gift of cash or appreciated property and the endowment pays you a fixed income for life. You receive an immediate charitable income tax deduction for the value of the gift. The remainder transitions to Big Hearts after you pass away as a gift in memory of you.

Did you know that Montana has one of the most attractive Endowment Tax Credits in the Nation?

Bequests. Remember Big Hearts under the Big Sky in your will or living trust with a gift that will live on. Many have found that including Big Hearts under the Big Sky as a beneficiary may help reduce tax liability for your family.

Gifts of Cash. Honor someone special to you with a cash donation in their name as an expression of love and respect that will last in perpetuity.

All gifts to *Big Hearts under the Big Sky* qualify as a tax deductible charitable donation.

For more information on leaving your legacy, please contact the Big Hearts office at (406) 449-3578



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The Impact of Giving

When *Big Hearts under the Big Sky* was conceived in 2008, we naively thought we would be the center of a wheel radiating good will. We quickly learned the families served by the Big Hearts program are the center and each spoke a means for others to give. We had inadvertently created a community based opportunity to give back, and we as Outfitters, are just a small part in that. Join us in giving back.



Plan your own Montana adventure!

Let one of our outfitters or guides show you the Montana adventure of your dreams!

<https://www.montanaoutfitters.org/search-results/>



Big Hearts under the Big Sky
2021 11th Avenue, Ste. 12
Helena, MT 59601
(406) 449-3578
Www.bigheartsmt.org



"Making a Difference, One Family at a Time"

You're
INVITED



Speaker: Christopher "Doc" Wright
Trip: October 2024



Speaker: Maddy Bezdioek
Trip: July 2024



Master of Ceremonies
Mac Minard



Keynote Speaker:
Mike Biller

BIG HEARTS BENEFIT AUCTION

January 18th, 2025

4:30pm - 10:00pm

Delta Hotel Helena Colonial
~ Helena, MT ~



Purchase Tickets Here