

## 2020 Retrospect

As we shutter 2020, we are filled with hope and gratitude. In spite of a global pandemic, together, we have accomplished much this year. Montanans are well known for our grit and innovative spirit and those traits have served us well. We've pivoted to virtual and outdoor meetings for work, events and activities as we navigate the new normal. Your cooperative has continued to anticipate and respond to our customers evolving needs, deliver 24/7 essential services and to support the communities we serve in ways that matter to you; our member-owners!

*Here are just a few ways we made a difference in 2020.*

## Education Matters; A Top Priority at Blackfoot!

- **Educator Access:** The **22nd Annual August Institute Educators' Conference** pivoted to a virtual Zoom event due to COVID-19. Blackfoot deepened our financial commitment to give **free access to 250 teachers and administrators** to learn digital tips and tools to teach on line learning in the fall. [wmplc.org](http://wmplc.org)
- **Sponsorship:** **University of Montana Repertory Theater;** our sponsorship of "Zombie Thoughts", a play about mental health and social anxiety allows **free shows** to all classrooms. [montanarepzombiethoughts.com](http://montanarepzombiethoughts.com)
- **Scholarship Program:** We awarded **\$31,500** to high school graduates for their

college tuition. To date our Trustees have awarded more than **\$500,000** to students who are served by Blackfoot. The deadline to apply for the next cycle is March 25, 2021. [Blackfoot.com/education](http://Blackfoot.com/education)

- **Library Grants:** Local libraries are vital community hubs that serve as centers for learning, professional development and of course reading. Annually, Blackfoot awards grant monies and in 2020, we awarded **more than \$8,000** to libraries. In August, we announced our support of the new **Missoula Public Library**, slated to open in early 2021. [Blackfoot.com/news](http://Blackfoot.com/news)



- **Free Wi-Fi Hot Spots & More:** In April we turned up **two mobile hot spots** in **Philipsburg** and **St. Ignatius** in response to the needs of students and community members who needed quick access to fast reliable broadband. [Blackfoot.com/news](http://Blackfoot.com/news)

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# TECH TIP

## STAY CYBER SAFE Five Family Friendly Tips

- **Don't share too much information.**  
Talk to kids about why it is important not to share personal things like address or phone numbers with strangers.
- **Be careful what you post.**  
Teach kids to be cautious about what they share online. Once something is posted, you can't control how others will use it and it can't be permanently deleted.
- **Only connect with people you know.**  
Help kids understand the importance of only connecting with people they know in real life and regularly check privacy settings to ensure strangers can't see their profiles.
- **Keep your location private.**  
Many apps, networks and devices that broadcast your location. Ensure these features are turned off.
- **Protect your password.**  
Create strong passwords and make sure you never share with others.

Need Help: We're here 24/7

**Blackfoot's Technical Support**  
**1-877-881-1155**

**Get more tech tips at**  
**[blackfoot.com/techtips](https://blackfoot.com/techtips)**

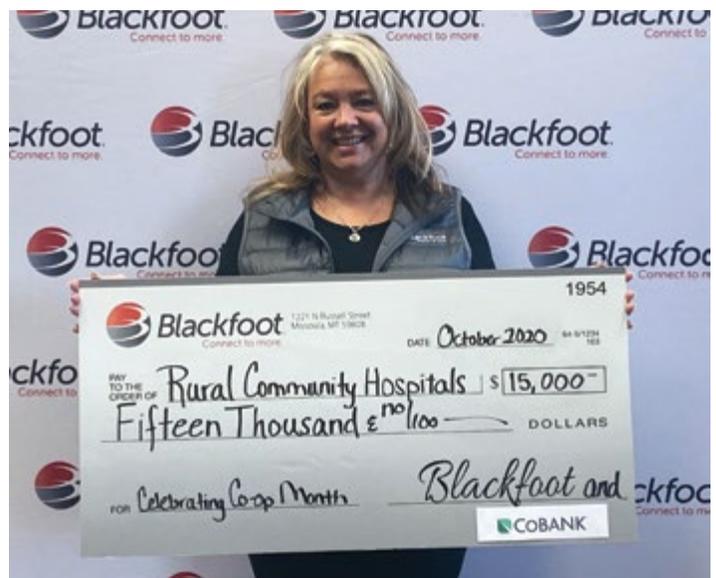
## Community Highlights



SLCF team

### SEELEY LAKE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Congratulations for receiving a \$5,000 grant from the Foundation for Rural Services (FRS) to help create a community tech hub! Annually, FRS awards thousands of dollars to deserving local agencies who work to enhance rural cooperative communities.



Kris Sweeney, Business Account Executive

### GIVING TO LOCAL HOSPITALS

Our local hospitals are critical now more than ever and this year we were proud to partner with CoBank to give \$15,000 to help ease the financial burden of COVID-19.

# Your Cooperative at Work!



2020

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**\$350k+**

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IMPACT

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## A Message From Jason Williams BLACKFOOT CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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

While 2020 threw more than one curve ball at us, I am grateful this holiday season to be living, working and raising my family in Western Montana. This gratitude extends to serving as CEO of Blackfoot Communications where I'm pleased to report we had another prosperous year. Last spring when schools and many businesses closed their doors throughout our cooperative serving area, Blackfoot added hundreds of new customers to its residential broadband customer base, enabling students to learn remotely, allowing employees to work from home, and keeping friends and families connected. We have continued to see increased voice and data traffic across our robust network, and thanks to the hard work and dedication of our employees, we continue to provide reliable service without any sustained major outages.

Heading into 2021, we remain committed to our plan to connect more homes and business than ever to our Smart Fiber and Smart Fiber Plus throughout the Mission Valley and in the Trout Creek and Thompson Falls area. We will also continue to make additional investments in our fiber-based services throughout the entire cooperative. There's just only so much construction we can do in our short summers!



Stay safe this winter!  
And from my family to yours,  
I wish you a very Merry Christmas  
and a Happy New Year!