

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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From Homelessness to Hope: Local Man Finds Nonprofit

Kalispell, MT – A year ago, Jason Stevens was homeless. Following a messy divorce, he found himself in the Flathead, staying with a relative. Things continued to fall apart and he ended up at Samaritan House. While staying at the shelter, which requires that residents leave during the day, Stevens spent many afternoons at ImagineIF Kalispell. In the library he read, used the computers and talked with other men who were staying at the shelter, many of whom were military veterans.

As Stevens became acquainted with the Flathead and the gap in services available for homeless veterans, he quickly recognized a need. Being homeless, especially as a military veteran accustomed to the constant presence of other soldiers, can be extremely isolating. Stevens said that his experience of homelessness “opened my eyes to how easily this happens to people.”

Now, a year later, after moving out of the shelter, working at Super 1 and getting back on his feet, Stevens is starting a nonprofit called Glacier Hope Homes. It will not only shelter veterans but also provide full-time housing, physical and mental health services, education, work training, and hands-on activities such as gardening or woodworking.

The time Stevens spent at ImagineIF Kalispell allowed him to talk with local veterans, build a sense of camaraderie and do research about starting a nonprofit. He said that “70 percent of the project happened in the library.” Whenever he talks about Glacier Hope Homes with local veterans, they quickly join in his excitement. Many have offered to help in any way they can, often for free.

Stevens hopes to acquire a property soon for Glacier Hope Homes in a rural setting outside Whitefish, where he can provide residents with the time and space needed to acclimate, feel safe and, for those who are able, transition back into the community to seek housing, education or employment.

Currently Stevens is in the process of assembling a board of directors and attaining 501(c)(3) status for Glacier Hope Homes. He said that the resources available at ImagineIF Kalispell – including the Foundation Directory Online, related books and the help of staff such as Library Advisor Tony Edmundson – have been critical to this project. Additional training such as the workshops offered by ImagineIF Libraries and the Flathead Nonprofit Development Partnership (NpDP) can provide the extra push that new nonprofits need to get started and find funding.

For others hoping to start a similar project, Stevens offered this advice: “Set your goal. Know in your mind what it is you want to do, and then be relentless.” When it comes to asking for board members and supporters, he said, “I’m not scared to talk to anybody. The worst they can say is no.”

On Friday, May 22, in the basement meeting room at ImagineIF Kalispell, ImagineIF Libraries and NpDP will offer two free workshops for anyone interested in learning more about starting a nonprofit. To register, contact NpDP at 756.3618 or admin@npdp.org.

Before You Seek a Grant

10:30 a.m.-12 p.m.

This first workshop will be an introduction to setting up a nonprofit, and will focus on organizational "building blocks" that new or startup organizations need before seeking grants.

Overview of Foundation Directory Online

1-2:30 p.m.

This hands-on workshop provides an introduction to the Foundation Center database, the leading tool for research on private and corporate foundations. Attendees will have the opportunity to follow along during the training and sample searches.

The Flathead Nonprofit Development Partnership provides educational programs, information resources and networking opportunities to improve the effectiveness of nonprofit organizations in northwest Montana. NpDP offers monthly brown bag seminars, nonprofit management focused eNewsletters, networking opportunities, and special educational events for board members and nonprofit leaders. More information about the Flathead Nonprofit Development Partnership can be found at www.npdp.org. NpDP is sponsored by the Flathead Community Foundation with additional support from the Flathead Valley Community College and individual, business and nonprofit partners.

ImagineIF Libraries encourage exploration, fresh ideas and self-discovery. ImagineIF offers activities and services for all ages. For more information, visit www.imagineiflibraries.org.

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