



**Empowered**

eliminating racism  
empowering women  
**ywca**  
helena

An awards event paying tribute to the accomplishments  
of women and girls in the Greater Helena Area.

**April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025 | 6pm | The Myrna Loy**



# Welcome

**6:00** Event opening/registration table

**6:10** Social Mixer in Jailhouse Gallery

*Catered tapas & mocktails*

*Photo opportunity #Empowered*

**6:45** Begin gathering in Theater

**7:00** Opening Introduction

*Exec. Director Denise C. King*

Sponsorship Recognition

*Board President Becky Lawson*

**7:05** Short Film

*History of Women's Rights*

**7:15** State of the Woman Address

*Exec. Director Denise C. King*

**7:20** Awards Presentation

**8:00** Conclusion

Awardee Photos

# Empowered Committee

## **Ari Cowser**

YWCA Helena Board Member,  
1st Judicial District Treatment  
Court/Behavioral Health  
Court

## **Chris Ferguson**

Office of Civil Rights,  
Montana Dept of  
Transportation

## **Katelyn Griep**

Administration Manager  
Helena Indian Alliance

## **Chandler Rowling**

Recreation Chair of Helena  
Young Professionals (HYP),  
Housing Program Specialist,  
Montana Dept of Commerce

## **Haley McKnight**

Morningstar Design Ltd. Co.,  
President of HYP

## **Sandy Schull**

Retired, former owner of  
Birds & Beasleys

## **Michelle Robinson**

Event Coordinator, YWCA  
Helena, Development  
Director

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# Board of Directors

## **Becky Lawson**

President

## **Ari Cowser**

Secretary, Empowered  
Committee Member

## **Abigail R. Brown**

Vice President

## **Melissa Schlichting**

Governance and  
Nominations Committees

## **Zoe Barnard**

Treasurer

## **Emily Smith**

Member



*How quickly do you put me at ease!  
Like a competent artist  
Arranging values,  
Creating harmonies.*

*Frieda Fligelman*

## *Innovator Award*

**The Frieda Fligelman Innovator award recognizes a woman who is active in social movements to expand educational and economic opportunities. She thinks globally and acts locally. She embodies a personal commitment to the advancement of social and racial justice. She challenges policies that perpetuate prejudice and impede the advancement of human rights.**





# Tonight's Menu

## Tapas

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- Braised Beef Rolled Tacos Mojo Crema
- Ginger Green Onion Meatballs Soy Glaze
- Herbed Peppered Goat cheese with Roasted Grape Reduction
- Grilled Vegetable Platters with Savory Reduction Sauce

## Mocktails

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- Huckleberry Not-a-Rita
- The Mule  
Ginger, lime, basil





## *Woman of the Year*

**The Maria Dean Woman of the Year Award recognizes a woman who exemplifies a commitment to the Greater Helena region. She leads with compassion and removes unnecessary barriers. She is devoted to her busy profession yet still carves out time to actively participate on numerous boards or lead committees. She is a driving force for improving the lives of women, girls and embraces diversity.**

# A future full of **OPPORTUNITIES!**

We believe in strengthening communities and creating opportunities that make a lasting impact.

That's why we're proud to support the YWCA and the Empowered event - celebrating resilience, leadership, and positive change.



**Opportunity Bank**  
OF MONTANA

[opportunitybank.com](http://opportunitybank.com)



[reachhighermontana.com](http://reachhighermontana.com)



MARBELLE REALTY

EMILY SMITH

406-425-1928



## *Path Maker Award*

**The Mary Prescott Path Maker Award recognizes a woman who invests endless energy in improving access to programs which benefit children and stabilize families. Where others notice a barrier, she sees an opportunity to create a new path. Though she may be a soft-spoken force, her commitment is undaunted. She is well respected in the community.**



CURIOUSER AND  
CURIOUSER



Music provided by  
Frank Kuntz, Ed. D.  
[pianolope@gmail.com](mailto:pianolope@gmail.com)



A Professional  
Law Corporation



architecture + design





## *She Speaks Power Award*

**The Margaret Freeman She Speaks Power award recognizes a woman who uses the power of looking back to move forward. She retains a wealth of historical knowledge of the fight for equality. She reminds us of the sacrifices others have made. She champions the cry that there is still work to be done and motivates others to act now.**

**United War Work Campaign**

**“It takes but one person,  
one moment, one  
conviction, to start a ripple  
of change.”**

Donna Brazile



**EMPOWERING  
WOMEN  
SINCE  
1883**



**Helena  
Indian  
Alliance**

**hia-mt.org**



## *Benefactor Award*

**The Adelaide Child Benefactor Award recognizes the generosity of a woman who contributes to the Helena YWCA because she believes in the mission. She gives generously to other nonprofits as well as investing volunteer hours. She has a positive outlook for the future and encourages her friends to donate to organizations she trusts.**



# Myrna the Activist

On screen Myrna was witty, smart and unflappable. Off screen, she advocated for people of color in the film industry, volunteered with the Red Cross during war times, and served as an ambassador with the UN, speaking on behalf of women's rights.

As her star power rose, she noticed the inequality afforded to black actors in Hollywood and began to advocate for their rights within the industry. At one point, she approached her bosses at MGM asking why every Negro in a film had to play a servant.

Myrna was outspoken against Hitler, resulting in him banning her movies and adding her to a list of Western names who would be sent to concentration camps if ever they were captured. She was credited with saying, "When the Nazis are against you, you know you're doing something right."

Her friendship with Eleanor Roosevelt had a profound impact on her political choices and led her to befriend Hubert Humphrey, who she met while campaigning for JFK.

This led to her support for the National Council Against Discrimination in Housing, where she worked throughout the Civil Rights Movement.





## *Legacy Award*

**The Alberta Sieben Legacy Award was introduced this year to acknowledge funders who help direct efforts, through an insightful practice of ensuring equity for all while providing human capital and monetary support for the betterment of Montana.**



## *Girls of the World Youth Leader Award*

**The Girls of the World Youth Leader Award recognizes a high school female student who is civically engaged and community minded. She speaks up when she sees injustice. She doesn't hesitate to take on a leadership role and motivates others to rally for a cause.**



# 2025 Nominees



**Hannah  
Nordhagen**



**Chelsia Rice**



**Heather  
O'Neill**



**Tammy  
Heigh**



**Emily  
Kroll**



**Robyn Lund**



**Alana Listoe**



# *I nominated her because....*

**Hannah Nordhagen** – Her ongoing support for organizations like the Friendship Center and Girls Thrive also demonstrates her commitment to uplifting women and addressing social issues.

**Robyn Lund** – Her holistic approach to healing which benefits YWCA residents, low-income senior centers, LGBTQIA+ communities, and Native American centers.

**Chelsia Rice** – Her business serves as a vital lifeline, providing a sense of belonging and safety for marginalized individuals, particularly the LGBTQ+ community in Helena.

**Alana Listoe** – She is relentless in her efforts to help youth advance and progress, in mental health residency, recovering from trauma as a refugee, or involved in the court system.

**Heather O'Neill** – She works tirelessly to improve STEM education and early childhood offerings for our community.

**Emily Kroll** – By supporting youth through emotional and educational challenges, she fosters confidence and resilience in the next generation.

**Tammy Heigh** – She is simply undaunted in her efforts to improve the lives of children ensuring they have an advocate looking out for their best interest.

# 2025 Nominees



# *I nominated her because....*

**Melanie Sands Snyder** – Her work in recruitment and retention at St. Peter's revealed a noticeable absence of Indigenous voices in decision-making areas—an issue she has committed herself to addressing.

**Natalia Sublette** – She has the most incredible insights and ideas and is constantly working to make sure everyone is included, and all voices are heard and respected.

**Deb Bakke** – She is a champion for the under dogs, a voice for the voiceless, and a hand up when she encounters the opportunity to help.

**Amy Stiffarm** – This legislative session she spearheaded a movement to have doula care covered by Medicare, so that all women may access the care of a trained birth assistant.

**Valerie Hellerman** – She created a resource center for immigrants and refugees in Helena, designed to foster independence and celebrate new cultures.

**Jamie Palagi** – She embodies the innovative and empathetic spirit necessary to meet the complex challenges children and families face today.

**Kylie Gursky** – Her leadership is rooted in a commitment to advancing gender equity and eliminating racism through strategic grantmaking, advocacy, and collaboration.

To learn more about the YWCA Helena,  
please visit [www.ywcahelena.org](http://www.ywcahelena.org)

