

# CAUSES THAT MATTER



WYCF.ORG  
WCF@WYCF.ORG  
307-721-8300

## Quality Childcare in Rural Wyoming

### Meeteetse Recreation District RecKids Program

*Unrestricted Grantmaking at WYCF*

**W**hen Brodie Serres was younger, her dream job was to be Director of the Meeteetse Recreation District (MRD). When she finally landed her dream job, she began by asking others, “How can we make this community better?”

After hearing from families in Meeteetse, the overwhelming answer to that question was “better childcare.” Parents in Meeteetse did not have many choices for childcare or afterschool programs. They could load their kids up early in the morning and commute to Cody, or one parent had to stay home. Sometimes grandparents or relatives helped look after the kids.

“Families were losing out on opportunities because there was no quality daycare option in Meeteetse they could count on,” says Brodie. “We would love to be able to create more opportunities for our children and continue to give them a safe, fun, and caring place to go, learn, and play.”

**Because of your support, the Meeteetse Recreation District received a grant to expand their RecKids program, the only afterschool and summer childcare facility in town.**

Funding and space were two problems the MRD was faced with when



Toddlers are taught some of the basics like shapes and colors in MRD’s program and are able to enter Kindergarten more prepared.

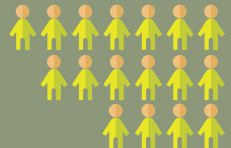
improving the RecKids program. Because of WYCF’s grant, the afterschool program for elementary students was extended from two days a week to three. The MRD also created a brand-new childcare program for the community’s toddlers.


The toddler program became popular fast. “It quickly became obvious there was a need for more than just a few hours a week,” says Brodie. “The toddler program started off with two half-days a week, but after a few months, the toddler program continued to grow and gain popularity and we now operate three full days a week.”

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## STATS & FACTS

Award Amount: **\$10,000**

**17**   
**Toddlers**  
enrolled in first year

**24+**   
hours of childcare offered per week

Wyoming’s community needs are wide ranging and change over time. An unrestricted fund offers the flexibility to address statewide challenges and opportunities now and in the future. These dollars are crucial to impacting communities big and small, like Meeteetse.

# Public Spaces and Partnerships

## Common Outdoor Ground Programs

*Unrestricted Grantmaking at WYCF*

**C**ommon Outdoor Ground (COG) is a nonprofit organization that connects public land managers with dedicated volunteers. Like you, these volunteers care about maintaining the beautiful outdoors our great state is known for. COG can connect volunteers with land managers who have a list of projects for these areas but not enough help.

For Program & Volunteer Coordinator Ashley Quick, COG creates outdoor spaces that are accessible to everyone. “It’s important to COG that we consider what public lands and spaces mean to people,” says Ashley. “It would be a disservice to land users if COG only worked with backpackers or mountain bikers. Some of our public spaces can be 30+ miles out of town, and hiking or biking can be intimidating.”

COG’s volunteers and partners work on projects like trail maintenance, campground cleanup, and areas within city limits like bike trails and parks.

**Because of your support, a grant to Common Outdoor Ground made this possible.**

The US Forest Service contacted Ashley to partner with COG. The two helped clean up and reopen Nash Fork

Campground in Medicine Bow National Forest. The campground had been closed for several years and had become overgrown. Fences had fallen and there were more splinters than paint on the picnic tables.

“The Forest Service does some of the more technical work, like cutting down dead trees that could fall into campsites, but otherwise the whole project was completed thanks to volunteer labor coordinated by COG,” says Ashley. “When the volunteers and I were packing up on our final workday, a family pulled into the campground and got to be the first guests in years to enjoy the newly reopened site. It was one of my favorite projects.”

Another project COG had a hand in was a biking skills course at the middle school. This course will be used by the Laramie Middle School Physical Education (P.E.) classes, but out of school time the space is available to the public for use.

Jamie Simmons, P.E. Teacher at Laramie Middle School, is thrilled with the new addition in the community. “I love the bike trails, it’s for everyone and all ability levels,” says Jamie, “The minute it was ready people were using it. I see a ton of kids riding their bikes afterschool.”

Outside of the work to clean up or build new public spaces, what takes the most time is building local partnerships. “We don’t need more tools, we need people’s time,” says Ashley. “Thanks to the general operating grant from WYCF, we were able to say yes to many of our partners and give volunteers an opportunity to give back.



Volunteers work together to clean up trails at Pilot Hill.



Staff at Laramie Middle School get ready to test out the trails for students during the upcoming school year.

## STATS & FACTS

Award Amount: **\$3,000**

Partner with **10+** organizations

- In the last year
- 183 volunteers
  - over 702 volunteer hours
  - 9 miles of trailwork
  - 36+ campsites rehabbed



# Painting the Town SAGE

## SAGE for a Creative Community Fund

Agency Endowed Funds at WYCF

**J**ill Benson, Executive Director of the Sheridan Artists' Guild, Et Al, (SAGE), is passionate about taking stories from artists and sharing them with patrons. "Art has gotten so diverse, so many people have artistic talent," says Jill. "In the Sheridan-Johnson community there are arts everywhere, from an eye doctor who plays piano downtown to local businesses displaying art from SAGE. Our organization is a way our community gets to relate to each other in a deeper way," says Jill.

Jill, the artists, and fans of SAGE take pride in all that they bring to the community. Through art classes, exhibits, and education programs, SAGE keeps the community vibrant, happy, and healthy.

As a nonprofit who received longtime support as a grantee, SAGE later established an endowed fund with WYCF. This is a "forever" fund for a nonprofit. It benefits SAGE with annual grant payouts and provides them with sustainability and security. Donors can help grow the endowment with legacy gifts.

**Jill credits the Wyoming Community Foundation for the**



SAGE creates opportunities for youth to tap into their artistic journey through camps and classes.

### ease of SAGE's operations and programs.

"I've been really proud of what we've been able to accomplish," say Jill. "That's because of our endowment with WYCF - it allows us to support our operations."

**Because of SAGE's endowment with WYCF, Jill can focus on connecting with the community and the people who want to make it better.**

*Continued on back page*



Classes offered to the community include printmaking, painting, and drawing for different levels of experience from beginner to advanced.

## STATS & FACTS

**SEE ART:** SAGE provides many opportunities to the Sheridan community to see and experience a wide variety of art. 

**CREATE ART:** Our Community Arts Education Program provides ongoing creative opportunities for all ages from beginners to professional artists. 

**PROMOTE ART:** SAGE supports the visual arts and local artists through our galleries, events, and marketing reach. 

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### The success of the Meeteetse toddler programs was a direct result of your generosity.

The community has been incredibly supportive. Brodie recalls hearing back from parents about how impressed they were with the quality of care and education their children receive.

“If parents know there is affordable childcare, they can stay here or move here, and maybe both parents can go back to work. They can make money again,” Brodie says. “Extending the toddler program really opened up our community. It kept kids in town and out of their car seats.”

Looking to the future, Brodie is excited to make RecKids even better. Currently

they are working out of a small rented space. With growing numbers in both their toddler and kindergarten through fifth grade programs, it’s a game of Tetris fitting all the kids in the facility. The MRD is in the process of building a new community center to fill more needs in Meeteetse. Brodie hopes to see spaces for middle schoolers to hang out after school, and opportunities for more sports and recreation with the new space.

**Meeteetse is a growing community with younger families looking to call it home. Because of YOU, the Meeteetse Recreation District can support that goal with safe and reliable childcare.**

“Painting the Town SAGE” continued

“We now own our space, which happened in 2016,” says Jill. “The Wyoming Community Foundation helped with that, and we can just focus on growing. Our kids’ camps, for example, exploded this summer with full rosters, and that’s the first time that’s happened.”

SAGE offers the Sheridan-Johnson area a Community Arts Education Program. The technical classes and artist talks provide ongoing creative opportunities for all ages and ability levels.

“We were able to grow this program, bring in more people, and a more diverse group of jurors because of WYCF,” says Jill. “WYCF was key in helping us with that.”

Follow us on Social Media!



## UPCOMING EVENTS

**OCTOBER 16-22**

**National Estate Planning Awareness Week**

Officially the best week of the year to plan for your future, and the future of WYCF. Contact [jerrica@wycf.org](mailto:jerrica@wycf.org) for more information.

**OCTOBER 26**

**Wyoming Afterschool Alliance Lights on Afterschool**

[WyAfterschoolAlliance.org/lights-on-afterschool](http://WyAfterschoolAlliance.org/lights-on-afterschool)

**NOVEMBER 10**

**Wyoming Women’s Antelope Hunt Recap Video Premiere!**

[WyomingWomensAntelopeHunt.org](http://WyomingWomensAntelopeHunt.org)

**NOVEMBER 13-15**

**Wyoming Governor’s Business Forum, Laramie**



**Thank You! You’ve helped Wyoming communities thrive in good and bad times.**

To learn more about how YOU can make a difference today and for years to come, contact Jerrica Becken, Director of Philanthropy at [jerrica@wycf.org](mailto:jerrica@wycf.org)

1472 N. 5th Street, Suite 201  
Laramie, WY 82072  
[wcf@wycf.org](mailto:wcf@wycf.org)  
[wycf.org](http://wycf.org)  
307.721.8300