



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 26, 2022

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Gallatin Valley Nonprofits HRDC & World Language Initiative Partner to Create more Welcoming Community for Growing Spanish-speaking Population

Many in the Gallatin Valley community have seen or directly experienced the multi-faceted work of local nonprofit [HRDC](#). For over 45 years, HRDC has committed to building a better community in the greater Bozeman area. Through transportation solutions, food and nutrition services, affordable housing, early childhood education, and financial coaching, HRDC plays a pivotal role in enhancing our hard-working neighbors' quality of life.

In Fall 2021, HRDC took another step to better serve their community of clients, specifically Gallatin County's growing Spanish-speaking population.

A new partnership with [World Language Initiative](#) (WLI), whose mission is to provide language & culture opportunities to all Montanans, provided 30 HRDC employees with Spanish language classes. Their shared goal is to better serve and communicate with Gallatin County's growing Spanish-speaking population to create a more welcoming community.

WLI Spanish Educator Kristen Wolf says, "The work of the entire HRDC team is incredibly vital to our growing community, and I myself have benefitted from their programs in the past. It's a true honor to guide their staff in acquiring Spanish so they may best communicate with clients."

Wolf has taught Spanish for 13 years, and received the Montana Language Teacher of The Year award in 2019. She currently works with WLI as their Lead Language Coach, offering professional development training to part-time language educators through WLI's "Coaches Up!" program.

The new partnership between HRDC and WLI allows employees to use professional development hours to learn useful & practical Spanish skills in the workplace.

HRDC Strategic Planning Officer, Krista Dicomitis, shares that she loves how the beginning Spanish classes focus on how HRDC can best connect with customers through their native language. "It's extremely applicable to the work we do, because we're practicing specific terms and phrases we will use in everyday interactions," says Dicomitis.

According to the Pew Hispanic Research Center, Montana has one of the fastest growing Latine populations in the nation, with an increase of 50% in 2019. BSD7 English Learner Coordinator, Ellen Guettler, says "The majority of these newcomers are from rural towns and frequently have low levels of formal education and literacy. Thus, Latine migrants living in new rural settlements such as Gallatin County face significant educational barriers and higher risks to their overall well-being."

Both HRDC & WLI believe this rapid growth calls upon them to create a more welcoming and supportive community that attempts to connect with and provide services to English Learners in their native language. It has become especially important as newcomers navigate the many cultural differences they and their families face when adapting to a new country and community.

"Across the board, we HRDC employees have observed an increase in language barriers between us and some of our customers," says HRDC employee, Jacqui Colt. "Kristen's Spanish class is really an excellent way to break down that barrier as best we can in a limited time...We are truly being provided with an excellent tool set to be able to ask and receive the critical information that makes the difference between communicating with our clients or not."

WLI Spanish Classes at HRDC continue this spring serving 30 employees through both beginner and intermediate Spanish classes.

HRDC CEO, Heather Grenier, says “World Language Initiative has been a terrific partner for HRDC as we continue to expand our team's bilingual abilities. They were willing to adapt their educational approach to meet our needs and customize content to be reflective of everyday interactions for our team members. After just a handful of sessions, our team has been able to better navigate through initial interactions with our non-English speaking community members and for that, we are most grateful.”

More information about World Language Initiative’s Spanish classes for businesses and other organizations can be obtained by contacting Kristina Allison, WLI Program Manager, at info@wlimt.org

