



Chamber CEO CORNER

Home for the Holidays: Building Belonging in Billings

*Article by John Brewer, CAE, CATP,
President/CEO of Billings Chamber of Commerce*

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PROJECT MANAGEMENT:

KELSI GAMBILL MSPR, CTA
406-869-3732
KELSI@BILLINGSCHAMBER.COM

ADVERTISING SALES:

TOBY WALKER
406-869-3738
TOBY@BILLINGSCHAMBER.COM

PHOTO CONTRIBUTORS:

BILLINGS CHAMBER
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Moving to a new community (for work or school) can be exciting yet tough—especially during the holidays. You’re meeting new people, learning a new town, new job, and navigating a strange new culture.

A couple of years ago, we asked our members to share information about their roots. 17% stated that they were born and raised here. 83% of us lived elsewhere at one time. Most respondents (59%) were born outside of Montana.

Billings is in a growth phase with people returning to Montana (boomeranging) and moving from rural parts of Montana (or both, like I did, moving from Miles City to Billings to Spokane and back to Billings). Some are coming from other states to Montana for the first time because they appreciate our culture, politics, and economy and are joining our workforce. They are weaving into our community, making us stronger, not desiring to change us into what they are fleeing.

Let’s all play a part in making our new residents feel they belong by helping them find their people and their scene. In October, the Chamber held its second “Welcome to Billings” event for newcomers at KOA, connecting more than 35 new residents (your employees and their families) over dinner with our cultural attractions, City services, faith communities, and new friends. Be looking for the next event this spring.

The Chamber also teamed up with Rocky Vista University, Rocky Mountain College, Montana State University Billings, University of Mary, and Walla Walla University to onboard new students to our community and held a pickleball tournament for them. We will host another student-driven event this February at Meadowlark Brewery. Let’s get our young talent excited about finding their career here once they graduate.

Wherever you’re from, know that you belong in Billings. And we thank you for spreading the holiday cheer to our merchants as you shop locally, enjoying the uniqueness of Billings beverages from Marble Coffee Company and Thirsty Street Brewing; incredible local cuisine from Bin 119 and Bernie’s, the great retail gifts you will find at Frae Everyday Goods, The Joy of Living, The Basecamp and the numerous others distinctively Billings shops.

Check out all our favorite local merchants and information on future “Welcome” events at BillingsChamber.com.

Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Happy Kwanzaa, and Happy Holidays.

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