

## **HOPA MOUNTAIN STORY MAKERS FALL GATHERING SEPT. 23-25 IN BOZEMAN**

For immediate release: September 19, 2019

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BOZEMAN, Montana—Hopa Mountain’s nationally recognized StoryMakers program presents its Fall Gathering September 23-25 in Bozeman. Now in its 14th year, StoryMakers serves 11,000 families throughout Montana’s rural and tribal communities.

The Fall Gathering, featuring leading early childhood development, counseling, and health practitioners, takes place at the C’Mon Inn, beginning Monday evening. Participants will explore the connection between experiences in early childhood and long-term health and learning outcomes.

According to Hopa Mountain Executive Director Bonnie Sachatello-Sawyer, the goal of Hopa Mountain’s StoryMakers program is to enhance early learning and cognitive development of children age 5 and under, through positive parent-child interaction. Working through trusted citizen leaders in rural and tribal communities, StoryMakers provides parents with books and early learning resources to support them as they read, sing, and talk with their children.

Sachatello-Sawyer says, “These are sometimes the only books making up a family’s home library. Through direct engagement with parents, StoryMakers Community Teams provide guidance and support for families on the importance of using books as tools to encourage interactive activities that improve a child’s brain development.”

Research indicates that a strong early-learning home environment predicts children’s success in school. Success in school, likewise, strongly predicts health and economic self-sufficiency in adulthood.

Evaluations of StoryMakers results show that the program increases the frequency and duration of reading in the family home. This positive impact on children and their families was recognized through the National Book Foundation’s Innovation in Reading Prize in 2014.

The StoryMakers program is funded by the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation, Gianforte Family Foundation, the O.P. and W.E. Edwards Foundation, and Hopa Mountain members.

Based in Bozeman, Hopa Mountain is a 501c3 nonprofit organization committed to investing in rural and tribal citizen leaders as they improve aspects of their community such as education, ecological health, and economic development.

For more information, contact Bonnie Sachatello-Sawyer at 406.586.2455.