

## **THE PHOENIX NONPROFIT EXPANDING ACTIVE, SOBER COMMUNITIES IN MONTANA**

LIVINGSTON, MT—Certified personal trainer and resiliency coach Kelly Miller specializes in trauma and mindful movement. A veteran of the Montana Army National Guard, Miller helps others through her wellness business, The Movement Collaborative, in Livingston. She's also senior program manager for The Phoenix, a nationwide program offering a sober community to those wanting to overcome their reliance on alcohol or other addictive substances.

For Miller, it's personal. After serving in Iraq, she found herself immersed in a culture that revolved around alcohol. "I didn't realize I had PTSD until I stopped drinking," Miller says. She started working with The Phoenix in 2021, overseeing the nonprofit's Montana, Idaho, and Utah region. Her goal is to help The Phoenix double its Montana participants this year by recruiting more volunteers and offering more than 350 activities around the state.

Program expansion is supported by the Gianforte Family Foundation, which provided funding for kickboxing equipment in Livingston and paddleboards in Billings last year. A 2023 grant will support added equipment and services, including childcare for some family activities.

The Phoenix currently offers free programs in Billings, Bozeman, Livingston, and Missoula. Popular activities include camping, paddleboarding, hiking, yoga, rock climbing, CrossFit, kickboxing, book clubs, arts and crafts, and social outings. The only "cost" to participants is 48 hours of sobriety. "Connecting with a community of supportive peers is one of the strongest predictors of success in recovery," Miller says.

Phoenix volunteer and member Erin Mason leads a weekly kickboxing program in Livingston, at L'esprit, where she also worked as a peer support specialist. "I've always struggled with my relationship with alcohol. But it wasn't until I found kickboxing that I realized I was just drinking because I was lonely and a little bored," she says.

Mason needed to become sober when she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. She now helps run a monthly rock-climbing program at Spire Climbing and Fitness. "One of the unique things at The Phoenix," Mason says, "is that members are encouraged to volunteer to lead groups of their personal interest."

Montana's largest and oldest Phoenix group, in Billings, is overseen by Stevie Robinson. Through her Volunteer Success Coordinator role, she inspires and assists volunteers who lead classes and activities. "The Phoenix is 90 percent volunteer-led and volunteers come from all backgrounds," according to Robinson. "They don't need to be in recovery."

Phoenix members come from all backgrounds, Robinson says—from U.S. veterans and professionals to recent parolees. The Billings group works with Alternatives, Inc. to offer Mindful Movement classes at the women's correctional facility and Alpha House pre-release center for men. The Livingston chapter offers a weekly yoga class at the Gallatin County Detention Center. "The goal is to get people started on the right path, right away," Robinson says. "I'm a person in recovery myself, so like to be surrounded by a community of like-minded people."

For more information on programs in your area or volunteering for The Phoenix, visit [thephoenix.org](http://thephoenix.org) or contact Kelly Miller at 406.946.1659.

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