

Duncan Family Adventure of a Lifetime



Alli Duncan, 16, of Billings, MT was the first trip recipient of 2023. Alli was nominated for Big Hearts through the Billings Clinic. She has been dealing with Spina Bifida and other medical conditions since birth, which have placed her in a wheelchair. Throughout her life, Alli and her family have been going to doctor's appointments around the country, and having to adjust in a way that most families don't. Alli has been through 24 sur-

geries in her life because of her various health issues, the latest one being this August, shortly after her trip. Despite this disheartening condition that she was born with, Alli has the spirit of a lion. She has a hilarious sense of humor, loves to try new things, and has a superb creative side for art.

Alli was accompanied on the adventure with her parents, Amber and Anthony, and older sister Addy. Noteworthy as

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well is the selflessness of Alli's family. This family is truly a team of love that works together through all

hours of the day to help Alli if needed and support one another.

On the trip that took place from July 10th – 14th, 2023, Alli and her family got to tear up some class 2 and 3 rapids with



Patrick Sipp (Flying Pig Raft Company); have a full day of fly fishing with Guy Flynn (Montana Elk and Trout) and Vern Strader (Greater Yellowstone Outfitters); go on an adventure in West Yellowstone to Old Faithful; and see

some beautiful sights of Yellowstone National Park from the air on a helicopter tour (Golden Eagle Helicopter Tours). Ad-



ditionally, the Duncan family got to stay in Lion's Ledge Mountain Escape courtesy of host and MOGA Outfitter Matt Klumpp of Walker Outfitting. After long days of adventures and early mornings, the family would wind down by singing songs as they roasted s'mores over the campfire.



This trip included many laughs, some happy tears, lots of hugs, and lots of healing. It truly took an army of generous MOGA Outfitters to make such a life-changing experience possible. We are so happy that

Alli will be one of our guest speakers for the Benefit and Auction this January! If you want to hear more from Alli,



come to the Big Hearts Benefit and Auction on January 13th, 2024, where Alli and her dad, Tony, will be one of the guest speakers!

"Since returning home, we can't stop talking about what an amazing week we had and what it meant to be able to take a trip together," said Tony Duncan, Alli's father. "This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for our family."

Scan to purchase Big Hearts Benefit Auction Tickets/Seats:



A Year of Making a Difference

Along with the amazing Duncan family, Big Hearts also had the pleasure of serving five other extraordinary families. Here are their stories:

Will Israel from Jefferson City, MT: (August 24 - 30, 2023)

Will Israel served 21 years in the US Army as an Airborne Ranger/Infantryman and was deployed on eight combat assignments to Afghanistan and Iraq. Israel's service to country was marked with numerous awards and commendations for combat deployments and military service, including a Bronze Star, Meritorious Service, Joint Commendation, Combat Infantry Badge, Army Commendation, Army Achievement. Will and his family joined the Big Heart's family in August of 2023 by taking a 5-day, fully guided and out-fitted Wilderness Pack Trip near Choteau, MT.



Mandi Perry of Columbia Falls, MT (October 20 – 25, 2023)

Mandi participated in the elk hunt along with her three sons Easton, Hunter, and Blake, and her husband Jeff. Mandi served in the Montana Army National Guard as a 31B (Military Police) and was slated to deploy with a unit until she found out she was pregnant with her first son. Her military career ended after her first enlistment and then she joined the Flathead Valley Sheriff's Department in 2016. Mandi excelled in her career, quickly moving to a Street Crime Unit position, and serving on the Crime Scene Team. Mandi was forced to give up her career in law enforcement in the wake of a very traumatic experience in 2021, following her work on the scene of a quadruple homicide in the Flathead Valley. Mandi



was nominated to the Big Hearts program through our partners at Impact Montana, a Montana-based service organization that "helps service members, veterans, first responders and their families define their purpose, connect with health and community solutions, and strive for what they value." During her trip Mandi collected a fine bull elk, an experience she enjoyed in the presence of her family. Mandi will be one of the guest speakers for the 2024 Benefit and Auction, accompanied by her husband, Jeff.

Joseph Murtaugh of Colorado Springs, MT (October 21-25, 2023)

Joe was accompanied by his sons, Luke (13) and Finn (10). Joe retired from military service with a greater than 70-percent disability rating in 2022 after nearly 23 years of service and 11 combat deployments between Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria. He served in both 10th Special Forces Group and 1st Special Forces



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Joseph Murtaugh—Cont.

In 2016, he was wounded in action during the Manbij Offensive, which was the first major US led Kurdish ground offensive against ISIS and a military offensive operation, in the area referred to as the "Manbij Pocket." During his years of service, Joseph was awarded the Bronze Star (V) twice, once in 2014 and again in 2016, Purple Heart in 2016, and numerous commendations and meritorious service awards. For wounds received because of hostile action on June 9, 2016, in Iraq, he was presented the Purple Heart. Because of his years of service and numerous deployments, Joe has been overseas for over half of his son Luke's life. Through the Big Hearts under the Big Sky trip, Joe and his boys connected and shared experiences that will last a lifetime, in addition to collecting a terrific Eastern Montana mule deer.

Tim Gardipee of Missoula, MT (October 20 – 25 2023)

LTC Tim Gardipee (ret) of Missoula, MT participated in the elk hunt along with his son, Alex (13), daughter Isabella (19), Shelley Grados, and nurse/caregiver, Connie Jo Taylor. Tim retired from the Army as a Lieutenant Colonel having served with the 18th Airborne in Somali 1993, Bosnia 1998-1999, Kosovo 2002, and Iraq in 2008 – 2009 where he was awarded the Bronze Star. In June of 2005, Tim was involved in a catastrophic parachute accident while training at Fort Brag, resulting in significant disabilities. Tim works hard to stay active and works with other disabled Veterans in enjoyment of the outdoors.

Tim hunted from a specialized TRAC chair equipped with a rifle mount. Surrounded by his family, Tim hunted hard each day of the trip.



Ethan Whitfield of Fayetteville, NC (November 8 -12, 2023)

Ethan Whitfield of Fayetteville, NC, a true American hero, was awarded a fully guided and outfitted elk hunt with Double D Outfitters on the picturesque Big Spring ranch near Lewistown, Montana. He was joined by his father, brother, and nephew.

Whitfield has an extraordinary record of service to his country, with 16 combat deployments spanning an impressive 22 years of military dedication. Throughout his illustrious career, he served with distinction in the 1st Ranger Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, 1st Special Forces Group, and the United States Army Special Operations Command (Special Missions Unit). His impressive training credentials include completing Ranger School, the Special Forces Qualification Course (Medical Sergeant), Military Free-Fall, and the Combat Divers course. For his remarkable service, Whitfield has been honored with the Silver Star, three Bronze Stars, and the Purple Heart. Sadly, due to injuries related to his service, Whitfield has been deemed 100% disabled.



WE'VE MOVED!!

New Big Hearts under the Big Sky Location:
2021 11th Avenue, Ste. 12
Helena, MT 59601



Tomahawk Partner



TOMAHAWK CHARITABLE SOLUTIONS ANNOUNCES NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH BIG HEARTS UNDER THE BIG SKY

NASHVILLE, TN - Tomahawk Charitable Solutions (TCS), an organization dedicated to supporting the Special Operations Forces, Military, and Law Enforcement communities and their families, proudly unveiled its latest partnership at an event in Nashville in early November. TCS announced that Montana-based Big Hearts Under the Big Sky (Big Hearts) has been designated as a national partner.

Since its inception in 2017, Tomahawk has worked as a zero overhead charity to address the immediate and enduring needs of our nation's heroes and their families. Through events held throughout the year, TCS raises money to provide funding support for a number of carefully selected organizations. Each organization is vetted and must report yearly to show how charitable funds are being utilized.

In the presentation announcing the Big Hearts partnership, TCS said they had seen first-hand the life-changing impact a Big Hearts trip can have on the families who have participated in the program. Nestled in Helena, Montana, Big Hearts operates as a program under the Montana Outfitter & Guides Association, offering fully outfitted trips to military service members and other individuals who have rendered extraordinary service to our nation. What sets Big Hearts apart is its unwavering commitment to the family experience, partnering exclusively with qualified and licensed outfitters and guides throughout Montana to serve individuals and their families. To date, Big Hearts, supported by MOGA member outfitters, has provided countless donated trips, all at no cost to the recipients.

Mac Minard, the Executive Director of Big Hearts, expressed gratitude for being chosen by Tomahawk Charitable Solutions. "We recognize that service to our country, particularly in times of war, exacts an immense toll on the soldier's family. The Big Hearts program serves as a pathway back to the life they sacrificed so much to protect and preserve," said Minard. "This new partnership enables us to extend our reach, uniting more families in the spirit of shared adventure, healing, and the creation of enduring memories against the backdrop of Montana's rugged landscape."

Fast Facts

- Big Hearts under the Big Sky was created in 2008 by Montana and Outfitters and Guides Association
- Big Hearts has served 95 families/groups totaling 500 people
- Involving 47 MOGA Outfitter businesses
- Accounting for over \$1M in donated Montana Outdoor activities and in-kind goods
- 80% of the money donated is spent on putting those we serve in the field
- Only fully licensed, professional outfitters deliver Big Hearts Trips

Big Hearts Staff:

Mac Minard—Executive Director
Kashia Herring—Executive Assistant
Celi Chapman—MOGA Intern
Becca Caro—MOGA Intern

Nothing Would Be Possible Without:

Amazing Ambassadors
Wonderful Volunteers

For more information:
Visit: bigheartsmt.org



Volunteer Spotlight: *Tim Fox*

In every edition of the Big Hearts Beat, we like to highlight volunteers that deserve to be recognized. There are so many amazing people in the Big Hearts Family that make these life-changing trips possible. The Big Hearts mission would not be fulfilled without these volunteers. In this edition, we would like to highlight Tim Fox. Fox has been an ambassador for two Big Hearts Trips. His first trip was Nate Jensen and Jesse Edinger in 2022, where he spent most of the trip helping Nate harvest an elk. Fox was also the ambassador for Joe Murtaugh in October of 2023.

Tim Fox originally found out about Big Hearts when Executive Director, Mac Minard, invited him to one of the Big Hearts Banquets. At this time, Fox still held the position of Attorney General for the state of Montana. After this experience, he was moved by the mission of the organization and the dedication of those who work at Big Hearts. Tim then decided that Big Hearts was an organization that he would like to be apart of when his life circumstances allowed him the time to do so.

Years later, Mac invited Tim to the celebration dinner for one of the trip recipients that year, Wade Palmer. Fox got to then see the role an ambassador plays in the Big Hearts trips, and decided he would like to be one. He then volunteered to become an ambassador and has been a key part of the organization ever since. Fox said that he

was impressed with the mission of Big Hearts, the generosity of people, as well as the family and spiritual aspect of the organization. Additionally, he noted that there is nothing like seeing the joy on the faces of the trip recipients.

Even though Fox is a relatively new face to Big Hearts, he notes how his life has been changed by his involvement with Big Hearts, “When you volunteer, you get a lot out of it. The name [Big Hearts] is very fitting. The generosity and compassion that a lot of people show to the trip recipients is amazing.”

Additionally, Fox notes of his experience from his ambassadorship during Joseph Murtaugh’s trip that, “He had been deployed for much of his older and younger son’s life. This was such an amazing way for them to reconnect, and [Joe] said that it meant a lot to him and his family.”

Tim Fox’s favorite part about being an ambassador is getting up with the recipients before the sunrise and getting to spend that time in the quiet of nature. The anticipation of the hunt is exciting, but Fox adds that it is a bonding experience to share with the trip recipients, that the nature of Montana is just so beautiful, it is healing in itself.

Being an ambassador for Big Heart, Fox noted, “... I just feel good about helping. It is a lot of work... but it is a labor of love and I really enjoy it. My heart swells every time I do one.”



BIG HEARTS
under the **BIG SKY**
MONTANA OUTFITTERS & GUIDES ASSOCIATION

OFFICIAL AMBASSADOR TRAINING

*Send resumes
to mogamember@gmail.com*

MAY 31ST - JUNE 2ND, 2024

Leave a Montana Legacy through Planned Giving

Planned giving provides you the opportunity to have a lasting and meaningful impact for years to come. During this season of giving, please consider including *Big Hearts under the Big Sky* in your charitable gifts. Your contribution will leave a legacy that will provide outdoor guided trips for military service men and women who provided extraordinary service and children who face life threatening illness for years to come.

There are multiple ways for you to be a part of Big Hearts:

Montana Endowment Tax Credit. Known as the Montana Endowment Tax Credit (METC) this gift option enables donors to pay less in Montana state income taxes when giving a planned gift to a qualified Montana charitable endowment. The year-end tax benefits from METC can be significant. Big Hearts under the Big Sky works closely with the Montana Community Foundation to manage your contributions to the endowment and ensure the right fit for each individual, family and organization's unique interests and financial circumstance.

Charitable Gift Annuity. With a charitable gift annuity, you make a gift of cash or appreciated property and the endowment pays you a fixed income for life. You receive an immediate charitable income tax deduction for the value of the gift. The remainder transitions to Big Hearts after you pass away as a gift in memory of you.

Did you know that Montana has one of the most attractive Endowment Tax Credits in the Nation?

Bequests. Remember Big Hearts under the Big Sky in your will or living trust with a gift that will live on. Many have found that including Big Hearts under the Big Sky as a beneficiary may help reduce tax liability for your family.

Gifts of Cash. Honor someone special to you with a cash donation in their name as an expression of love and respect that will last in perpetuity.

All gifts to Big Hearts under the Big Sky qualify as a tax deductible charitable donation.

For more information on leaving your legacy, please contact the Big Hearts office at (406) 449-3578



Planned giving provides you the opportunity to have a lasting and meaningful impact for years to come.

The Impact of Giving

When *Big Hearts under the Big Sky* was conceived in 2008, we naively thought we would be the center of a wheel radiating good will. We quickly learned the families served by the Big Hearts program are the center and each spoke a means for others to give. We had inadvertently created a community based opportunity to give back, and we as Outfitters, are just a small part in that. Join us in giving back.



Plan your own Montana adventure!

Let one of our outfitters or guides show you the Montana adventure of your dreams!

www.montanaoutfitters.org/find-an-outfitter/



Big Hearts under the Big Sky
 2021 11th Avenue, Ste. 12
 Helena, MT 59601
 (406) 449-3578 • moga@mt.net
 Www.bigheartsmt.org



Speaker: Allie Duncan
 Trip: July 2023



Speaker: Mandi Perry
 Trip: October 2023



Master of Ceremonies
 Lieutenant Governor Kristen Juras

You're INVITED

Big Hearts Benefit Auction

January 13, 2024
 Delta Hotel Helena Colonial
 Helena, Montana



Making a Difference. One Family at a Time!