

Legacy of Leadership: Celebrating 50 Years with CEO Latrielle *A Journey of Appreciation, Contribution, and Success at the Missoula Chamber of Commerce*

To the Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, Leadership, Membership, and friends

As I prepare to bid farewell as your CEO to the Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce on January 2nd, 2024, I am filled with a mix of emotions.

This letter is not just a goodbye; it reflects our *collective journey*, a testament to the Chamber's triumphs, and a preservation of our history as Missoula's largest business organization in Missoula, MT.

From my very beginning in 1954, as a highway patrol's daughter from Sidney, MT, my path to leadership was unconventional as I became the Receptionist for the Missoula Chamber of Commerce on March 15, 1973, and then CEO in 1996. Yet, it has been a journey marked by incredible experiences, challenges overcome, and countless successes.

The essence of this sharing is to underscore not just the Chamber's achievements but also to encapsulate the rich history and evolution of this remarkable institution that I've had the honor to lead the Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce.

As I reflect on the past 50 years with the Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce, my heart is filled with immense gratitude. Every single one of you has been a vital part of this incredible journey. Your dedication, expertise, and passion have been the cornerstone of our combined success.

- **To our cherished Chamber employees**, current and past, your unwavering commitment and hard work have been the driving force behind our accomplishments. Your contributions have not just been professional but have touched lives in countless ways. *"I will forever be grateful to the 30 years of employees I had the honor to lead as your CEO." RIP: Frank Cudia*
- **To our business members**, your support and engagement have shaped the business landscape of Missoula. You have been the pulse of our community, fostering growth and innovation. *"To those **420 business believers** that no matter the economy or the political landscape, have remained constant believers of Chamber as my members for over 50 years, never missing payment of dues and always providing needed feedback that allowed me to lead and carry your messages."*

- **To our board chairs (Presidents) and the Chamber board**, your visionary leadership and strategic guidance have steered us through challenges and opportunities alike. Your wisdom and insights have been invaluable. *“To those that are and forever will be my CHAMPIONS, you know who you are and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.”* RIP: Marge Sample, Vicki Judd, Steve Clawson
- **To all the committees and everyone who has worked alongside me**, you have been my strength. Your collaboration and spirit of teamwork have been instrumental in achieving our goals. *“It takes a village, a mighty village,” to accomplish what we have done together. And indeed, this journey would not have been possible without each one of you serving as volunteers for this Chamber – I sincerely thank you for your friendship, trust, and leadership.* Your contributions have left an indelible mark on the Chamber and the Missoula community.

“Thank you to every single one of you for your unwavering support, for believing in our mission, and for walking this path with me.” “Here's to the accomplishments we've achieved together and the future we've paved for those who follow”.

IN CONCLUSION: *As I say goodbye, with my official departure as your CEO on January 2, 2024, I am filled with pride and confidence as your new CEO steps in to lead. I am certain that under their guidance, the Chamber will reach new heights and continue to be a formidable force in the business community.*

Thank you for allowing me the honor of serving you. It has been a privilege to be part of this journey, to grow with you, and to witness firsthand the incredible impact we have made together.

As I step into the next chapter of my life, I carry with me the memories, lessons, and friendships that have enriched my life beyond measure. Here's to a future that continues to be bright for the Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce, a future I will always support and cherish. With deepest appreciation and warm regards,

*Best,
Kim Dahl Latrielle*

KIM'S REFLECTIONS ON THE LAST 50 YEARS

"BELIEF IN BUSINESS" – *"I firmly believe that business is the backbone of our beloved community in Missoula, Montana. It is the engine that drives our local economy, the source of innovation and progress, and a key contributor to our community's vitality and strength. In Missoula, businesses do more than just provide goods and services; they are integral to the fabric of our daily lives, shaping our community in ways that often go unrecognized and unmentioned."* Beyond economic contributions, businesses in Missoula are a force for good in numerous other aspects. They are at the forefront of community engagement, often leading and supporting charitable causes, local events, and civic initiatives. Their involvement in community projects, whether through donations, volunteerism, or leadership, demonstrates a deep commitment to the well-being and enrichment of our town. Furthermore, businesses in Missoula help to cultivate a unique and vibrant culture. From local cafes and bookstores to theaters and galleries, they contribute to the city's cultural richness and diversity. They support US or Families: They sponsor and support UM, MCPS athletes, our youth sports (Little Griz, Avalanche, Baseball, etc, our pools, parks, theatres, MCT, and more. This not only enhances the quality of life for residents but also attracts visitors and new inhabitants, adding to the dynamism and appeal of our community.

"In conclusion, businesses in Missoula are much more than economic entities; they are the lifeblood of our community, essential to its vitality and resilience. Their contributions, though sometimes unspoken, are deeply felt and profoundly appreciated. It is my unwavering belief that as we support and nurture our local businesses, we are, in turn, strengthening the heart and soul of Missoula."

"Then there is The Chamber!" *"In the heart of our vibrant community, the Missoula Chamber of Commerce stands as a beacon of leadership and innovation for the business landscape. As the CEO of the Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce and over my tenure, I am proud to share this powerful statement of the role of our organization and that we kept our promise and led the way under these key pillars for a Chamber"*.

As the Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce, we have proudly embraced as an organization these roles for business: champion, catalyst, connector, and convener, tirelessly advocating for and nurturing the commercial and shared spirit of Missoula.

As **Champion**, we have steadfastly advocated for the interests and needs of our businesses, big and small, ensuring that their voices are heard and their concerns addressed. Our unwavering commitment to business growth and sustainability has seen us fight for conducive policies, foster an environment of entrepreneurial spirit, and celebrate the achievements that fuel our local economy. **ADVOCACY**

As a **Catalyst**, we have sparked transformation and progress within our business community. Our initiatives and programs have been instrumental in driving innovation, encouraging adaptability, and promoting a culture of excellence that permeates every corner of Missoula's vibrant business sector. **LEADERSHIP**

As a **Connector**, we have created an intricate web of relationships and networks that bind our community. We bridge gaps between businesses, connect entrepreneurs with resources, and foster partnerships that amplify success and facilitate mutual growth. Our role in bringing together diverse voices and perspectives has been critical in creating a synergistic environment where ideas flourish and collaborations thrive. **PROGRAM, COMMITTEES AND EVENTS**

Finally, as a **Convener**, we have been at the forefront of gathering the community around critical issues and opportunities providing full support through the Chamber's Governmental Affairs Committee and Board Advocacy. By sending surveys and hosting forums, informational panels, workshops, and events (State of Missoula), we provide a platform for meaningful dialogue, shared learning, and collective decision-making. These gatherings are not just meetings; they are the crucibles where the future of Missoula's business landscape is forged. **VOICE OF BUSINESS**

In these key areas, the Missoula Chamber of Commerce has not just participated in the narrative of Missoula's business community; we have been instrumental in writing it. Our commitment to championing, catalyzing, connecting, and convening has established us as a pillar of strength and progress in Missoula, empowering businesses and enriching our community in countless, invaluable ways."

THE IMPORTANCE OF ADVOCACY: *Latrielle: "As the only organization in Missoula that receives NO public dollars - The importance of advocacy and the role of the Missoula Chamber as the Voice for Business is the most important ROLE and RESPONSIBILITY for business that we can provide as a Chamber."*

Advocacy is the lifeblood of a dynamic business environment. It is the means through which the needs, concerns, and aspirations of the business community are communicated and addressed. In this vital role, the Missoula Chamber stands at the forefront, ensuring that the interests of businesses are not only heard but are also influential in shaping policies, strategies, and economic development plans. In the ever-evolving landscape of commerce and community, the importance of strong, dedicated advocacy cannot be overstated. The Missoula Chamber of Commerce proudly embraces this critical responsibility, serving as the powerful and dependable voice for businesses in our thriving city.

As the single voice for business in Missoula, the Chamber's role transcends mere representation. We are the advocates, the protectors of business interests, and the promoters of an environment where businesses can flourish unencumbered by undue obstacles. Our advocacy efforts are deeply rooted in a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing our business community, from small local enterprises to larger corporations.

The Chamber's role as the voice for business is built on a foundation of trust and credibility. The Chamber's long-standing history and deep connections within the community position us as a respected and authoritative advocate. Businesses in Missoula rely on the Chamber to articulate their views, champion their causes, and deliver impactful results.

The Missoula Chamber of Commerce's commitment to advocacy is a testament to our dedication to the well-being and success of our business community. We are more than a voice; we are a steadfast ally, a strategic partner, and a catalyst for growth and prosperity in Missoula.

Through our unwavering advocacy, we ensure that the business voice is not just heard – it resonates and leads to meaningful change.

LOOK WHAT WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED TOGETHER: *“Our achievements are not just a list of milestones but a testament to what we can accomplish when we work together. We have made a difference, not just in the business world but in the lives of countless individuals who make up this wonderful community.”*

THE CHAMBER'S HISTORIC ROLE IN CREATING THE LARGEST ECONOMIC ORGANIZATIONS IN MISSOULA – LATRIELLE WAS THERE:

- **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:** The Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce has been instrumental in fostering economic and business development in the Missoula area. This organization, comprising businesses of various sizes, focuses on supporting and encouraging local economic growth. A key example of its role in nurturing new organizations is its involvement in the creation of the Missoula Economic Development Corporation. This entity, which started as a committee within the Chamber in the 1980s, exemplifies the Chamber's commitment to initiating and supporting organizations that contribute to the region's economic vitality. Over the years, the Chamber has maintained its mission of providing networking and learning opportunities to the business community in and around Missoula, reinforcing its status as a cornerstone of local business development.

The Chamber is a key partner to the MT Department of Commerce hosting businesses interested in locating in MT. The Missoula Chamber has worked side by side with the Department of Commerce and the Department of Labor to foster positive development for business in MT. The Missoula Chamber currently is a member of the Missoula Economic Partnership, connecting them with businesses seeking details on support from communities for economic development. Once a business is located in Missoula, the Chamber becomes their solid and dependable partner to ensure they remain in business, network, and stay connected.

- **TOURISM: Summary Statement on the transition of tourism from the Chamber to Destination Missoula:**

For over three decades, the Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce served as Missoula's only visitor and tourism center for Missoula. The Chamber created the Missoula Convention and Visitors Bureau (Missoula CVB) that had oversight on the Bed Tax and Tourism for several years. The transition of the tourism sector from the Missoula Chamber of Commerce (Missoula CVB) to Destination Missoula marked a strategic realignment with significant benefits for both entities. This shift allowed the Chamber to dedicate itself entirely to addressing the needs and priorities of the business community. Previously, a substantial portion of the Chamber's resources and time, estimated at around 75%, was devoted to assisting tourists in finding recreational activities in Montana. With the emergence of Destination Missoula, focused exclusively on promoting tourism, the Chamber could redirect its efforts and resources to concentrate fully on supporting, advocating for, and meeting the specific needs of local businesses. This change not only enhanced the effectiveness of the Chamber in serving the business community but also ensured a more targeted and specialized approach to tourism through Destination Missoula, benefiting both sectors and the community at large.

- **RETAIL:** The Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce has played a pivotal role in fostering the growth and independence of local organizations. A notable example from the 1980s is the Missoula Chamber of Commerce had an active committee called the Retail Committee. When the Retail community requested the Chamber Board to have a single focus on retail and marketing of Missoula with a focus on retail, the Chamber Board worked with the committee and retailers who wanted to establish an association downtown. **The Emergence of the Downtown Association:** Recognizing the need for focused efforts, the Missoula Downtown Association was established as a separate entity. This strategic separation allowed the MDA to concentrate exclusively on the revitalization, promotion, and growth of Downtown Missoula. The Association embarked on initiatives tailored to enhance the downtown experience, including beautification projects, marketing campaigns, and event organization, all aimed at drawing visitors and supporting local businesses.

The Chamber continues to have an ongoing mission in Retail: Meanwhile, the Missoula Chamber of Commerce continued its vital role in advocating for and supporting the wider business community. With a broader scope, the Chamber's efforts encompassed **all** retail corridors in Missoula, addressing city-wide business concerns, policy advocacy, and economic development. This included supporting retail zones outside the downtown area, ensuring balanced growth and opportunities across the city in all key transportation and retail corridors in Missoula County.

- **Synergy and Collaboration:** The separation of the MDA from the Chamber did not signify a divide but rather a strategic realignment of roles for the greater good of Missoula's business community. Both organizations continued to collaborate, sharing insights and supporting each other's initiatives to create a cohesive and thriving business environment.
- **Summary of the Advocacy Note on the Independence of the Missoula Downtown Association and the Chamber's Role:** The separation of the Missoula Downtown Association from the Missoula Chamber of Commerce has not only allowed for a specialized focus on downtown businesses but also established the *Chamber as a neutral advocate for these downtown businesses*. This was exemplified in the Chamber's involvement in the Beartracks Bridge issue. During this situation, the Chamber effectively represented the concerns of 60 downtown businesses. These businesses were apprehensive about the future goals of transportation and the availability of parking downtown, crucial factors for their operation and growth. The Chamber stepped in as a neutral voice, ensuring that the concerns of these businesses were communicated effectively to both the Downtown Association and local government authorities. This role of the Chamber as a mediator and advocate highlights its commitment to providing balanced and effective representation for all sectors of Missoula's business community.
- **Conclusion:** The establishment of the Missoula Downtown Association as an independent entity dedicated to the downtown area, while the Missoula Chamber of Commerce maintained its broader focus, represents a forward-thinking approach to economic development. This evolution in Missoula's business landscape exemplifies the community's commitment to recognizing and nurturing the unique strengths of its diverse business districts, ensuring that each can thrive and contribute to the overall vibrancy and prosperity of Missoula.

Latrielle led Initiative Results: Board Directed, CEO implemented successes:

THE CHAMBER ORGANIZED AND PLANNED A FLY-IN TO WASHINGTON DC TO MEET WITH MONTANA DELEGATES AND THE US DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION: In 2019, the Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce (WGM), led by CEO Latrielle played a pivotal role in securing a **\$13 million BUILD (Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development) Grant for the Missoula** community, specifically for the Mullan/West Broadway area. This grant was a

collaborative effort between the Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce and Missoula County and was a part of a larger initiative to promote the development of workforce housing and commercial spaces in the area. The Chamber led the lobbying efforts with Montana's Congressional Delegation and the US Department of Transportation to obtain this federal grant. The funds are earmarked for critical infrastructure development, including the installation of roads, water, and sewer systems. This infrastructure is crucial for facilitating the development of the area, and it also helps in mitigating the costs associated with these projects. By doing so, the initiative aims to enable residential and commercial developers to construct and sell properties at more affordable prices, benefiting both the workforce and business owners in the area. The project, which was a joint effort between Missoula County and the City of Missoula, aimed to make infrastructure improvements in the area, which includes the Mullan Road area west of Reserve Street and south of Broadway. It involved the installation of water and sewer utility infrastructure as well as the construction of roads and trails. This was further supported by an additional \$8 million in local funding from the City and County. The successful lobbying for the BUILD grant was a significant learning and unifying experience for the Chamber. ***Chamber President and CEO Kim Latrielle*** highlighted the role of the Chamber in bringing together various stakeholders, organizing the trip, and ensuring that all parties had consistent talking points and a unified front, especially in meetings with Montana's Congressional delegation. This collaborative approach was noted as being particularly effective and unusual, demonstrating the power of unity in achieving significant funding for community projects. The success of this initiative has also set a precedent and provided a model for the community in seeking additional government funds in the future.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA:

The Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce led by CEO Latrielle played a crucial role in helping the University of Montana receive a **\$6 million grant** from the Department of Labor for the Accelerate Montana program. Accelerate Montana, is a collaborative initiative led by the University of Montana with full support of the Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce business community. The program focuses on rapid training and instruction for up to 5,000 Montanans in industry-specific jobs. This initiative is part of a broader effort to meet the workforce needs of Montana employers and to assist in the state's economic recovery by providing targeted skill development in various industries. A \$6 million grant will support rapid training programs for Montana workers. The Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce role in this process is their involvement of their CEO Latrielle in critical state level meetings and also included advocacy, partnership, and support to the University demonstrating their commitment to fostering business and economic development in the region.

THE CRITICAL IMPORTANCE TO EXPAND CHILD CARE: In 2021, Latrielle was named the **Chairperson of the Montana Early Childhood Advisory Council by the Montana Department of Health and Human Services by the Governor of the State of Montana.** Her appointment to this role underscored her commitment to addressing critical issues like childcare, reflecting her holistic approach to community development. In this capacity, she worked towards improving childcare for Montana's workforce, emphasizing the need for collaboration between nonprofit childcare organizations and government bodies. This hard work granted Kim Latrielle, the CEO of the Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce, along with Mark Roberts, a special invitation from the Trump administration and they were flown to DE to participate in a significant childcare event in Washington D.C. This event was the **White House Summit on Child Care and Paid Leave**, held on December 12. Latrielle's involvement in this summit was a testament to her and the Chamber's proactive approach to addressing childcare issues in Missoula and Montana at large. Her leadership in the Chamber's innovative childcare initiatives earned this prestigious invitation, recognizing the efforts made in Missoula to tackle childcare challenges. This recognition underlines the importance of local initiatives in influencing national policy discussions. **Latrielle led Missoula and State's discussion with her peers serving as CEOs in major communities in Montana to support enhancing and expanding Child Care.** The Missoula Chamber of Commerce under Latrielle's leadership has shown a deep commitment to improving childcare. The Chamber surveyed in 2019, revealing the acute need for affordable and accessible childcare in the Missoula area. This survey highlighted that childcare was not only hard to find but also too expensive for many families. The results of this survey and the subsequent efforts of the Chamber to find solutions to this pressing community issue were likely influential in garnering the attention of the White House. The Missoula Chamber's initiatives have included partnerships and collaborative efforts aimed at addressing these challenges.

ADDICTION MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE – Kim Latrielle, as the President and CEO of the Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce under the direction and support of the Chamber leadership and board, has significantly contributed to addressing addiction and mental health issues in the Missoula community. The concerns surrounding the issue of addiction were first presented to Latrielle by Levi Bessette, a longtime family friend who has spent years trying to support and find solutions for addiction and mental health. Levi's statement – "Latrielle, you have to open your eyes to what's happening with addiction and mental health and understand it to help change it." Under Latrielle's leadership, the Chamber Board took a proactive stance in tackling the growing substance abuse problem and the scarcity of resources for community members recovering from addiction. This initiative had direct implications for Missoula's workforce, as the Chamber aimed to connect businesses with resources to support current, past, and future employees in their recovery journey. The Chamber's approach included connecting businesses and nonprofit agencies with resources and experts to expand options for those facing addiction issues in Missoula. This collaborative work involved various organizations and key figures, including

Montana's former Attorney General Tim Fox and former US Attorney Kurt Alme. One of the significant outcomes of these efforts was securing a **\$234,000 grant** to United Way of Missoula County. This funding supported a countywide substance abuse prevention project. The Chamber's commitment to this cause extended to participating in the initiative's leadership round table, emphasizing its role in continued collaboration and support.

The Chamber also highlighted need for the **“The 4th D Club of Missoula: A Pillar of Support and Unity in the Heart of the Community”**: In Missoula the 4th D Club has emerged as a vital institution, playing a significant role in fostering a sense of community and support. As an organization deeply rooted in the city's social fabric, the 4th D Club extends its arms to offer help, hope, and a sense of belonging to those in need. This article delves into the club's role in Missoula and the essential community support it requires to continue its noble mission. The club's role extends beyond individual support; it is a beacon of hope in Missoula, breaking down the stigmas associated with mental health and addiction. By advocating for greater awareness and understanding, the 4th D Club plays a crucial role in creating a more inclusive and empathetic community. **Under CEO Latrielle’s leadership a “Call to Action:** The 4th D Club of Missoula stands as a testament to the power of community and compassion. It reminds us that together, we can make a difference in the lives of many. The club's continued success relies on the collective efforts of the Missoula community. By supporting the 4th D Club, we are not only aiding a vital local institution but also nurturing the very heart and soul of our community. The Chamber’s focus provided needed financial resources, volunteers, equipment, and the understanding of the importance of this Club and how vital they are to the health of our community and workforce.

CEO Latrielle’s final request of the Missoula business community and Chamber: Please Missoula find it in your hearts, and wallets to lend support to these critical organizations.

- **THE MISSOULA YOUNG PROFESSIONALS:** The Chamber was approached by the leadership of a group called the Missoula Greenhorns' who requested Latrielle’s assistance to transition to the Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce to later be known as The Missoula Young Professionals (MYP). The MYP group plays a crucial role in the Missoula Chamber of Commerce's efforts to support and develop young professionals in the region. This transformation signifies the Chamber's adaptive approach to meeting the evolving needs of its members and the local business community. MYP represents a significant shift in the organization's approach to engaging and supporting young business professionals in the Missoula area. **The Missoula Young Professionals group, as it stands today,** is a vibrant community within the Chamber that focuses on engaging individuals who are new to their careers, new to Missoula, or new to networking. The objective is to assist these young professionals in becoming more competitive and successful in the business arena. This group provides opportunities for networking, professional

development, and personal growth through various events and program topics. The evolution of this group reflects broader trends in professional networking and development, acknowledging the unique needs and preferences of younger professionals. These trends include a greater emphasis on informal networking opportunities, mentorship programs, and events that combine social interaction with professional development.

- **LEADERSHIP MISSOULA IS IN ITS 39TH YEAR: It is with great pride that CEO Latrielle boasts of the creation of Leadership Missoula over 40+ years ago.** One of her notable achievements includes the assistance in the creation of Leadership Missoula, which has been operating for nearly 40 years. For over 4 decades Latrielle has worked with Chairs and planning groups of Leadership Missoula to ensure that the program's content, connections, and viability continue over the class's nine months of leadership training. Ensuring that Leadership Missoula contributed the highest non-dues revenue to the Chamber over 40 years allowed the Chamber to do the work of advocacy and support for businesses in Missoula.
- **ADVOCACY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS – SUPPORTED BY BOARD LEADERSHIP:**
 1. ****Business-Friendly – Voice during Legislation sessions**:** The Missoula Chamber Board of Directors and staff worked nonstop to influence local and state legislation to create a more favorable business environment. This includes advocating for tax reforms, regulatory changes, and other legislative measures that directly benefit the business community.
 2. ****Economic Development Initiatives**:** A key role of the Missoula Chamber of Commerce was to promote economic development. In Missoula and Montana, this included attracting new businesses, supporting local startups, and creating job opportunities. The Missoula Chamber led by Latrielle works in collaboration with local and state representatives; The Department of Commerce, The Department of Labor, and The Governor's office.
 3. ****Infrastructure Improvements**:** Advocacy for infrastructure projects that benefit the business community, such as transportation upgrades, utility improvements, and technology advancements monitored by the Missoula Chamber. BUILD GRANT success.
 4. ****Education and Workforce Development**:** The Missoula Chamber has proudly supported all MCPS bonds over Latrielle's five decades. The Missoula Chamber collaborates with educational institutions to ensure the workforce meets the evolving needs of local businesses. The Missoula Chamber's support of our University of MT over 50 years, including the most recent grant for Accelerate Montana.

5. **Healthcare and Quality of Life**: Efforts to support and improve healthcare access and overall quality of life can be important for attracting and retaining a skilled workforce. The Chamber advocated for its health members for policies that support these areas. Missoula serves as a regional medical hub and the collaboration and partnership between the Chamber and our local hospitals and health care providers is proven and strong.
6. **Environmental and Sustainability Measures**: A blast from Latrielle's past, the Missoula Chamber in the early '70s led "Clean Air Week", educating businesses on how they could do their part for the environment and boasting those success stories. The Missoula Chamber was featured as the only Chamber in the nation at that time that had a standing "Environmental Committee" of the Chamber. The Chamber has advocated and supported environmentally friendly policies and practices that also benefit businesses.
7. **Networking and Partnerships**: The Missoula Chamber has created many options for a network of business, government, and community leaders is crucial for effective advocacy. The Chamber hosts monthly Business After House, Annual State of Missoula, Business Networking Events, Missoula Young Professionals monthly events, and Leadership Missoula.
8. **Crisis Response and Support**: In times of crisis, during economic downturns or natural disasters, COVID-19, The Missoula Chamber took the lead with the Campaign "Yes, We're Open" connecting consumers to new practices in getting services and supplies. It features stories and articles on how businesses were embracing the Chamber. Advocacy voice during Covid: The Chamber also became a voice for business with the Local Health Department establishing new rules and policies for restaurants and bars. Ensuring they had a representative and voice at the table.
9. **Public Relations and Community Engagement**: The Missoula Chamber continually worked to improve the public perception of the business community and engage in community affairs, which indirectly supports advocacy efforts.
10. **Research and Data Analysis**: The Missoula Chamber over the years continually provided information, data, and research to policymakers to inform decision-making is another key area where chambers contribute significantly.

CHAMBER COMMITTEES: *Under the leadership of CEO Latrielle for over 50 years, the following committees and events flourished and grew.*

- **The Missoula Chamber Red Coats:** This group is responsible for organizing the annual business golf tournament called the *Red Ripper*. This event annually met or exceeded their budget to support the Chamber with non-dues revenue. The Red Coats are hosts at the Chamber's monthly Business After Hours saving countless hours of staff time and providing a professional image of the Chamber monthly. The Red Coats are simply "Missoula Chamber PR in motion". The Red Coats stand ready to support this Chamber at VIP events, along with being Missoula's community parade organizers.
- **The Agri-Business Committee:** Annually this group of volunteers plans and holds the Missoula Chamber of Commerce Ag Banquet, the goal of the event is to express appreciation for area farmers and ranchers that do business in Missoula. This event draws nearly 340 individuals, half in attendance being farmer/rancher couples that are hosted for this special evening by the Missoula business community. Hands down one of the best events this Chamber sponsors each year and acts as a reminder of our heritage.
- **The Ambassadors:** This group, began as the old guard of Missoula and when CEO Latrielle started in 1973, this group held all the key community leaders. The Ambassadors are responsible for organizing the largest event of the Chamber – The Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce Annual banquet, drawing at one time over 1,000 attendees in the 70s. This event's goal is to celebrate business and free enterprise annually and to recognize key community leaders who have given back to this community through the Circle of Excellence Award and the Steve Clawson Award (formally the George Award).
- **The Missoula Rangers:** This group for 5 decades has facilitated the official ribbon cuttings for new businesses and members of the Chamber. The Rangers, a professional group of volunteers would monthly at times open 6-8 businesses. With ribbon, banner, and scissors in hand, they would greet, tour, welcome, and introduce themselves to new business owners welcoming them to the Chamber and Missoula. *Our "Grip and Grin First Dollar of Pure Profit" volunteers.*
- **Leadership Missoula** was created with CEO Latrielle as staff creation and is now in its 39th year.
- **Chamber Board, Chamber Executive Committee, Governmental Affairs and The Finance Committee.** "The dedicated volunteers of the Board, Executive Committee, Governmental Affairs, and Finance Committee have been the guiding force behind the Chamber's direction, embodying the essence of business advocacy and ensuring our adherence to our mission. Their unwavering commitment and insights have not only advanced our organization but have also profoundly influenced my leadership journey. *Over my 50-year tenure with the Chamber, I've gleaned invaluable leadership skills from these groups, experiencing the spectrum of best and worst practices. These volunteers have been instrumental*

in my evolution as the CEO I am today. Their generous contributions, trust, and time have been pivotal in making the Missoula Chamber a leading business organization, and for this, my gratitude is boundless."

IMPACT OUTSIDE THE CHAMBER AND FOR THE MISSOULA COMMUNITY WITH PERSONAL LEADERSHIP AND VOLUNTEERISM:

MISSOULA COUNTY STADIUM CONSTRUCTION: Latrielle participated in a significant community project to help raise money and build the Missoula County Stadium in Missoula, MT. This incredible effort was significant and was led by several notable figures including Kenny Staninger, President of the Missoula County Stadium Boosters. Latrielle's involvement in representing the Chamber exemplified her deep commitment to economic development and community engagement. This project involved building new facilities for all Missoula County Public High Schools, it included new construction for a concession stand and locker rooms, bleachers, media box, lights, sound system, and other features, significantly enhancing the stadium's capabilities and services for all high schools in Missoula County. The combined efforts of this esteemed group of volunteers and numerous community members reflect a strong collaborative spirit aimed at enriching the Missoula community through improved infrastructure and facilities. The mission goal of the Chamber and the Stadium Boosters was to provide a facility that would instill pride in our athletes and families, to generate new revenue for Missoula businesses by hosting large events like state track meets, state football, and large community events.

MISSOULA COUNTY FAIR BOARD: Kim Latrielle's two-decade tenure on the Missoula County Fair Board as first a volunteer and then serving on the Board, stands as a remarkable example of dedicated community service and leadership. Throughout her 20 years of involvement, Kim played a pivotal role in steering the direction and growth of the Missoula County Fair, contributing significantly to its success and development. As a member of the Fair Board, Kim brought with her a wealth of experience gained from her long-standing role as the President/CEO of the Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce. This background equipped her with unique insights into community engagement, event planning, and business development, all of which were invaluable to the Fair Board.

One regret: *"As Kim reflected on her two decades with the Missoula County Fair Board, a bittersweet realization dawned upon her. Despite numerous accomplishments, there remained one significant, unfulfilled aspiration – the creation of a versatile community venue in Missoula. Envisioned to host state sporting events, rodeos, concerts, hockey, and ice shows, this proposed multi-purpose facility symbolized a dream of bringing the community together under one roof for diverse events. – Many great updates are*

occurring at the Missoula County Fairgrounds today but as I leave this role, I still believe this community needs a multi-events center to support our businesses, families, sports – etc.

A REFLECTION ON THE CHAMBER AND LATRIELLE’S INVOLVEMENT OVER THE PAST 50 YEARS – HOW DID WE ACCOMPLISH SO MUCH?

Throughout my 50 years at the Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce, my leadership style has been characterized by a preference for working behind the scenes and an inclination to share credit with others. I've always believed that the achievements and growth of our organization and community are far more important than personal accolades. My leadership philosophy is rooted in the thinking of leading from the second row. This style focuses on empowering others, building strong teams, and creating an environment where collaborative efforts lead to collective success. I value the contributions of each team member, knowing that together, we achieve more than any one of us could achieve alone. I've seen how this approach has shaped not just the Missoula Chamber but also our broader business community. By fostering a culture of shared success and recognition, we've built a more cohesive, supportive, and dynamic business environment. This environment has been crucial in encouraging innovation and mutual support, key factors in building a resilient and thriving business community. My dedication to humility and collective achievement has helped mold the Chamber and the business community throughout my tenure. I believe that focusing on shared goals and collective growth is the key to significant, lasting impacts in both organizational and community development.

SOME FUN HUMOR IN OUR HISTORY OF THE CHAMBER – WHERE LEADERSHIP HAPPENED WITH NOTHING MORE THAN A HANDSHAKE AND YOUR WORD.

Fifty years ago, the community of Missoula, Montana, thrived on a foundation of trust, integrity, and strong personal relationships. Leadership in this close-knit community was not just about position or title; it was deeply rooted in the values of a handshake, one's word, and the power of relationships. This retrospective look into Missoula's past reveals how these principles shaped the town and its people, creating a legacy that continues to resonate today. Let's take a humorous step back in history to a time in Missoula, Montana early '70s when things were quite different from today. Imagine a scene right out of the past: Playboy bunnies and boat races on the Clark Fork River, adding a splash of excitement and glamour to the city's life. These events, while now a quirky part of Missoula's history, were once a highlight for many locals. Then picture the business world of that era: bourbon and cigars at noon lunches were not uncommon. It was a time when the corporate atmosphere was more relaxed, and perhaps less formal than what we're accustomed to today. The offices buzzed with the sound of secretaries proficient in shorthand, typing away on dictation machines – a skill that's almost a lost art in today's digital world. Fashion too had its unique flair with miniskirts and perms being the rage. After a long day at work, people would often hit the dance floor, grooving to the music of

the 70s – think disco balls and funky moves. And who could forget the fun-filled cruises on Flathead Lake “The Fun Ship” or the beach liners filled with business professionals for a trip to Ovando, MT? These events were often organized to celebrate with groups like the Blackfoot Cattlewomen, bringing together different communities for a good time. This nostalgic look at Missoula's past highlights a time of social and cultural shifts, reflecting a more laid-back and perhaps flamboyant lifestyle. It's a reminder of how times change, but the memories of those vibrant days continue to bring smiles.

Latrielle believes in the Weight of One’s Word: In a time when formal contracts were not always the norm, the value of a person's word held immense significance. Leaders were respected and followed based on their reputation for honesty and reliability. When a community leader makes a promise, it is expected to be fulfilled. This unwritten rule of integrity was the bedrock of trust within the community, allowing for seamless collaboration and progress.

Latrielle believes in the Role of Relationships: Relationships were the cornerstone of leadership and community building in Missoula. Leaders recognized that strong, personal connections were crucial for the town's well-being. These relationships were nurtured through regular face-to-face interactions, community gatherings, and a shared sense of purpose. Leaders were accessible and part of the community fabric, making them more responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people.

“I fondly reminisce about some of the most colorful moments in the history of the Missoula Chamber, painting a vivid picture of its unique spirit and camaraderie. There was that unforgettable time when the Chamber leadership, donned in elegant furs and sharp suits, took to the streets with picket signs in hand. They marched alongside the gas station owners to build a new gas station on Higgins, a quirky yet powerful show of support that must have been a sight to behold! Then there's the story of Karl Tyler's ambitious venture to build a new car dealership. It was located, of all places, on a then remote and unpaved Reserve Street, a decision that raised many eyebrows and sparked cautious whispers in the business community. And who could forget the community's buzzing conversations when the idea of introducing a mall to Missoula was first floated? The prospect stirred a mix of excitement and apprehension, as people pondered over how this development might reshape the retail landscape of the town. These memories and hundreds more, filled with a blend of humor, boldness, and a touch of nostalgia, truly encapsulate the dynamic and ever-evolving journey of the Missoula Chamber under my leadership.”

The Missoula Chamber has received its fair share of amusing and unusual inquiries over the years, reflecting the charm and quirkiness of both the city and its visitors. Among the most memorable questions:

- *"What time of year do deer turn into elk?" – a whimsical misunderstanding of local wildlife habits that brings a smile.*
- *"Where is the airshow in Missoula being held?" – a logical query, yet humorous in its straightforwardness, considering the vast Montana skies.*
- *The search for "M" and "L" on the hillsides led to the baffling yet comical quest to find the "issou and a" to complete the spelling of "Missoula".*
- *A delightful mispronunciation turned "Nine Pipes" into the endearingly mistaken "Ninny Pippy" when inquiring about the Bird Refuge.*