

KAYLA MORRIS | 27

Tell us a bit about yourself, are you a Helena native born and raised? If not, when did you move here – what brought you to Helena?

I grew up in Oregon and came to Helena in 2017 to attend Carroll College as a pre-med student with plans of ultimately becoming an OB/GYN. Like many college students, I thought I had my life mapped out.

While I was at Carroll, I found myself increasingly drawn to leadership and systems change. I helped lead a Culture of Respect grant that ultimately contributed to the creation of a student-run Peer Advocacy Center on campus, in partnership with The Friendship Center. Looking back, it was probably one of the first signs that my interests extended beyond direct patient care.

After graduating, while applying to medical school, I accepted a position at St. Peter's Health to partner with our community and launch a brand-new Housing is Healthcare initiative. Around the same time, I was accepted into several medical schools. Rather than beginning medical school that next fall, I chose to defer my admission for a year so I could see the project through.

Over the next year, as I worked alongside healthcare providers, housing partners, behavioral health organizations, nonprofits, and local leaders, I began to see that many of healthcare's biggest challenges weren't clinical, they were systemic. Across the country, too many patients struggle to navigate a fragmented healthcare system despite the incredible work being done by dedicated clinicians every day. It became clear that I wanted to spend my career building systems that allow patients, providers, and communities to thrive. I felt that I could make a bigger impact by bringing organizations together to solve complex problems and ultimately made the difficult decision to step away from going to medical school and pursue a career in population health instead.

Nearly ten years later, Helena has become home. It's where I've grown professionally, found lifelong mentors and friends, fallen in love, and discovered a community that believes collaboration can accomplish incredible things.

OCCUPATION

I serve as the Manager of Community-Based and Crisis Care Delivery at St. Peter's Health, where I oversee programs including Frequent Users of System Engagement (FUSE), Community Health Workers, Peer Support Specialists, and Mobile Crisis Re-



sponse.

Without question, the best part of my job is the people I get to work with. I have the privilege of leading an incredible team of people who show up every day with compassion, creativity, and a deep commitment to our community. They meet people where they are, earn their trust, navigate complex situations, and, in so doing, change lives for the better. They're the ones doing the truly difficult work. My role is to remove barriers, build partnerships, and create the conditions that allow them to do what they do best. I'm incredibly proud of them and grateful to support their work.

What excites me most is building systems that better support both patients and the people caring for them. Whether that's launching new programs, strengthening partnerships, or rethinking how care is delivered, I enjoy bringing people together to solve problems. Most recently, I've been leading the transformation of our Mobile Crisis Response Team into a 24/7 response model that ensures people experiencing behavioral health crises receive care from the most clinically appropriate team while allowing law enforcement to focus on public safety.

Last year, I completed my Master of Health Administration at Dartmouth College. One of my biggest takeaways was realizing that many of the ideas people were excited to discuss were already taking shape here in Helena. It reinforced my belief that some of healthcare's most innovative solutions come from communities willing to collaborate and think differently.

I feel incredibly fortunate that St. Peter's Health and this community have trusted me with this work. My hope is that every partnership we build leaves our healthcare system stronger, easier to navigate, and our community healthier than we found it.

MORRIS

From L15

Q&A

What community service or volunteer activities/organizations are you involved with? And what interests you in being an active community member?

One of the unique things about my career is that community collaboration is woven into my everyday work. Whether I'm working alongside local nonprofits, housing providers, law enforcement, behavioral health organizations, or government agencies, my job is centered on building partnerships that strengthen our community.

Outside of work, I recently was elected to serve as Vice President of the Gym 406 Cheer Booster Club and am a member of the Good Samaritan Ministries Advisory Board.

I've learned that meaningful community change rarely comes from one person or one organization. It happens when people are willing to show up, listen, and say "yes" to working together. I feel fortunate to be part of a community where people genuinely care about one another and are willing to roll up their sleeves to solve difficult problems together.

What do you like best about living, working and volunteering in the Helena area?

Helena is the perfect size to make a real difference. It's large enough to have incredible organizations doing meaningful work, but small enough that relationships matter and meaningful collaboration can occur. If someone has a good idea, chances are you can get the right people around a table and start making it happen.

Professionally, Helena has opened doors I never imag-

ined. Personally, it's become home. The scenery is hard to beat, but it's the people who make Helena special. This is a community that shows up for one another and isn't afraid to tackle hard problems together.

What else should people know about you?

If you would have asked me as a high school senior if I was going to stay in Montana, I would have told you 'no way!' Ironically, I almost transferred out of Carroll College during my freshman year. Looking back, I'm incredibly grateful I stayed.

Outside of work, life revolves around my family. Being a bonus mom to two incredible kids is one of the greatest joys in my life. I also love to travel, spend time outdoors, and am always looking for opportunities to learn something new.