An Interview with the Downtown Missoula Partnership
Edited by Emily Pritchard

Robert C. Gibin is the Director of Finance and Administration for the Downtown Missoula Partnership (DMP). The DMP has hired interns for over five years and the work they accomplish is significant. “Interns assist in marketing, community development, membership, and database work so that more time can be spent on big picture goals.”

What is the Downtown Missoula Partnership?

“The DMP is comprised of the Missoula Downtown Association (MDA), the Business Improvement District (BID), and the Missoula Downtown Foundation (MDF). The DMP strives to promote Downtown Missoula as a center of business, culture, and entertainment while enhancing vitality by facilitating commerce, investment, beautification of streetscapes, and safety.”

Briefly describe your academic background and how you got to be Director of Finance and Administration at DMP.

“I have a B.A. in Accountancy and Finance from St. Anselm College in Manchester, NH and MBA course work at The University of Montana (not currently a student). I spent a number of years in finance with an investment firm here in Missoula. I began work with the MDA in early 2011 and have been instrumental in assisting the growth of the MDA, BID and MDF as well as formation of the Downtown Missoula Partnership in 2014. The DMP was formed to fulfill each organizations mission with better resources, higher efficiency and greater output.”

What are some of the tasks your current intern Mariah is working on?

“The Missoula Downtown Foundation is currently in the middle of its annual Friends of Downtown Campaign, which is a fundraising effort to support capital projects in Downtown Missoula. Mariah has been very helpful in donor outreach, database management and customer service.”

Do interns do a lot of work with the public? What are intern schedules like?

“Yes they do. Marketing, Membership and Fundraising interns work directly with members, donors, and office customers depending on the project they are assigned. There are membership and marketing sales calls, donor thank you calls or the sale of a gift cards, etc. as potential customer service requirements. The DMP office is open M-F 8-5.”

“Interns set their own schedules and work anywhere from 8-15 hours/week depending on the semester. The DMP works with interns on their work schedule so it does not interfere with their class schedule.”
How often are interns involved with planning big events?

“Every semester. The MDA holds a number of large events each year: Winter Brewfest, Garden City Brewfest, Out To Lunch, Downtown ToNight, Garden City River Rod Run and River City Roots Festival. Interns are an integral part of planning and executing these larger events. Last summer, the MDA’s Membership and Events intern, Niki Bates, was chair of the River City Roots Festival Art Show. Niki coordinated with 26 artists on booth setup, art sales, policy, and hospitality throughout the two day event. She did an excellent job. Interns are also currently assisting the MDF with its up and coming fundraising poker tournament in March of 2016.”

Can you tell me more about the networking opportunities for interns? Who might they meet?

“The Downtown Missoula Partnership (MDA, BID, MDF) works with over 500 member businesses (MDA), 600 downtown property owners (BID), many, many donors (MDF), and nearly 40 Board members, all who are key community stakeholders. Interns are an important part of our ongoing communications with all constituencies.”

When and how do you advertise for interns?

“We advertise for paid internships in December/January for Spring Semester; April/May for Summer Semester; and in August for Fall Semester. Listings can be found on our website and through Internship Services. We have anywhere from 1-3 interns a semester. We primarily look for Marketing, Community Development, IT, and Accounting students but have no specific years or qualifications in mind.”

Do you have any advice for students seeking internships or other experiences in your field?

“Real-world, practical experience is equally as important as relationships. We offer a very dynamic and fulfilling professional experience.”

Would you recommend UM interns to other employers?

“Absolutely. The DMP has been very fortunate to work alongside UM interns for a number of years. Interns are passionate, interesting, intelligent, and have shown excellent work ethic. The DMP has seen our interns move on to small and large local employers as well as some amazing regional and national corporate experiences. The DMP cannot ask for more than that.”

Where can students go for more information?
Our website: www.missouladowntown.com or Robert@missouladowntown.com