



**Montana District Office District Director
Michelle Johnston**

Michelle Johnston is District Director for the U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) Montana District Office located in Helena. Appointed in December of 2001, Ms. Johnston is responsible for the delivery of SBA programs throughout Montana. These programs include the administration of the total SBA business loan portfolio of over 2500 loans and more than \$330 million dollars, oversight of ten Small Business Development Centers (SBDC), and nine SCORE chapters.

Ms. Johnston serves on the Helena YWCA Board and is a member of Women's Leadership Network (WLN.) She is a past board member of Career Training Institute (which formerly housed a Women's Business Center), past President of Business and Professional Women and a Past State Business Chair and serves on the Combined Federal Campaign Committee.

Prior to her appointment, Ms. Johnston served as the Acting District Director. She began her federal career in 1974 with the Veterans Administration and moved to U.S. Geological Survey in the fall of 1976, after their first child was born. She was fortunate to work permanent part time until their second child went to kindergarten. In 1986, she transferred to the Internal Revenue Service and in 1987, came to SBA in Business Development. One of her collateral duties was the Women's Business Ownership Rep and she was honored for her work in that arena. She nominated a who who owned a construction firm and was in the 8a program for an Avon/SBA Women of Enterprise Award – and she was a national recipient. She also started the very successful Women's Network for Entrepreneurial Training (WNET) in Montana. She was responsible for and served as the oversight person for the Small Business Institute program. During that time, three of the plans were recognized as the National Undergraduate studies of the year. She was named Chief of Entrepreneurial Development in 1996, and not only oversaw all ED programs but GC/BD as well as the Public Information function. In 2000, she was named Acting District Director and one year later was named as District Director for Montana.

During her tenure as District Director, she has seen the office decrease by 10 employees, through centralization and retirements. Yet in 2003, the first year of the scorecard, Montana ranked as the #1 office out of 70 District Offices, reaching or exceeding 125% of all goals. Again in 2006, Montana tied two other states in the country for very small markets reaching or achieving all goals – with a total of six staff. In 2001, Montana was honored to have the National Minority Small Business of the Year, in 2004, the National Exporter of the year and in 2006, the 1st Runner Up for National Small Business Person of the Year.

Johnston is no stranger to small business, as she and her husband have owned and operated their own small business for many years. They started their auto body shop business in 1976, received an SBA guaranteed loan to purchase the real estate in 1979, and today have grown it into a profitable and successful enterprise. She is proud to be a small business owner and knows the ins and outs and trials and tribulations of owning a small business. As a business owner, she understands what business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs go through. Both Johnston and her husband are Montana natives and have two adult children, Heather and Travis.