



20 UNDER 40

Recognizing 20 outstanding community members up to age 40

July 2021



Inspired

Congratulations Lee Ricks!

SVP, Business Banking Manager

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Congratulations to this year's 20 Under 40 winners

If you're in business in the Helena area, you know our community is thriving with leaders who have accomplished great things by the age of 40. The Independent Record and the Helena Area Chamber of Commerce are proud to recognize many of those young leaders with our annual 20 Under 40 business professional awards.

This year's winners will be honored during a luncheon scheduled for 11:45 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 17 at the Delta Hotels by Marriott—Helena Colonial. The event is open to the public, and tickets cost \$25. Call the chamber at 442-4120 for more information or to reserve your seat.

We invite you to join us in celebrating these young leaders and thanking them for making our community such a great place to live and work.

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Congratulations Justin Kennedy!

As MSF's Nurse Manager, you carry out our mission every day to partner with employers and their employees to care for those injured on the job and champion a culture of workplace safety for our fellow Montanans.



SARAH ELLIOTT

St. Peter's Health

JESSE CHANEY

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Sarah Elliott specializes in solving complex problems.

As the first person to assume the role of director of complex care at St. Peter's Health, a position she has held for about three years, Elliott leads the organization's case management team and oversees the complex care team within the primary units.

"Our focus is really on helping people with complex medical and social needs, and helping connect them with resources in the community," she said.

One of her first projects in this role was the merger of the outpatient and inpatient case management departments, which aims to make the transition smoother for patients.

After local schools closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Elliott also helped form a daycare program at ExplorationWorks for the children of local physicians, nurses, emergency medical technicians and other medical staff. The partnership supported ExplorationWorks during a financially difficult time and helped ensure that the parents of about 20 local children could continue reporting to work each day to fight the pandemic.

Elliott grew up in Helena and graduated from Carroll College. She left the community for a few years but came back in 2009 to work at St. Peter's Health, where she was a registered nurse for several years before becoming the director of complex care.

"It's great to be back in Helena," she said. "I love Helena."

And Helena is lucky to have her.

In addition to her work at St. Peter's Health, Elliot serves as a parent volunteer at Hawthorne Elementary School, a Helena Youth Soccer Association coach, and a member of the Healthy Together Task Force, the Helena Transition Coalition and the Capital Transit Advisory Coalition.

"We are so fortunate at St. Peter's to have a thoughtful, intelligent, forward-thinking, dedicated, and caring leader like Sarah," her colleagues and supervisors wrote in her nomination for the 20 Under 40 award. "She is truly helping the Helena community be the healthiest it can be."

Editor Jesse Chaney can be reached at 406-447-4074, or find him on Twitter: @IR_JesseChaney.



KATIE BRENNAN

Crafted Aesthetics & Wellness



THOM BRIDGE, INDEPENDENT RECORD

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Katie Mildenberger Brennan remembers working in family practice and noticing people coming in grumpy and leaving grumpy. She knew there had to be a bet-

ter way.

Whatever she has done to make people happier is apparently working, as the 35-year-old Brennan was nominated to be one of the 20 under 40 honorees.

She is the owner of Crafted Aesthetics & Wellness, with locations in Helena, Butte

and Missoula and has about 24 employees total.

"I think it's pretty cool," she said of being an honoree. "Whatever I am doing is clearly working for the community."

She was nominated by friend Judy Reddy.

"Using her medical knowledge and experience, she developed an interest in helping women (and men) look and feel their very best (in body, mind and spirit)," Reddy wrote.

She also said Brennan is one of the hardest-working people she knows. And she said she trains and motivates her staff to keep them up to date on the latest procedures.

Brennan, who received her nurse practitioner degree from Georgetown University, describes Crafted as a spa and medical service.

"I think, essentially, what we are about is having people come in the front door and have some peace and then leave," she said.

She said she grew up with three sisters who did beauty treatments on each other. All of the sisters are in the same line of business.

Brennan opened her first business in Helena in a "teeny-tiny room" in which she said she could barely see what she was doing. Her business is now in a 4,000-square-foot building on North Montana Avenue.

She and husband, Michael, have three children under age 5.

"I call Crafted my fourth baby," she said. Brennan said her husband, Michael, is a "huge supporter" of what she does.

"You have to be flexible to make it work," she said of the blend of work and family.

Brennan said her clientele are mostly women, but said she is starting to see more and more men show up.

"They need love, too," she said.

Assistant editor Phil Drake can be reached at 406-231-9021.



Katie, you have never been one to be stagnant. You dream big and risk often, and in doing so you have crafted the most welcoming business for people and your employees. You make sisters of everyone.

Your momma and real sisters are so proud of you for making the top 20 under 40. We can't wait to see what the future brings for you and for Crafted in the years to come.

Love Mom, Melissa, Ashli, and Ali

craftedaestheticsmt.com

CRAFTED
AESTHETICS

Katie, you inspire us every day
to take risks and be bold.

Beth & Elizabeth

Best Friends Forever



ASHLEIGH HEIMBACH

West Mont

PHIL DRAKE

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Ashleigh Heimbach was living in Belgrade when she applied for three jobs.

The one she selected led her to West Mont, where in 2012 she started as the accounts payable coordinator.

And she said she had no idea it would land her where she is today.

Heimbach, 38, for the past 3 1/2 years has been president of West Mont, overseeing 215 employees.

She said she was excited to learn she has been named one of the 20 Under 40 award winners.

"I think I've worked really hard to get where I am at and I have found my passion with West Mont, so it is nice to be recognized for that," she said.

She was nominated for the award by her mother, Janice Spencer.

"Ashleigh loves her work in the nonprofit field," Spencer wrote, adding she is respected by board members and staff.

"Ashleigh has implemented several positive and sometimes difficult changes in the company over the years to enable West Mont to not only stay viable, but to thrive during difficult and uncertain times in the nonprofit world," she wrote, adding she is proud of her daughter.

West Mont is one the larger nonprofit groups in Helena and provides services to people with disabilities. Heimbach said they have clients in group homes and have work sites, a flower shop and a barn.

Some clients are involved with employment programs and work in the community.

She said they work with 250 people with disabilities a year.

Heimbach said she climbed ladder with West Mont and said her knowledge of its accounting and finances helped her to land the job she now holds.

"It's now more about leadership than management," she said.

"I like the fact I get to make a difference in somebody's life every single day, whether it be an employee or a client. It's a heartfelt job," she said.

She said she appreciates transparency and compassion in leaders as well as strong communication and listening skills.

And she tries to remember "that we are all human and we make mistakes and how to help someone learn from those mistakes."

She said West Mont has an extensive employee placement program. It does some job training and some job coaching and it helps



THOM BRIDGE, INDEPENDENT RECORD

take the burden off employers.

"Our clients are some of the hardest-working people they will ever employ," she said.

Heimbach said her future plans involve the organization she is already with.

"I would like to see where I can take West Mont in the next five, 10 or 15 years," she said.

"There is a need for the services we provide."

She said she would like to see West Mont expand and remain one of the best employers in Helena.

"I still have a lot of work ahead of me," she said.

Assistant editor Phil Drake can be reached at 406-231-9021.



LAURA CRAFT

Anderson ZurMuehlen & Co.

NOLAN LISTER

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For Laura Craft, a manager within local accounting firm Anderson ZurMuehlen & Co.'s attest department, the dollars and cents she pores over each year are more than just numbers on a ledger. They play an important role in the lives of people in her community.

The 31-year-old Craft is a member of the firm's nonprofit specialty team and helps her fellow accountants connect with numerous nonprofits and manages the organizations' audits.

"I do enjoy working with our nonprofit clients and helping them with their finances," she said. "There are a lot of nonprofits in our community that do so much good."

The Helena native and Capital High School graduate said her more than 10 years with the firm have taught her that things do not always go as planned.

"Every day is different; it's one of the things I like about the job," Craft said. "You have to adjust."

She did just that earlier this year when she took the reins of her firm's annual nonprofit conference that was forced to go virtual during the global health pandemic.

Office Manager Tiff Hanson, who nominated Craft for the 20 Under 40 award, called the event a "huge success."

"This was the first year for the conference to be held virtually and Laura took on the huge task of leading and organizing the conference in a virtual environment and it was a huge success with 145 attendees," Hanson wrote in the letter.

Craft credited her talented coworkers.

"This is a unique department," she said. "Having coworkers who enjoy doing the same thing you do has been helpful."

Craft said she is appreciative of others taking notice of the work she and her department do.

"It feels really good to be recognized," she said. "I beat myself up more than recognizing that I do well with my job, so the fact that I was nominated by my coworkers, that says a lot to me that I am doing my job well."

Hanson said she looks forward to seeing what Craft's future may hold.

"She is a huge asset to Anderson ZurMuehlen and we look forward to seeing where her career leads her," Hanson wrote.



GARY MARSHALL, BMGPHOTOS.COM



Congratulations, Laura Craft, on being selected as a recipient of the 2021 Helena Independent Record's 20 Under 40 Award. The Team at Anderson ZurMuehlen is proud of you!



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ABBIE CZIOK

Browning, Kaleczyc, Berry, & Hoven

LACEY MIDDLESTEAD
For the Independent Record

An early love for reading, writing, and speaking, along with experience editing deposition transcripts, inspired Abbie Cziok to pursue a career in the world of law.

Today she serves as an attorney at Browning, Kaleczyc, Berry, & Hoven's Helena office, where her practice focuses on commercial and medical litigation.

A native of Butte, Cziok attended Gonzaga University and later Regent University School of Law. After receiving her law degree, Cziok lived and practiced in Denver for a few years. She later made the decision to return to Montana to be closer to family and closer to community.

"I felt too far removed from the community in the big city life," explained Cziok.

In 2018, Cziok joined Browning, Kaleczyc, Berry, & Hoven, where she defends physicians and medical providers in malpractice matters and insurance companies in personal injury defense, and represents entities in tax, business, and commercial litigation matters.

"It's humbling that people come to you in their most vulnerable moments and you actually get to do something active about it," said Cziok about her work.

In an effort to give back to the broader community,

Cziok also regularly takes on pro bono cases from the Montana Legal Services Association and through her firm.

"In dealing with family law on pro bono cases you meet people at their lowest point," explained Cziok. "It's nice to help solve problems in a really concrete way."

In 2020, Cziok was recognized for her work by receiving the First Judicial District Pro Bono award. She also received the Frank Haswell Award in 2019 for outstanding contributions to "The Montana Lawyer," where she wrote a series of legal writing columns.

In addition to her work at Browning, Kaleczyc, Berry & Hoven, Cziok has been on the YWCA Helena board since 2019 and is an active volunteer for the organization.

"I know that they [YWCA] have a long-term commitment to the women in the community and are very serious about the work they do," said Cziok of the YWCA.

Outside of her day-to-day legal work, you can find Cziok playing in Montana's outdoors, helping run the Gonzaga Alumni Association, teaching dance at the Dynamic Dance and Tumbling Academy in her hometown of Butte, or prepping new content for a wine podcast she hosts with her sister, Hannah.



GARY MARSHALL, BMGPHOTOS.COM

Congratulations Abbie Cziok on Your Selection to Helena's 20 Under 40!

The law firm of Browning, Kaleczyc, Berry & Hoven, P.C. is pleased to announce the selection of Abbie Cziok to Helena's 20 Under 40 for 2021!

With a focus on litigation, Abbie is a trusted advisor who excels at solving difficult issues, both inside and outside the courtroom. She defends physicians and medical providers in malpractice matters and insurance companies in personal injury defense, and represents entities in tax, business, and commercial litigation matters.



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WES FEIST

Carroll College



GARY MARSHALL, BMGPHOTOS.COM

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Wes Feist says it has always been his passion to help students find their right career path and make sure it aligns with personal and professional goals.

That is exactly what he is doing now.

Feist, 36, said he gets a tremendous amount of satisfaction as director of career services at Carroll College in Helena, a job he has held for 4 1/2 years.

He said the students at the private Catholic university “are so capable and so impressive,” that to help them “make sure they find joy, generosity and satisfaction with personal and professional lives is extraordinarily rewarding.”

He said he did not expect to be selected as one of the 20 Under 40 honorees.

“I feel very honored, humbled and gracious to Dr. Cech for the nomination, the Chamber and the Helena Independent Record,” he said.

John Cech, the president of Carroll College, nominated Feist.

“Through hundreds of student appointments and professional events annually, Wes provides attentive and direct advice and guidance to the incredibly talented students of Carroll College,” Cech wrote

in his nomination.

“Wes collaborates with faculty and staff to tailor opportunities to the specific needs of each student, helping them to reach their life and professional goals,” he wrote.

Cech noted Feist’s skills were especially critical during the COVID-19 pandemic by helping students position themselves for an unknown workforce.

Feist said he hopes to stay at Carroll College in the profession he is doing now.

He and his wife, Dani, have two young sons. He also serves on the East Helena City Council.

“I have always been the type who tries to build bridges for others and the community,” he said. “I think it is important, if you have the ability, to give back in any way you can. I hope to convey that to my boys — Giving of oneself is important to find success for yourself and others.”

Feist thanked the city of East Helena for helping to develop him as a person.

He is active in several other organizations as well.

“I hope to continue building connections and opportunities throughout the Helena community and state of Montana,” Feist said.

Assistant editor Phil Drake can be reached at 406-231-9021.

Carroll College

Congratulations to our
20 UNDER 40
SAINTS

Laura Craft, '13

Sarah Elliott, '07

Wes Feist

McKenzie Homan, '12

Anderson ZurMuehlen

St. Peter's Health

Carroll College

SkyHi Kennels

You continue to make us proud as the motto says,
“Not for School, but for Life.”



www.carroll.edu

TIFFANY KNIIEPKAMP

St. Peter's Health

JESSE CHANEY

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Dr. Tiffany Kniepkamp thrives amid chaos, which made her a natural leader in the emergency department at St. Peter's Health as the coronavirus pandemic gripped the community.

"It was like being in training all over again," she said, noting that she was in constant communication with other providers around the country and spent most nights watching lectures at home to learn more about the virus discovered only a few months earlier.

COVID-19 changed virtually everything for Kniepkamp and her colleagues.

Protective equipment such as masks, gowns and gloves became scarce as providers put it on and took it off each time they entered and exited a patient's room.

Kniepkamp would not touch her children before she was fully showered, and some of her colleagues completely isolated from their families to avoid infecting them.

Among the most difficult changes were the new policies and procedures that prohibited people from visiting loved ones hospitalized with COVID-19, she said.

"A lot of people didn't understand that, and it was difficult to explain it because at the same time it was new to us," she said.

Through it all, Kniepkamp remained committed to defeating COVID-19.

"Every shift she donned her personal protective equipment and accepted without question the very real risk that she might contract the potentially deadly virus through her close contact with her patient's respiratory aerosol," Dr. William S. Gallea, another emergency physician at St. Peter's Health, wrote in her nomination letter.

Kniepkamp was also the liaison between the emergency department and St. Peter's Incident Command Team, which worked to adapt to ever-changing information about the virus.

Through the news media, social media and community forums, she participated in community outreach efforts related to the pandemic.

And she volunteered to be on the Triage Team, which was charged with determining how to allocate resources if the health system ever came up short.

"That unthinkable reality never materialized in Montana, but she was willing to participate in making the difficult decisions if necessary," Gallea wrote.



THOM BRIDGE, INDEPENDENT RECORD

Originally from Circle, Kniepkamp was born and raised in Montana and has been working in the emergency department at St. Peter's Health for about six years.

She is a voting member of the Quality Committee of the health system's board

and a member of the Sexual Assault Response Team, and former Gov. Steve Bullock appointed her to the State Trauma Care Committee in 2020.

"I have known many physicians throughout my nearly 50-year career in

medicine, and I cannot imagine a more deserving individual," Gallea wrote.

Editor Jesse Chaney can be reached at 406-447-4074, or find him on Twitter: @IR_JesseChaney.

KATIE GALLAGHER

St. Peter's Health



THOM BRIDGE, INDEPENDENT RECORD

JESSE CHANEY

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As a spokesperson for St. Peter's Health, Katie Gallagher has written more nominations than she can remember for the annual 20 Under 40 award.

Now it's her turn to be recognized.

"It's weird to be put forward when I very much see my role as putting other people forward and celebrating other people for the important work they do," she said. "Every day I come to work that's what my mind is focused on: How can we highlight the expertise that's in this organization and share it with the community?"

The Oregon native has lived in Helena for about a decade, and she has been a public relations manager at St. Peter's Health for the last four years. In that role she is responsible for highlighting the work of the health system, its providers, and during the last few months, its COVID-19 vaccination efforts.

"Katie was absolutely essential with the county vaccination event planning, communication events, and much more," Tom Richardson, clinical pharmacy manager at St. Peter's Health, wrote in Gallagher's nomination letter. "Without her our county would not have been as successful as it was with COVID vaccination distribution. Her dedication to these efforts were nothing short of heroic."

Although St. Peter's Health has its own

vaccination strategy, Gallagher has also been working with the Lewis and Clark County Vaccine Planning Group that spearheaded mass vaccination clinics at the Lewis and Clark County Fairgrounds and other sites around the area.

Through media interviews, newsletters, social media, videos and other means, she has been working to educate the community about the importance of the vaccine and the efforts of the many volunteers and health-care professionals providing them.

"My role was really educating people on why vaccinations are important," she said.

Gallagher also helped collect donations that were used to purchase meals from local restaurants to feed the volunteers at the clinics. About \$15,000 was spent at local restaurants during a time when many were struggling due to the pandemic.

"My role is to champion the people who are doing the tough work on the ground," she said.

Even though only a few people showed up to some of the clinics, Gallagher said every little bit helps.

"Lewis and Clark County has been a leader in vaccinations from the start, and that's something to be proud of in the state of Montana," she said.

Editor Jesse Chaney can be reached at 406-447-4074, or find him on Twitter: @IR_JesseChaney.

Join Us In Honoring Helena's 20 Under 40 Recipients

Awards Luncheon
Tuesday, August 17
at 11:45 am
Delta Hotel Colonial
Sponsored by St. Peter's Health

Please call
406-442-4120
for ticket info

Independent
Record



MĒGHAN SCOTT

AmeriCorps and Montana Legal Services Association



NOLAN LISTER

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Lawyers often play a critical role in society. Perhaps nobody knows that better than Mēghan Scott, AmeriCorps' project director of Justice for Montanans and the Montana Legal Services Association's program coordinator of the Rural Incubator Project for Lawyers.

In her role with the Justice for Montanans Project, Scott oversees about two dozen AmeriCorps members helping more than 40,000 underserved, impoverished Montanans receive free or reduced cost civil law advice, resources and information.

"There just aren't enough attorneys to meet everyone's needs," she said.

With the Rural Incubator Project for Lawyers, Scott helps mentor rural Montana attorneys and delivers referrals to build sustainability among the burgeoning practices.

"I've always wanted to feel I'm making an impact on communities and in people's lives," she said. "Knowing the work I'm doing is helping tens of thousands of Montanans means a lot to me."

The Defiance, Ohio, native moved to Helena in 2014 as part of the AmeriCorps program, and by 2016, she took over control of the program.

"Just being involved in the legal realm and in a nonprofit organization setting, I found my niche," she said. "So I stayed."

Scott said she owes much of her success over the past years to her boss at the Montana Legal Services Association, Alison Paul.

"It's been really nice learning from her," Scott said.

In her nomination for the 20 Under 40 award, Paul called Scott "one of the brightest jewels in the Queen City."

"She is committed to improving the lives of those around her, and giving back to those in need in her community," Paul said. "Mēghan's passion for social justice work is contagious and she regularly goes above and beyond to motivate those around her to do their best."

She said if she was not doing this work, she would probably be trying to make it as an actress.

Scott has a deep love for the theater. She has appeared in a number of local stage productions, including taking on the role of Jesus in the Myrna Loy production of Jesus Christ Superstar. She also performs in the Helena Symphony Chorale.

Scott also plays softball. Some of her teammates also sent in nomination letters.

When asked what some of her hobbies are, Scott noted her participation on her homeowner association board.

"I love Helena," she said. "I'm trying to get more young people to stay."

Of winning the award, Scott said "it feels awesome. It's nice to know what you're doing is gaining attention."

EMILY FRAZIER

Helena Area Community Foundation



GARY MARSHALL, BMGPHOTOS.COM

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The title of executive director may invoke a vision of plush leather office chairs and plenty of delegation. That could not be further from the truth in the case of Emily Frazier, executive director of the Helena Area Community Foundation.

"I'm still the one who puts the deposit slips in the bank," Frazier said. "Generally speaking, I'm it."

Outside observers of some of Helena's most cherished events such as Greater Helena Gives, the annual, 24-hour fundraising effort, is put on almost entirely by Frazier.

The Helena native helped raise more than \$200,000 for area nonprofits during this year's event.

However, Frazier noted she did have some help. She credited the foundation's board of directors with giving her the support she needs to make the magic happen.

"They've really been hands-on and not just a governing board," Frazier said. "The board members stuff envelopes if need be."

While the board of directors may lick some stamps, it was Frazier who adjusted on the fly during a global health pandemic by partnering with the United Way to es-

tablish an emergency relief fund.

Frazier also created a pandemic-friendly holiday fundraiser, the Helena Holiday Cruise, that she hopes will become a new tradition.

"She has shown amazing leadership since she came on as ED and has headed up immense growth and success of the organization during a very challenging time," Sara Berg, chairwoman of the foundation's board, wrote in Frazier's nomination letter for the 20 Under 40 award.

Fellow board member Jeannie Etchart wrote "She is an absolute rock star and brings so much to the Helena Community!"

Frazier said her deep appreciation for her beloved Helena community was instilled in her at an early age by her parents, Ted and Carrie Flemming, longtime teachers in the Helena Public Schools district.

"I was raised by people who were incredibly involved in the community," she said. "And as teachers, they were teaching all the time."

Frazier said she likes to joke that her role at Helena Area Community Foundation is her "forever job."

"Our motto is 'Love Helena forever,'" she said. "That's easy for me."



RICH BAILEY

406 Electric

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Rich Bailey said he's the kind of guy who likes to put his head down and move forward, go about doing his business and get stuff done.

Maybe that's part of the reason the 33-year-old Bailey was selected to be honored as one of the 20 Under 40 award winners.

Bailey is the founder of 406 Electric in Helena and grew up around people in the profession he has chosen.

"My stepdad is an electrician," Bailey said. "He seemed to always be doing something different and it was interesting."

Three years ago Bailey decided to go on his own and started his own company. He said he now has five employees.

"I like the technical side of things, doing new things and to troubleshoot an issue," he said. "I just enjoy doing the more technical stuff and creating a system that works."

Bailey said he just enjoys a challenge, whether it is getting a project off the ground, doing a remodel or getting electrical systems to work the way they are supposed to.

"You get something thrown at you every day and you have to make it work," he said.

Bailey said management has

its challenges, but he enjoys those challenges for the most part. He said he has tried to create a group of people who work well together and get along.

Bailey believes an environment where employees are happy trickles down to customer service.

Danielle Brooks is one of those employees.

"When you meet Rich you have a friend for life," she said in his nomination for 20 Under 40.

Brooks said Bailey has hired top staff, given them good benefits and offers top customer service.

"And he is an amazing family man," she adds.

He and his wife, Lena, have three children. They moved to Helena six years ago so that their kids could grow up near their cousins, he said.

"We want that relationship to be strong," Bailey said. "We just like the Helena community and Montana values. That is what we want for our family."

He said his future goals are for his company to grow. He also wants to provide the best workplace for his employees.

And he wants to create "the best customer service possible and give employees the tools they need to do a good job."

Assistant editor Phil Drake can be reached at 406-231-9021.



GARY MARSHALL, BMGPHOTOS.COM

**THANK YOU
HELENA!**



**WE TAKE CHARGE
TO KEEP YOUR
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Keeven Tamol • Walker Ryan • Danielle Brooks
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COLLETTE ANDERSON

Great West Engineering

MARGA LINCOLN

For the Independent Record

It was a group effort at Great West Engineering to nominate Collette Anderson for a 20 Under 40 award.

"She makes it an easy choice," said human resources director Denise Street.

"She has those qualities that when you meet her, you can just tell what a good person she is. She has the ability to be a leader in whatever she's doing."

A civil engineer at Great West for the past 11 years, Anderson was recently named Municipal Business Unit Manager for the Helena office.

"One of her qualities is to handle tough situations with such ease and grace, you don't even realize it was a tough situation," Street said. In public hearings and meetings, "she has an ability to see the other side and really take other people's considerations into account."

"I think what I like about engineering is just the problem solving and the challenges each project presents," said Anderson of what drew her to this career. "One of my favorite parts about the job ... is working with small rural communities across the state," in dealing with their water and wastewater systems.

"It's really important that we're disposing our wastewater safely so we can keep our water clean," protecting Montana's environment and its drinking water.

"One of the biggest challenges we face is infrastructure," she said. It's exceedingly important but also



very expensive, so she and Great West staff help communities find funding to keep costs down.

Her efforts have earned her praise from the communities she works with.

"Collette goes above and beyond to put her clients first," wrote Town of Fairfield clerk Tammy Comer. "She cares about us and the Town of Fairfield. Our relationship is much greater than client/engineer, it is more like family."

The mother of four, Anderson is also an award-winning athlete, who was the first volleyball player to be inducted as an individual in Montana Tech's Hall of Fame.

It was while working as a volleyball coach at Helena High School that she

learned about some Helena families facing really tough financial times.

Because of Anderson's efforts, Great West decided to adopt a number of Christmas families — donating everything from meals, presents and clothes, to, in one case, a washer and dryer.

The program is so successful, it's spread to Great West's Spokane, Billings and Boise offices.

"I'm just really honored," said Anderson of her 20 Under 40 award. "I'm surrounded by a great group of people ... that make all the things I get involved with possible. I'm just appreciative of that. None of it would be possible without all the wonderful people in my life."

See
what's
possible.

We are proud of all
of your outstanding
achievements.

Congratulations Collette!

Collette Anderson, PE

Helena Municipal
Business Unit
Manager



20 Under 40



www.greatwesteng.com

TRISTAN SHEA

Montana Primary Care Association

NOLAN LISTER
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There is power in numbers. Montana Primary Care Association Data Analyst Tristan Shea aims to empower federally qualified health centers in the state with those numbers.

Shea compiles data submitted by such health care providers to the federal government to give them insight into who they are serving and how they can better serve them.

“My goal is to ensure our health centers have a good idea about the populations they’re seeing,” he said. “They can take that information and use it to switch things up internally if needed.”

Shea said his desire to further the mission of providing affordable health care and equitable access to such services is what drives him.

“I hear stories from all across the country about people who can’t afford what they need just to stay alive,” he said. “Working here has been a great opportunity to work toward that driver.”

While the Helena native and Capital High School graduate said he loves to work with those numbers, his coworkers are what keep him coming back.

“I work with a whole lot of great individuals,” Shea said. “Aside of the hands-on, technical piece, I really enjoy working with my colleagues.”

His coworkers appreciate him as well.

“Tristan is passionate about analyzing and organizing data to tell a story about how health care is delivered by Montana’s community health centers,” coworker Stacey Anderson wrote in her letter of nomination.

The 25-year-old Shea was a standout in the Oregon Tech baseball program not long ago and continued his love of the game by lending his talents to coaching youth baseball in Helena.

Shea said his nomination and selection for the 20 Under 40 award came as a surprise.

“I wasn’t expecting to be nominated,” he said. “I’ve always been taught to be humble, but I do feel honored.”



THOM BRIDGE, INDEPENDENT RECORD

Congratulations to Tristan for being recognized as one of Helena’s 20 Under 40 community leaders! We are so lucky to get to work with you.
~ The MPCA Team



Montana Primary Care Association
www.mtpca.org



DILLON McLAIN

KLJ Engineering

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Dillon McLain took an internship with the Montana Department of Transportation and found the road leading to his future.

McLain, 29, an associate project manager with KLJ Engineering, has been named as one of the 20 Under 40 award winners for 2021.

"It feels pretty great," McLain said of the award, adding it was kind of a shock that someone from within his company asked his permission to be nominated.

He's been with the company since 2014. He had attended Montana State University Northern in Havre.

Kevin Antene, a colleague who nominated him, said McLain "reimagines engineering."

"When moving from place to place, you might take the road, sidewalk, or rail you're traveling on for granted," Antene wrote. "And that's OK, thanks to Dillon McLain."

He named several projects in which McLain participated: The Helena Quiet Zone that allowed trains to cease routine sounding of horns; Rodney Street Phase II in Helena, which will improve one of the city's oldest streets; and the Kalispell

Bypass.

McLain said his job offers him variety, noting a wide range of projects.

He said while Montana has a low population, there is a vast network of roads in the 147,000-square-mile state.

"There is a lot of area to cover and everyone can agree that our transportation infrastructure is not the greatest in spots," McLain said.

He said many of the state's roads, bridges and interstate roads were built 70-80 years ago and are reaching the end of their usable life.

"The aging infrastructure we see around us is in dire need of repair," McLain said.

In his occupation, a drive down the road is not just a drive down the road. It's almost a classroom.

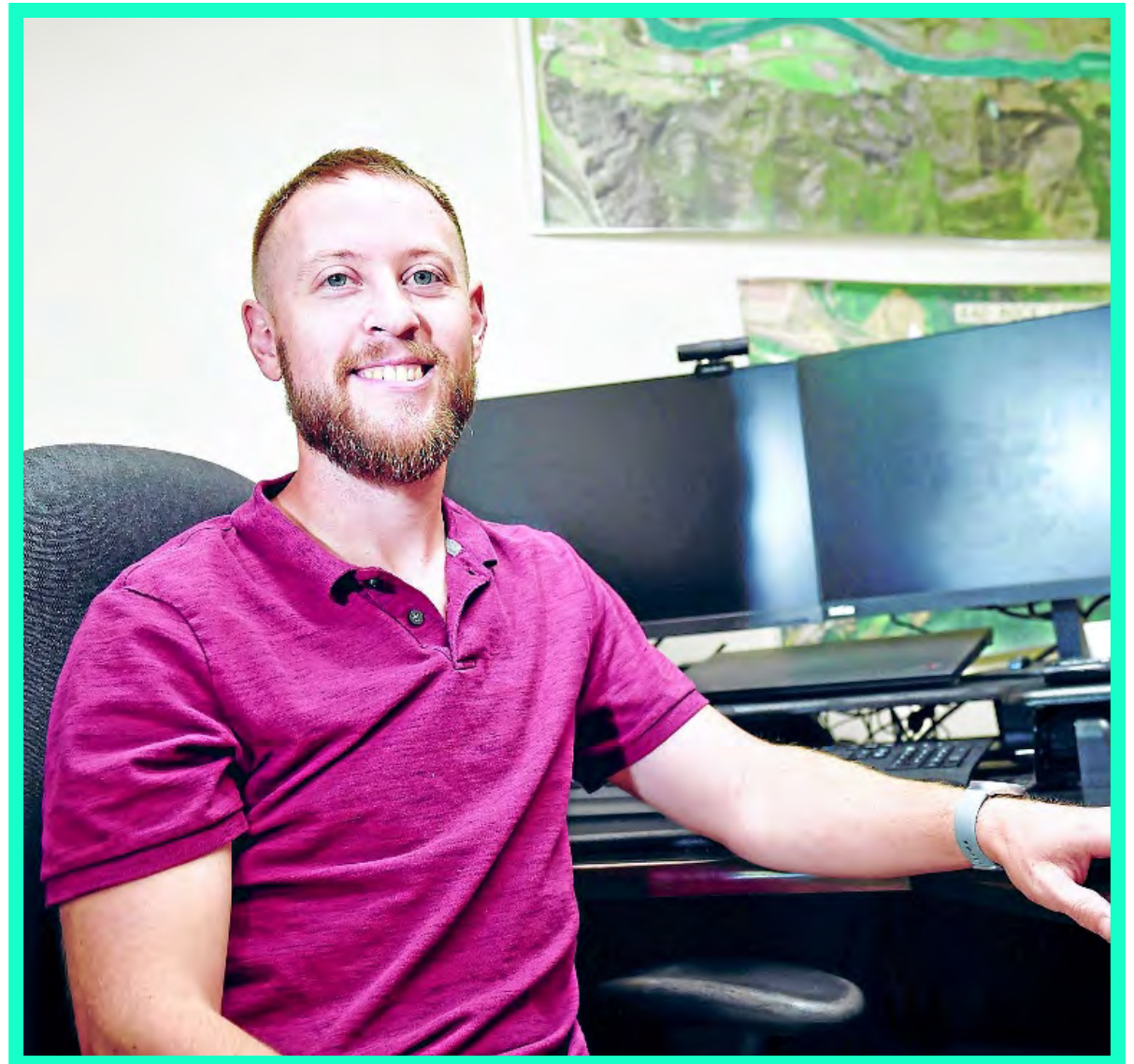
It's a checking of signs, road width, whether or not the road has a curb or a gutter.

"It's the little things that stand out," he said.

He said his future plans are open. He bought a home in the Helena Valley in December, adding he now has roots planted in Helena.

In terms of his career, he wants to become Montana's go-to guy for road design and project management.

Assistant editor Phil Drake can be reached at 406-231-9021.



THOM BRIDGE, INDEPENDENT RECORD



CONGRATULATIONS 
Dillon McLain

20
UNDER
40

McKENZIE HOMAN

Sky-Hi Kennels Daycare and Training

PHIL DRAKE
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When McKenzie Homan was a student at Helena High School, she said she used to park her car near Smitham Brothers Automotive on Boulder Avenue.

She recalled that never in her wildest dreams did she think she'd ever have a business in that very location.

Not only is it a business, it's a dog-gone good business.

The 34-year-old Homan is the owner of Sky-Hi Kennels Daycare and Training, and is one of those being honored with the 20 Under 40 award.

She was nominated by her mother, Robin.

"McKenzie saw a need in Helena's community for her model of canine business and paired it with her dream of working with dogs," she wrote. "The result of her endeavors is that SkyHi has become a valued and well-respected small business..."

Homan went through the anthrozoology program at Carroll College and said the canine classes were her favorite. She had studied to be an equine professional, because she grew up with horses.

But she really enjoyed her time with dogs.

Homan wanted a career in which she could stay in Helena, but said there was not a lot of job opportunity in her field. She had traveled the world and had been in Africa several times. But home was where she wanted to be and realized Helena did not have a lot of social canine care centers.

And so she decided to start her own business.

She said she was surprised how much she likes operating a facility.

She said having a staff is new to her.

"I wasn't much of a leader growing up," she said, adding management does not allow her to spend as much time with dogs as she used to.



THOM BRIDGE, INDEPENDENT RECORD

She now has 15 people on her crew and says their biggest service is daycare Monday through Friday and each day has a different activity. They also provide training and grooming.

Her reaction to the 20 Under 40 Award?

"I was pretty surprised and a little embarrassed," she said, adding she is not used to being the

center of attention. But she notes she worked hard the past five years growing Ski-Hi.

Homan said the business had a rough year last year, with the coronavirus pandemic keeping people home.

"This year is busier than we can handle most days," she said.

She said she has employed a lot of Carroll students on a part-time

basis who are now in the same canine program she was in.

Homan said she is feeling pretty good about her business and credits her husband Kyle Perkins for all his help in remodeling the building.

"My husband helped me build the business," she said. "We started from a kennel facility we built from the ground up. We did all of it, dug every fence post. I

would have not been able to do this without his help."

In terms of her future, she talks about continuing to focus on high-quality services. And she would like to operate a separate facility just for "littles only" day care.

Assistant editor Phil Drake can be reached at 406-231-9021.

TEAL WHITAKER

Montana Community Foundation

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The Montana Community Foundation intends to create permanent philanthropy and build stronger communities, and Teal Whitaker is here to tell us about it.

Whitaker, the 34-year-old Manhattan native, has spent the past two years working as the foundation's communications and outreach manager.

"I get to tell the story of what Montana Community Foundation is doing around the state, cultivating a culture of vision and impacting local communities," Whitaker said.

She is more than proud of her Montana heritage and said it is easy to see why people in the Treasure State are so generous.

"Montanans really love their communities. They care about what happens. They're invested in it," Whitaker said. "That pride of being Montanans filters into philanthropy."

She said that with a small population, a little bit of giving goes a long way toward "creating a sense of place."

Through endowment funds, Montana Community Foundation creates long-term programs designed to distribute resources to some of the most vulnerable.

Whitaker said one such project she is proud to be a part of is the foundation's Snowbird Fund, which di-



GARY MARSHALL, BMGPHOTOS.COM

rectly supports Montana Native families conducting searches for missing loved ones by providing direct financial assistance to individuals leading the search.

She said her involvement in the Snowbird Fund has been a humbling learning experience.

"It's a tangible way to use philanthropy to in some small way help solve this problem," she said. "I'm learning a lot about indigenous communities by listening to what they're saying. ... I'm humbled in realizing there is still a lot to learn."

Whitaker and her husband moved to Helena three years ago.

"My husband and I were looking for a place to raise kids," she said. "When we arrived in Helena, I said this is it."

The couple now has two young children.

"As a mother of two children under the age of 4, Teal did what so many of us thought impossible. She gave her very best to both her family and her profession amid a global pandemic," coworker Jessica Stewart-Kuntz wrote in Whitaker's nomination letter for the 20 Under 40 award. "Sometimes we are fortunate enough to work with a person who not only is the consummate professional, but is someone who always has our backs, is humble enough to learn from others, and courageous enough to show up as their authentic self no matter what."

Whitaker said she typically shies away from accolades, but called the award an honor.

"I feel really humbled," she said. "It means a lot to know my coworkers feel that way."



Congratulations!

FROM YOU FRIENDS & COWORKERS



Teal Whitaker **20** UNDER **40**

COMMUNICATIONS &
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CLANCY CASEY

Helena Dental

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Clancy Casey grew up with a mother who had worked in dental offices a long time and knew it would not only be a good career, but a good career for someone with a family.

She still believes that today.

Casey, who turned 40 in late June and works at Helena Dental as a registered dental hygienist, says she is excited to be among those named as a 20 Under 40 honoree.

"I was pretty surprised," she said. "There are plenty of other people who deserve this more than I do, so I think it's pretty cool."

Casey also served a past president of the Montana Dental Hygienists Association (MDHA) and has been on its board for nearly 10 years.

"She's amazing," said friend and fellow board member Crystal Spring. "She has fought for things she would not use, she just knows it's fair."

Spring said Casey was an effective board member who got results.

"She's pretty awesome," she said. "She does not come in aggressive. She sits down and works with both sides. I don't know a lot of people who can do that. I'm surprised she hasn't been honored more. She is that spectacular."

Casey said MDHA gave her an opportunity to help break down access to care barriers in Montana.

"I was able to represent MDHA to the Board of Dentistry as well as the state Legislature," she said. "I was able to advocate for the people that have access to care issues."

She also said she was able to give a voice to the hygienists who are college educated, licensed oral health professionals, and who are often not being used to their full scope of practice.

Casey said oral health is a risk factor for many serious health issues such as diabetes, heart dis-



THOM BRIDGE, INDEPENDENT RECORD

ease and stroke.

"Medical dental integration is happening throughout the U.S.," she said. "Dental hygienists are most often referred to as 'cleaning teeth.' We do so much more..."

She noted they do tasks such as

monitor blood pressure, review health history including medications, oral cancer screenings, evaluate periodontal health and take X-rays.

"We are the prevention specialists," Casey said.

Casey is now working toward her master's degree.

"I don't know if my body will hold up as a hygienist," she said, adding dental hygiene is physically demanding and musculoskeletal injuries are common.

"But I know I want to continue to help people."

She and her husband, Dan, have two children and live in Helena.

Assistant editor Phil Drake can be reached at 406-231-9021.

INGRID McLELLAN

Associated Dental Care of Helena

NOLAN LISTER

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Growing up in Helena, Ingrid McLellan was a patient of brothers Roger and David Kiesling, who started Associated Dental Care of Helena decades ago.

After graduating from Capital High School and then Montana State University, McLellan pursued an advanced degree in dentistry from Oregon Health Sciences University, eventually finding herself back home, working for the Kieslings.

"I was very fortunate to land at this practice," she said. "I greatly appreciated Roger and David; they were mentors."

Fast forward 13 years. McLellan is now a partner in the practice and continuing to care for patients of her own.

"I love seeing my patients, and I love practicing dentistry," she said.

Since becoming part owner of the practice, she said learning the business management side of things was not as foreign as she once thought.

"A lot of practicing dentistry and owning a business is treating people well," McLellan said. "That's not something you necessarily learn in school."

It is a trait that her hometown of Helena also benefits from.

"Dr. McLellan has always given back to the Helena community," McLellan's mother and patient, Luella Schultz, wrote in her nominating letter. "Growing up she was active as a volunteer, playing violin in fundraisers and in rest homes."



GARY MARSHALL, BMGPHOTOS.COM

McLellan has continued that spirit of giving back. She volunteered throughout college. She worked as a Girl Scout camp counselor.

McLellan also donates her time and skills to providing dental care in local schools.

She also serves as the president of the Montana Dental Association, "always looking to develop future leaders within the association."

Through all of that, she also helps raise her and her husband's two boys. She said the support of her family has been more than helpful over the years.

"Sometimes my kids are sitting in the office while I'm seeing a patient on a weekend," she said with a chuckle. "Everybody's on board."

McLellan also has an artistic side, sewing clothes for her and her family. But in addition to the sewing, she said dentistry is an art form in itself.

"I take a tooth that is broken and make it into something beautiful again," she said. "I joke that I'm an artist who deals in shades of white."

She said of winning the 20 Under 40 award, "That was a nice surprise. I was quite shocked."

Her employees, many of whom also submitted letters of recommendation for the award, said she is more than deserving of the recognition.

"She has been an awesome boss!" Jamie Baty wrote in her letter. "She truly cares about her patients."

Thank you

DR. INGRID McLELLAN



For all of your hard work and dedication to the dental profession and to your entire team at Associated Dental Care of Helena. You are amazing!

Congratulations!

Dr. Brandon Kiesling

Ashlee

Jamie

Cindy

Dawn

Dagny

Kara

Dr. Allen Johnson

Sharon

Jil

Amanda

Diane

Amy

Nelly



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JUSTIN KENNEDY

Montana State Fund

LACEY MIDDLESTEAD
For the Independent Record

Justin Kennedy's first introduction to the Helena community was while playing hockey for the Helena Bighorns. Little did he know that the multitude of injuries suffered while playing hockey and the resulting time spent in the hospital would be the inspiration for his future career path.

Today, Kennedy serves as the nurse manager in the operations support department at Montana State Fund, where he manages nurses, medical case managers, strategic nurse consultants, and medical management specialists.

Kennedy attended Helena College, where he earned two associates degrees and became a registered nurse in 2009. He later obtained his bachelor's degree from Western Governor's University in Salt Lake City, Utah in 2016.

He began his medical career by working at a local medical clinic for a few years. He later transitioned to St. Peter's Health, where he gained valuable experience as a nurse on the behavioral health unit as well as on the medical, surgical, and oncology floors.

In 2017, Kennedy shifted gears when he joined Montana State Fund as a medical management specialist. While he admits that not many people think about or are necessarily interested in the insurance side of nursing, he maintains that there is still a lot of good a nurse can do in that realm. And it didn't take him long to realize that the insurance side of nursing was where he was meant to be.

Kennedy was later promoted to his current position as nurse manager with Montana State Fund, where he leads his team in reviewing medical claims.

"I really enjoy helping the nursing team grow and bettering their understanding of workers compensation, along with medical and case management in the insurance field," said Kennedy.

Throughout his time with Montana State Fund, Kennedy has been grateful for his employer's support and encouragement of his personal and professional goals.

In 2019 Kennedy completed the Helena Area Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Helena program, where he networked and participated alongside other leaders in the community looking to better themselves and improve their managerial skills.

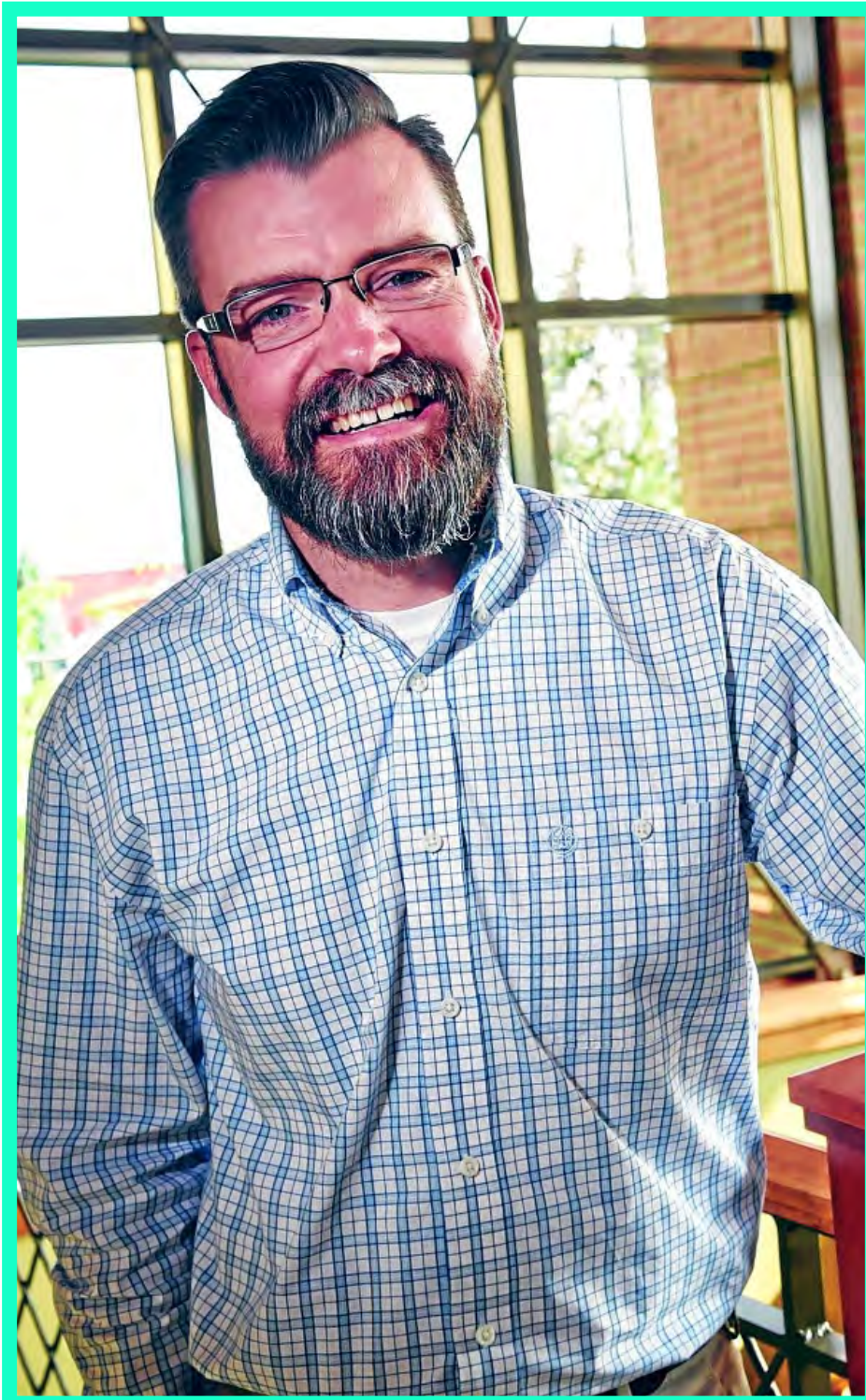
In his free time, Kennedy strives to give back to the Helena community by helping coach youth hockey and baseball as well volunteering with Helena Food Share and events like the Montana Governor's Cup and the Helena Bowl for Kids' Sake event benefiting Big Brothers Big Sisters.

"It's nice to get into the community and give back," said Kennedy. "I'm an able-bodied person, so I know I'm capable of helping the community and making a difference in people's lives."



LEE RICKS

Valley Bank of Helena



THOM BRIDGE, INDEPENDENT RECORD

LACEY MIDDLESTEAD
For the Independent Record

Lee Ricks described his entrance into the world of banking as “serendipitous.” While his father was a banker, it was really a fishing trip to Montana that set the wheels in motion for his future career path.

Ricks grew up in northern Michigan and graduated from Michigan Technological University. A post-high school graduation trip to Montana to fish the Missouri River spurred his love for the area and later called him back to live nearby.

Ricks first joined Valley Bank of Helena in 2006 as a personal banking officer. He slowly worked his way up through the ranks and today serves as their senior credit officer. In this position he helps monitor credit quality and guides lenders in structuring deals with customers.

According to co-worker Jack Berry, it was Ricks’ leadership skills that earned him his current position.

“In my experience, there are managers and mentors, and a few leaders,” said Berry. “Lee Ricks manages to be all of these in a dynamic, often challenging environment, and I have observed the personal growth and teamwork that resulted from his leadership.”

Over the past year and a half, the banking

industry faced unprecedented challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks in part to Ricks’ guidance and leadership, the bank and its customers were able to come out on the other side.

“He helped us—and the people we helped—feel confident navigating complicated loan and grant requirements and inspired us to understand the critical importance of what we were doing,” said Berry.

“I’m proud of the group I work with and how we rose to the occasion,” said Ricks of navigating through the pandemic.

What ultimately guides Ricks’ work are the people—both customers and co-workers.

“It’s about remembering that this business is about people and the relationships we form with them,” said Ricks.

Outside the bank, Ricks is actively involved in the Helena community. He is a longtime member of the Pat Barnes’ Chapter of Trout Unlimited, where he currently serves as the secretary and treasurer. In the past he has also been involved with the Helena Young Professionals and the Capital City Optimist Club.

But perhaps Ricks’ truest passion outside of his work is introducing his two young daughters to the same love that first brought him to Montana—fly fishing the Missouri.

**THANK YOU
HELENA**
FOR SUBMITTING YOUR NOMINATIONS
FOR THIS YEAR’S 20 UNDER 40

**WE ARE FORTUNATE
TO HAVE SO MANY TALENTED
& HIGHLY REGARDED
YOUNG PROFESSIONALS
IN OUR COMMUNITY.**

Independent Record

LEADING THE WAY TO PROVIDE EXCEPTIONAL CARE FOR OUR COMMUNITY



Congratulations on being named to Helena's 20 Under 40

KATIE GALLAGHER

Communications and Engagement Manager

Katie oversees public and community relations, marketing and employee engagement at St. Peter's, ensuring both employees and the public get the important information they need about their local health care system. Her communication leadership and tireless work as a key member of St. Peter's COVID-19 incident command and the County Vaccination Planning teams played a crucial role in keeping our community informed on the best ways to stay as safe as possible throughout the pandemic.

TIFFANY KNIEPKAMP, MD, FACEP

Emergency Department Physician

Since joining Lewis and Clark Emergency Physicians at the St. Peter's Health Emergency Department in 2015, Dr. Kniepkamp has become known as a collaborative, creative and innovative leader both in Helena and as a member of various statewide medical boards and associations. She didn't hesitate to take on a leadership role during the COVID-19 pandemic. Along with frontline response work, she helped develop crucial policy, protocols and procedures; volunteered for important triage teams and vaccination clinics; and lent her expertise to help share COVID-19 safety information with the community.

SARAH ELLIOTT, MSN, RN, CCM

Director of Complex Care

Sarah leads St. Peter's case management and primary care complex care teams. She works across the organization to provide ongoing and compassionate care to support individuals who are transitioning home from the hospital and to those with complex medical and social needs. After the COVID-19 pandemic forced the closure of many schools and daycares, Sarah worked to form an innovative partnership with ExplorationWorks! that provided a safe learning environment for kids of St. Peter's caregivers.