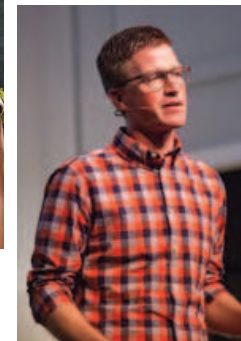


20 under 40

Recognizing
20
outstanding
community
members
up to age
40



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DR. EMILY BUBBERS

General Surgeon and Colorectal Specialist, St. Peter's Hospital

PEGGY O'NEILL
For the Independent Record

Hopefully, you won't need to see Dr. Emily Bubbers before you turn 50. That's the age when the American Cancer Society recommends that men and women who are of average risk of getting colorectal cancer get screened.

"Montana has one of the nation's worst screening rates for colorectal cancer, ranking 49th among states in the U.S.," said Dr. Fred Olson in his 20 Under 40 nomination letter for Bubbers. Olson is serving as St. Peter's Hospital's interim chief executive officer until Wade Johnson fills the role on July 31.

"St. Peter's general surgeon and colorectal specialist, Emily Bubbers, M.D., is working hard

to change that," Olson said in his nomination letter.

Bubbers, 35, joined St. Peter's in 2015 and is the only board-certified colorectal surgeon in Montana. You might think that sounds overwhelming, but Bubbers said she has lots of support.

Bubbers grew up in the Los Angeles area and graduated from Brown University. She earned her medical degree from Rosaline Franklin University of Medicine and Science, The Chicago Medical School, and then completed her general surgery residency at Oregon Health and Science University in Portland, Oregon, and a residency in colon and rectal surgery at the University of Southern California.

Bubbers' husband, Matthew

Klara, had spent summers in West Yellowstone while growing up in central New York and worked as a river guide. The couple were looking for a way to relocate here, so Bubbers reached out to the major medical facilities in Montana.

"We love Helena," Bubbers said. "It's so welcoming and the staff is wonderful and supportive."

Bubbers is an advocate for colorectal cancer prevention and awareness and often serves as a spokesperson for fundraising and outreach events. She said that screening is so important because oftentimes colorectal cancer only becomes symptomatic at later stages. Screening can detect the cancer at earlier stages when it's more treatable, she said.

The addition of Bubbers to the St. Peter's medical staff means that Helenans, and Montanans in general, don't have to travel out of state for colorectal care.

"For Montanans who needed specialized surgery following a colorectal cancer diagnosis, this meant they no longer needed to travel to Seattle or Salt Lake City to see a specialist," Olson wrote. "Patients could see Dr. Bubbers right here in Helena. Word of Dr. Bubbers' services quickly spread across the state, and she now regularly sees patients from across Montana."

While her work schedule might keep her busy, she finds time to spend time enjoying the outdoors with her husband and their 3-month-old son Everett.



THOM BRIDGE,
THOM.BRIDGE@HELENAIR.COM

CONGRATULATIONS on being
selected to Helena's **20 UNDER 40:**

Emily Bubbers, M.D.
Montana's only board-certified
colorectal surgeon

Thank you for all the ways you care for
our community.



St. Peter's Hospital

457-4180



COREY JOHNSON

Owner, Eaton Turner Jewelry

LACEY MIDDLESTEAD
For the Independent Record

At Eaton Turner Jewelry of Helena, owner Corey Johnson spends his days crafting unique and timeless pieces his customers are proud to wear.

Johnson can still recall being 13 years old and standing in his father's jewelry store learning right alongside him how to craft gold and precious stones into wearable works of art. Johnson's father, Don Johnson, is a master goldsmith who taught jewelry design and metalsmithing at the State University College of New York in Oneonta, New York for 12 years. His work has been exhibited in numerous juried national art exhibitions and even has pieces featured in collections of the Smithsonian.

Johnson shared that he couldn't have asked for a better mentor and instructor to learn from than his own dad.

Growing up, Johnson admits to always being naturally creative. This led him to pursue a degree in the fine arts with an emphasis on graphic design from Montana State University in Bozeman. During school, Johnson explored design work across a variety of media.

"I honestly didn't think I would

come back to jewelry," said Johnson.

But Johnson's roots kept calling him back. After working a stint at a Bozeman jewelry store, he found himself reliving his childhood memories of crafting jewelry alongside his dad. Johnson began reconsidering what he wanted to do with his life.

In 2000, Johnson and his wife, Katrina, were lured back to Helena after being offered a job at Eaton Turner by his dad, who had assumed ownership of the store. Not long after working at Eaton Turner, Johnson's custom jewelry creations earned him "best of show" several years in a row at the Montana-Wyoming Jeweler's Association Design Competition.

"After those recognitions for metal smithing, I was confident I was in the right place doing the right thing," said Johnson.

Johnson went on to become a Graduate Gemologist with certification from the Gemological Institute of America to further the skills he was able to offer.

In 2013, Don and his wife Deanna began transitioning ownership of Eaton Turner over to Corey.

For Johnson, the most enjoyable part of what he does now is being able to be creative every day.



THOM BRIDGE, THOM.BRIDGE@HELENAIR.COM

Johnson is dedicated to more than just the customers he works with, however. The community of Helena as a whole also has a special place in his heart.

From Intermountain's annual Festival of Trees event and Florence Crittenton's Paint the Town Pink fundraiser, to the St. Peter's Hospital Foundation Gala, Johnson's regularly designs and donates

pieces to be auctioned off to help raise money for local organizations.

"We accept the responsibility to give back to this wonderful community that has supported us for the last 132 years," said Johnson.

"He is generous and cares not only about his customers, but also our community," said his wife.

The rest of the Eaton Turner staff shares a similar sentiment.

"As an employee, he treats you like you're family," said Daniel Bruno, salesman at Eaton Turner for the last five years. "He genuinely cares about you and what's going on in your life outside of work. Not a lot of bosses do that."

"Nobody can touch what he does," said Bruno. "He has a real talent and we're lucky to have him in Helena."



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MARCUS KELLEY

Optometrist and Partner,
Montana Eye Care

JESSE CHANEY
jesse.chaney@helenair.com

After Montana Eye Care opened his eyes to a career in optometry, Marcus Kelley went on to become one of the owners of the Helena business.

"I was first introduced to Montana Eye Care 25 years ago as a patient," said Kelley, 37, who started working for the local eye care center in 2006 as an optometrist. "My eye doctors growing up were Drs. Bill Simons and Bill Hasquet, who inspired me to pursue optometry from an early age."

That has worked out well for both Kelley and Montana Eyecare, which recently added a new building and expanded its frame dispensary.

"He has been an instrumental part of the growth of our eye clinic in Helena, allowing us to better serve the people of Hel-

ena," Hasquet wrote in Kelley's nomination for the 20 Under 40 award.

Born and raised in Helena, Kelley earned his bachelor's degree from Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio and his doctorate from Southern California College of Optometry in Fullerton, California.

In addition to seeing patients and helping manage 30 employees at Montana Eye Care, Kelley has been a member of the Montana Optometric Association for 15 years and has served on the State of Montana Board of Optometry since 2013. Gov. Steve Bullock recently reappointed him to the board for another four-year term.

"I enjoy serving all Montanans on this board, which oversees the practice of optometry in Montana to ensure that all patients receive

quality optometric care," he said.

Kelley and his wife serve as volunteer mentors through the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Helena program, and they support nonprofit organizations such as the Grandstreet Theatre, Holter Museum of Art, Glacier National Park Conservancy, Montana Conservation Corps, Prickly Pear Land Trust and Intermountain.

And he has passed on his values to the next generation as a coach for his son's YMCA soccer and basketball teams for the last few years.

"I enjoy working with youth as they build confidence, develop skills and learn teamwork through sports," he said.

In his off-time, Kelley enjoys traveling and spending time with

his wife and two children, ages 8 and 5.

"He is thoughtful in his discussions, respecting the opinions of others and taking time to analyze the topics in order to ensure thorough discussion," Hasquet wrote. "I truly do feel that he is a great asset to this community and will continue to be a leader for years to come."



THOM BRIDGE, THOM.BRIDGE@HELENAIR.COM


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***A "Big" Congratulations to
Marcus and Lisa Kelley
and Melissa Lewis***



**Big Brothers Big Sisters
of Helena**

LISA KELLEY

Associate General Counsel, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Montana

ERIN LORANGER
erin.loranger@helenair.com

With a passion for serving the community on her own time, Lisa Kelley decided to work at a company that was just as dedicated to giving back.

As an attorney at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Montana, Kelley, 36, spends her free time volunteering with leadership organizations and for environmental preservation. Her employer gives \$750,000 a year to nonprofit organizations, and employees contribute more than 7,000 hours of community service.

"My kids (ages 8 and 5) inspire me because they remind me that it's our responsibility to make

a difference in the world for all kids," Kelley said. "We can all act and make a difference for future generations."

At BCBS, Kelley focuses on legal advice related to health care provider networks and state legislative and regulatory issues.

Mary Belcher, Kelley's supervisor, said she is exceptionally smart and personable.

"She's an all around great employee," Belcher said. "She has a winning personality."

Kelley was part of the Helena Area Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Helena class of 2017, where she connected with other local businesses in the community and worked on leadership

development, networking and community involvement.

She grew up hiking in Glacier National Park and avidly supports the Glacier National Park Conservancy. Kelley sits on the board of the Montana Conservation Corp, which encourages young people to get involved with the community and outdoors.

"Living in Montana, we have access to incredible outdoor recreational activities," she said. "Everyone can make a difference in protecting and preserving our land and resources."

She and her husband, Marcus, have been mentors with the Big Brothers Big Sisters organization



THOM BRIDGE, THOM.BRIDGE@HELENAIR.COM

for four years. They also support the Grandstreet Theatre, Holter Museum of Art and the Myrna Loy Center.

Before taking a position at BCBS in 2010, Kelley practiced law at Hughes, Kellner, Sullivan

and Alke and was a law clerk for Montana Supreme Court Justice Jim Rice. She received a degree in business administration from Washington State University and went to Law School at Gonzaga University.

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CHRISTOPHER LEBSOCK

Assistant Pastor,
Cathedral of Saint Helena

TOM KUGLIN

tom.kuglin@helenair.com

The Rev. Christopher Lebsock says he is naturally an introvert.

Yet for those who nominated him for the 20 Under 40 award, it is his ability to relate to people, to help and guide them spiritually that makes him stand out.

"His passion and joy for the Catholic faith – it's contagious," said John Barnes, one of the nominators. "You can see it in his words and actions and people are drawn to him. And he is drawn to people."

Lebsock, 36, is a Billings native and the oldest of five brothers. As he attended college and then medical school, he felt the overwhelming call to priesthood, and walked away from medical school to enroll in the seminary.

"It was so peaceful," he told the Billings Gazette in 2015. "There was no questioning the call."

Lebsock has spent the last two summers as a chaplain at Legendary Lodge on Salmon Lake. He also spent a year in Rome studying moral theology, returning to Montana and beginning his work as a priest in the Diocese of

Helena.

Lebsock describes the experience in Rome as "wonderful." He taught theology, engaged in his own studies, and lived with a group of men who became friends, and also accountable to each other in a common life of prayer.

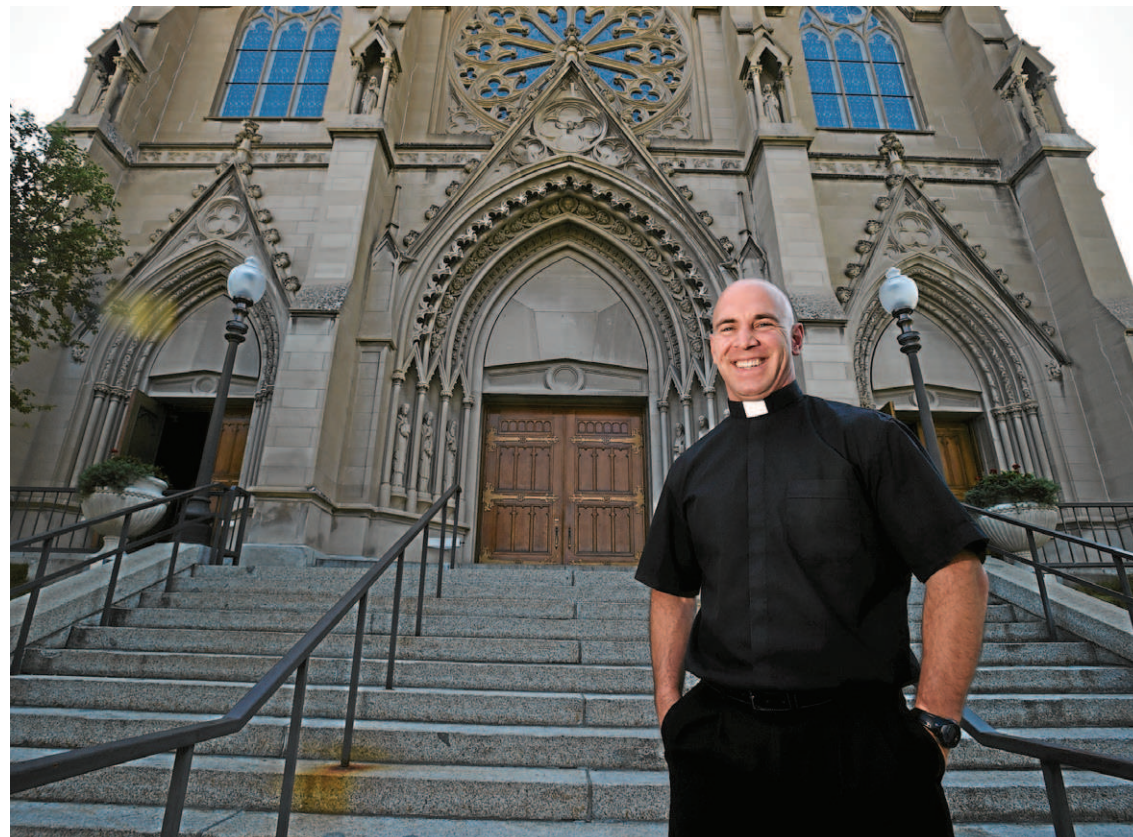
"Then I came back to Helena and people always ask me if I miss Rome," he said. "Ever since I left Montana I've wanted to be back. Every day in Montana is the best."

Lebsock enjoys Montanans as well and the community of people within the Cathedral of St. Helena.

"I love seeing people who are trying to know the truth and follow it," he said. "I love seeing people live excellently – not necessarily a happy life all the time – but trying to do the best to follow God and love him. That's beautiful to me."

The people of Helena's Catholic community and beyond appreciate him too.

"He never counts the cost but instead asks first how he can help those in need," said Matt Brower, executive director of the Mon-



THOM BRIDGE, THOM.BRIDGE@HELENAIR.COM

tana Catholic Conference. "He is a wonderful example to many of how meaning in life is discovered and more fully realized through serving others."

When asked his biggest challenge as a priest, Lebsock finds

balancing the fun and importance of meeting with people with his natural introversion, and the interior work he needs to do by taking time for prayer. It's a "wonderful problem to have" he added. "I just praise God that I get to be

in Helena in the greatest state and greatest country in the world," Lebsock said.

Reporter Tom Kuglin can be reached at 447-4076 @IR_TomKuglin

CONGRATULATIONS

FR. CHRISTOPHER LEBSOCK

FROM THE PARISH FAMILY OF
THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. HELENA

Congratulations

FR. CHRIS LEBSOCK

Thank you for bringing help and encouragement to those throughout the community. We are so fortunate to have you in Helena!

**FROM THE DIOCESE OF HELENA & MONTANA
CATHOLIC CONFERENCE**

MARY AHMANN HIBBARD

Agent and Broker,
Windermere Real Estate

LACEY MIDDLESTEAD
For the Independent Record

It's been said that "a good Realtor is not a salesperson, but a matchmaker. They introduce people to homes until they fall in love with the one."

For the past 11 years, Mary Ahmann Hibbard, real estate agent and broker for Windermere Real Estate, has been helping plan the happily-ever-afters for countless couples and families in the Helena community.

Real estate is in Ahmann Hibbard's blood. While she has had her real estate license for over a decade, she really has been involved with the industry for as far back as she can remember. Her father, Al Ahmann, owned a real-estate firm here in Helena, and Ahmann Hibbard grew up spending time at his office answering phones, putting together relocation packets, and doing other miscellaneous tasks. So when she decided to officially go into the business herself, it came naturally.

"There's nothing better than helping someone realize life goals," said Ahmann Hibbard. "Besides higher education, purchasing a house is one of the biggest investments people make in their lives."

As a Realtor, she admits that every day is different and she is always meeting new people in all types of situations. Ahmann Hibbard, being the people person that she



THOM BRIDGE, THOM.BRIDGE@HELENAIR.COM

is, loves the daily interactions with her clients and meeting new people.

"You will be hard-pressed to find many people around Helena that do not know Mary personally, or have at least know of her," said Crystal Ahmann, Windermere marketing and operations manager. "It's a standing joke that she should be the mayor of Helena. And we wouldn't be surprised if that comes to fruition, as she already takes on the role of honorary mayor."

Please see **AHMANN HIBBARD**, Page 12

Congratulations Mary Ahmann Hibbard

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you
because
you are...



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awesome life woman traveler positive
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The Holter Museum of Art
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Mary Ahmann Hibbard

on her selection in the 2017 Helena IR's
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ADAM HUSCHKA

Founder, Narrate Church of Helena

LACEY MIDDLESTEAD
For the Independent Record

In 1 Corinthians 3:7 of the Bible, it says “So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.” At Narrate Church of Helena, the Rev. Adam Huschka helps gather and scatter the seeds of new disciples, but leaves the work of true spiritual growth to God.

Faith has long played an important role in Huschka's life. He explained that he was raised Catholic but his family didn't regularly attend Mass. It wasn't until a turning point at age 19 that Huschka says he really started to follow Jesus.

Later, while Huschka was attending college for both his undergraduate and master's degrees, he became involved with and even took on leadership roles at Harvest Church in Billings. His work with Harvest continued to grow his faith and a new reality for him of what “church” could be like. Huschka wasn't the only one.

“We found a new way of doing church that we fell in love with,” said Huschka of himself and others he connected with before starting Narrate.

Huschka and his family, along with about 30 other people he had been involved with at Harvest Church, felt

called to share their new-found church theology in the Helena community.

In October 2009, Narrate Church officially formed in Helena.

Huschka doesn't like to use the term “church” so much as “gathering” and “scattering” when discussing Narrate's work and purpose.

Every Sunday, Narrate members gather at Grand-street Theatre in downtown Helena to “wrestle with topics like relationships, dating, marriage, parenting, vocation, money and the many emotions that come with living.” The services are complemented by songs delivered by Narrate's band of musicians.

“We strive to make the gatherings enjoyable for people no matter their current place with Jesus,” said Huschka.

The other six days of the week are what Huschka refers to as “scattering,” where people are “called to narrate God's story to our community by the way we serve.”

Part of Narrate's efforts to scatter is also one of the things that makes Huschka most proud — that is the

church's uncanny ability to form unlikely partnerships in the community.

For instance, Narrate partners with local breweries to host the annual fundraising event, Ales for Trails. The beer, cider and wine tasting festival, which Narrate started seven years ago, raises money to support Helena's local trail system.

For the past several years, Narrate has also partnered with the City of Helena to help distribute firewood to local families in need. City forestry projects to clean up dead or fallen trees create a surplus of firewood. Narrate then assembles a team of volunteers to split the wood for donation in the fall and winter. Huschka shared that Narrate compiles approximately 100 cords of firewood each year to distribute.

Narrate also hosts an annual Easter egg scramble on Mount Helena. This past Easter, dozens of kids up through 5th grade made a mad dash up the mountain in search of the 17,500 eggs hidden.

“For us, serving the common good is a win-win,” said Huschka.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Congratulations
Adam
from your
Narrate Family
and

**Dad
& Mary**

**Mom
& Sam**

**Steve
& Deb**

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narrate
church

ADAM JESPERSEN

Associate Director
of Development,
Intermountain

LACEY MIDDLESTEAD

For the Independent Record

Jay Weatherill, Premier of South Australia, said “I believe that investing in our children’s development from the earliest age is the single most important contribution we can make.”

For the past eight years, Adam Jespersen has dedicated himself to investing in the care and healing of struggling children in the Helena area through his work at Intermountain.

A 2009 graduate of Carroll College, Jespersen landed his first job out of school as an administrative assistant for the development department of Intermountain, an adolescent mental health center that provides both residential and community based mental health services.

“Adam immediately made himself indispensable in the department—keeping track of donor records, organizing meetings, streamlining processes, and helping with events,” said Glenna Wortman-Obie, director of communications and marketing at Intermountain. “He was so helpful



THOM BRIDGE, THOM.BRIDGE@HELENAIR.COM

and knowledgeable, he was dubbed ‘Adam Mountain.’”

It wasn’t long before Jespersen was promoted and assumed more responsibilities. He was also given a secondary position as project manager in the construction of two new residential cottages on Intermountain’s Helena campus location in 2014. The \$2.5 million project gave Jespersen the opportunity to truly see the fruits of his

fundraising efforts.

“We’re literally building new homes for the children we serve,” said Jespersen.

Jespersen remarked that it was inspiring to not only see the cottages take form but to see the efforts put in to build them.

“The architects and contractors and everyone involved realized it wasn’t just another office building they were building,” said Jespersen.

peutic group home located just north of Flathead Lake near Somers, Montana. The \$1.4 million, 5,500-square-foot facility mirrors the new cottages built in Helena and now provides intensive therapeutic care to up to eight children at a time.

Thanks to all of his dedicated efforts, Jespersen eventually earned himself the position of associate director of development at Intermountain. In that role, Jespersen has provided leadership and management of all fundraising activities for Intermountain, as well as offered expertise in grant writing and grant administration. Jespersen has also had continued opportunities to spend time interacting with community members — some who already contribute to Intermountain and others who are potential future supporters.

“It’s rewarding to be able to connect Intermountain’s mission to the community and help people better understand what our kids and families are facing and how they can help respond to it,” said Jespersen.

“To see how sacrificially this community supports our work is very humbling for me,” said Jespersen. “We are very committed to stretching that support as far as possible to make a lasting impact for kids and families.”

CONGRATULATIONS, ADAM!

Like many of our young leaders, your talent, skill and work ethic are matched in equal measure by your passion for children and families and the healing work we do. We are proud of your accomplishments!



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BRETT ZANTO

Principal, Capital High School

LACEY MIDDLESTEAD
For the Independent Record

From wandering the halls as a student, then a teacher, and now the principal, Brett Zanto has truly come full circle in his career at Capital High School.

Four years ago, Zanto was hired as the principal of his alma mater. Ever since, he has been hard at work building relationships, increasing academic success among students, and transforming Capital into a school that students and staff alike are proud to be part of.

After graduating from Capital in 1995, Zanto went on to become a teacher in the small Montana communities of both Outlook and Flaxville and later Bozeman. He later returned to Helena to teach at Capital High

and served as the assistant principal of Helena High School for six years.

Upon transitioning into his current role as principal of Capital in the summer of 2013, one of Zanto's primary goals was to "instill a sense of pride in Capital High School" and continue building upon the school's history of success.

"We are continually trying to cast a positive light on Capital High," said Zanto. "And I think that's something that we've been doing a really good job of."

This past spring, Capital High was honored with the Montana ACT College and Career Transition Exemplar Award for the 2016-2017 school year. The 2017 graduating class had the second highest ACT writing score in



THOM BRIDGE, INDEPENDENT RECORD

2016 compared to other Montana AA schools.

In May, the Montana Behavioral Initiative (MBI) awarded Capital an MBI Exemplar School award and platinum status for meeting "exemplary standards for promoting positive school climate and school safety."

Zanto attributes Capital's

Please see **ZANTO**, Page 12

CHRISSY MURGEL

Counselor, Helena High School

LACEY MIDDLESTEAD
For the Independent Record

Lifelong educator Rita Pier-son said "Every child deserves a champion — an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection, and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be."

For the past 17 years, Chrissy Murgel has tried to be one of those champions for the students she works with as a counselor at Helena High School.

With her mother and grandfather having both been teachers, Murgel admits that she comes from a long line of educators. She shared that she always knew growing up that she also wanted to be a teacher and help people, especially young people. This dream led her to pursue a bachelor's degree in secondary education from



THOM BRIDGE, INDEPENDENT RECORD

the University of Western Montana in Dillon.

During her time at Western,

Please see **MURGEL**, Page 13

We would like to **Congratulate** Brett Zanto and Christina Murgel and thank them for all the great work that they do in our schools!



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and

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Chrissy Murgel (HHS) and Brett Zanto (CHS)

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DAVID HEMMER

Regional Credit Analyst Manager, First Interstate Bank

ERIN LORANGER

erin.loranger@helenair.com

David Hemmer has worked his way up at First Interstate Bank for 13 years, starting with a job in college.

Now Hemmer, 34, is a regional credit analyst manager covering the Western Montana market.

He studied business finance at Carroll College and got a job in the operations center in Billings the summer before his senior year. Right before he graduated he was offered a teller position at the Helena location and continued to be promoted in different areas of the bank.

His most recent promotion to a regional credit analyst came just a couple of months ago.

"I knew I wanted to stay here and stay with the bank, and I really grew to love Helena," Hemmer said.

Hemmer said he is analytical, and his job allows him to use numbers and put pieces together to solve a puzzle. His former supervisor, Rich Bruner, said Hemmer not only excels at the numbers part of his job, but works each day to become a better leader. He goes out of his way to mentor others and is a go-to person for many at the bank,

Bruner said.

"I've always kind of bounced around and helped out in many different areas, even if it's not in my certain department. I know we all function best as a team," Hemmer said.

Outside of work, Hemmer is involved in the Helena Exchange Club and serves on the board of the Montana Club. He also joins colleagues from First Interstate Bank to do outdoor maintenance and cleanup for residents who aren't able to do it on their own.


Hemmer spends his free time enjoying the local breweries, mountain biking and golfing.



THOM BRIDGE, INDEPENDENT RECORD

Congrats, David Hemmer!

We are proud to support great people like you every day and appreciate your commitment to the Helena community. You are a worthy recipient of this honor.

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JENNY TAYLOR

Corporate Accounting Director,
Anderson ZurMuehlen

JESSE CHANEY

jesse.chaney@helenair.com

Members of Helena's business community are fortunate to have an ally who spends her "me time" volunteering for them.

As organizer of the Swish Basketball Tournament, golf tournament and other events hosted by the Helena Area Chamber of Commerce, Jenny Taylor of Anderson ZurMuehlen helps bring in thousands of people who generate an estimated economic impact in the millions of dollars each year.

"It's really cheesy, but it makes

me feel good and I love it, and I love the people of the community of Helena, and I love the relationships I've made and the contacts I've made," she said. "And it's just a great way to get out in the community other than working professionally."

Taylor and her husband grew up in Havre and moved to Seattle, but returned to Helena to be closer to family. She earned her Master of Accountancy degree from the University of Montana and has been the corporate accounting director at Anderson ZurMuehlen

since 2008.

"I call it the accountant for the accountants in the sense that my department does the financial statements and payroll and budgeting," she said. "... We're just kind of the financial center of Anderson ZurMuehlen."

Taylor originally got involved in the chamber through the Leadership Helena program in 2014-15, and she was chosen to represent her class on the chamber's board of directors that following year. She later became a permanent board member, which gave her the opportunity to get involved

in planning the organization's events.

Though she also enjoys downhill skiing and spending time at the lake, she said, "any other time is usually spent running around after my kids."

"Jenny shows amazing grace and dexterity in balancing both work and family," John Cummings, also of Anderson ZurMuehlen, wrote in her nomination for the 20 Under 40 award. "... Jenny has a dedication to her two kids (ages 7 and 10) and makes sure to be there for baseball games, soccer matches and Sunday School."



THOM BRIDGE, THOM.BRIDGE@HELENAIR.COM

Ahmann Hibbard

From 7

Ahmann Hibbard explained that she doesn't focus on advertising her real estate services in town; instead she relies on repeat and referral business and word-of-mouth, stressing that choosing a Realtor is not a decision that people should rush into.

"Finding the right Realtor is like finding the right pair of shoes," said Ahmann Hibbard. "Sometimes you have to try on a few before you find the one that fits."

In 2016, Ahmann Hibbard finished in the top three of the top-producing agents in Helena out of 300 total agents. She was completely unaware of the news until her brother shared it with her, stating that she's never kept track of the number of deals she closes on; she only focuses on her clients and doing what's best for them.

So what's the secret behind her success? Ahmann Hibbard chalks it up to her love for people and the Helena community.

"I love Helena. It's such a wonderful place," she said. "I love the strength of our community and how much the people here care about each other."

Zanto

From 10

successes like these to the students and staff that breathe life into the school.

"We have great, hard working staff that really care about the

students and great students who genuinely want to excel both academically and in extracurricular activities they are involved with," said Zanto.

Joslyn Davidson, curriculum and instruction administrator for Helena Public Schools, added that Zanto's leadership is another key

factor in Capital's success.

"Brett Zanto is an outstanding, selfless leader who has worked hard to maintain a sense of pride and community at Capital High School," Davidson said.

While the classrooms and hallways at Capital currently stand empty and silent, Zanto is still

hard at work in his office during the summer months gearing up for the upcoming school year. According to Zanto, 1,315 students are currently enrolled for the 2017-2018 school year, along with approximately 120 staff that keep the school operating smoothly year-round. When the first day of

school hits in August, Zanto will be right there at the helm steering Capital into what he believes will be another successful year.

"It was my dream to return to Helena and give back to the school system that did so much for me," said Zanto. "I still can't believe I'm back here."



CONGRATULATIONS

Jenny Taylor!

We are so lucky to
have you on our team!

from all of us at



JERIN BORREGO

Pesticide Registration Specialist, Montana Department of Agriculture

MATT NEUMAN
matthew.neuman@helenair.com

In between hundred-mile bike rides and hiking with her dogs, Jerin Borrego earned two major promotions at the Montana Department of Agriculture in less than a year, achieving a specialist position at the pesticide department.

"She's really taken the bull by the horns," her manager, Linda Johns, said.

As a pesticide registration specialist, Borrego is responsible for reviewing all 12,000 of the registered pesticides in Montana, making sure each one is safe and labeled properly. But she hasn't limited herself to that.

In addition to working her own

job, Borrego said she is committed to learning what everyone else around her does so she can be aware of how her work affects them. She volunteers her time to serve as a member of the Helena zoning commission and sings in the Helena Symphony choir.

A graduate of Capital High, she earned her bachelor's degree in environmental science from Brigham Young University in Utah. She has mastered Spanish and Mandarin Chinese, and spent a year teaching English at a university in Xinxiang, China.

Since returning to Helena, she was accepted into the Helena Area Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Helena program, where she met someone from the agriculture

department, and was hired as an administrative assistant.

She quickly worked her way up to technician, and eventually specialist. After showing such promise at her job, the state offered to pay for her to earn a master's degree from Montana State University, where she is studying land resources and environmental management.

She loves hiking around Mt. Ascension near her home with her husband, Jaime, and her two Australian shepherds, Marty McFly and Doc Brown.

"I think my keys to success have been a willingness to branch out, volunteer for extra work and understanding how I play into the bigger picture of everyone around me," she said.



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Murgel

From 10

Murgel recalled seeing a poster on the wall of a hallway one day advertising the counselor education program at the University of Montana. She was immediately intrigued. While part of her felt becoming a counselor might be the next step on her career path, she wanted to gain some classroom

experience first.

After graduating from the University of Montana Western, Murgel was hired as a teacher at Helena High School. After teaching for a few years, Murgel continued her journey of helping others after being accepted into the three year counselor education program in Missoula. Murgel explained that she had to travel to Missoula on weekends while working full time at Helena High in order to achieve

her master's degree. In the spring of 2005, Murgel officially became a counselor and returned to Helena High to continue helping her students.

Murgel explained that the role of a school counselor involves bringing together three different realms: high school academic planning, college and career planning, and social/emotional support.

"We do the best we can to understand all of our students' vary-

ing needs," said Murgel. "We work with them to find viable solutions to whatever challenge or setback they are facing so that they can continue to find success in the academic setting."

"It's a big job," Murgel went on to say. "We have to wear a lot of hats."

Outside of her regular role as a counselor, Murgel also serves on an advisory council for Reach Higher Montana as both a counselor and parent. Reach Higher Montana is

a public benefit partnership with the Montana Higher Education Student Assistance Corporation that works to guide, prepare and support students in their efforts to reach their potential through higher education. Murgel helps with Reach Higher Montana's college goal nights, which help raise FAFSA awareness and provide free help to students and parents as well as the opportunity to complete their FAFSA application.

Congratulations
Jerin Borrego
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KARRI JONES

Employee, Helena Industries

PEGGY O'NEILL

For the Independent Record

When Karri Jones was born, doctors told her parents she wouldn't live more than a few hours. Her mother had been Life Flighted to Salt Lake City after she went into early labor.

That was 28 years ago, and just last year Karri fulfilled one of her dreams when she married Edwin (Junior) Ramirez.

"I thought it would never happen," Jones said. "It was a dream wedding. It was magical."

In her 28 years, Jones has accomplished more than many, and she's done it from a wheelchair. In her 20 Under 40 nomination letter, Kathryn Gallagher, marketing director at Helena Industries, wrote: "Born

with a disability and today utilizing a wheelchair, Karri exemplifies someone who is dedicated to their work, committed to our community and always seeking ways to use her abilities to help other people and achieve her goals."

Jones has worked at Helena Industries for 10 years, first in the Benchmark Manufacturing area and more recently in the document destruction office. Jones also is the administrative assistant for Partners Ensuring Equal Rights and Support (PEERS) and a co-host of a Helena Civic Television program called "The Helena Industries Report."

"I'm very active," Jones said.

Jones also competes in Special Olympics in track

and field events and bowling and participates in a West Mont cheer squad that performs at various community events. Oh, and you'll also see her in the stands at Helena Bighorns hockey games waving a sign and cheering on the players.

"It's rewarding to see the smiles on the players' faces," she said.

But Jones has more dreams on her to-do list.

"I'd like to go to college," she said. "If I didn't have a disability, I'd go for an O.B. — I have a fascination with babies. If I was able to do it in this situation, I'd still like to do it, or become a midwife. Or, if there was a way I could be a doctor's assistant, I'd do it."

And just like with that magical wedding, Jones is



THOM BRIDGE, THOM.BRIDGE@HELENIAIR.COM

determined to make those dreams a reality.

"You have to follow your

dreams as they come," Jones said. "You don't know if you're going to have tomor-

row. You have to live life to the fullest and keep your head up high."



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From: Helena Industries, PEERS Unlimited, West Mont, Montana Independent Living Project, United Way of the Lewis and Clark Area, and Helena Civic Television.

NATE MCCARTHY

CPA and Partner, Wipfli LLP

JESSE CHANEY
jesse.chaney@helenair.com

Helena native Nate McCarthy isn't content using his background in accounting and finance just for his job.

A partner at Wipfli LLP who has been with the accounting and consulting firm in 1999, McCarthy also uses his professional skills as a finance committee member for the Cathedral of St. Helena and the parent council treasurer for Hawthorne Elementary School.

After attending services at the cathedral for years and sending his children to Hawthorne, which he also attended as a child, he said both volunteer positions were a good fit.

"I have taken an interest in the Helena school district happenings," he added, noting that he and his wife have three children attending Helena's public schools.

McCarthy also puts his passion for sports to good use as the treasurer for the Helena Babe Ruth



THOM BRIDGE, INDETHOM.BRIDGE@HELENAIR.COM

Association and a coach for several youth soccer, baseball and softball teams.

"I like youth athletics, and I think it's important for kids to learn the sport but then learn a little bit about being on a team and wining, losing as a team," McCarthy said. "I played soccer

and baseball growing up too and I just like the sport, so it's a pretty natural fit for me."

It's not unusual for him to coach up to five teams during the same season, said Marc McCauley, who nominated McCarthy for the 20 Under 40 award.

"He is sincerely interested in all that he is involved with, organizing endless activities, and most of all, truly invested in the youth of Helena," McCauley wrote.

After attending elementary, middle and high school in Helena, McCarthy earned a degree in business administration, along with his Masters of Accountancy, from the University of Montana. A Certified Public Accountant in the state of Montana, he now oversees a team of associates and consultants who specialize in the financial and operational needs of businesses and organizations at Wipfli.

McCarthy and his family enjoy camping and boating, and he spends much of his off-time in the Bootcamp cycle class at Crossroads Fitness and riding his mountain bike on area trails.

"Nate gives tirelessly to his hometown Helena in so many ways – we are certainly a better community because of Nate McCarthy," McCauley wrote.



Congratulations

Nathan McCarthy, partner at Wipfli, for being a recipient of the **2017 20 Under 40 Award!**

Nate, thank you for your significant efforts that contribute to the success of Wipfli, the profession and the community. - The associates and partners of Wipfli

WIPFLI
CPAs and Consultants

Helena Office:
406.442.5520

wipfli.com

KYLE CICERO

Co-owner, Ascension Physical Therapy

LACEY MIDDLESTEAD For the Independent Record

Would you rather slave 9 to 5 or hustle 24/7?

For Kyle Cicero, co-owner of Ascension Physical Therapy, the answer is simple. He knows that true success in any area of life requires a dedicated amount of hustling. And that is exactly what he spends most of his days doing.

A single session of physical therapy following an injury in high school first sparked Cicero's interest in the field. He admitted being attracted to the more hands-on, patient friendly profession of physical therapy and decided to pursue that as a career.

A 2006 Carroll College graduate, Cicero is also proud to have been a member of two of their NAIA championship football teams. Cicero later attended Mayo Clinic School of

Health Sciences and graduated in 2011 with a doctorate of physical therapy. He has been practicing in the Helena area ever since.

After working for Heuiser Physical Therapy for a few years, Cicero made the bold decision in January 2016 to open his own practice, Ascension Physical Therapy, along with business partners Anna Larson and Jeff Shirley. At Ascension, Cicero specializes in low back pain and spine care, post-operative care, shoulder pain, knee pain, and any other physical therapy needs of his patients.

For Cicero, the greatest rewards from his physical therapy practice come from offering his patients a place to be comfortable during a stressful time and watching them walk through the door smiling and free of pain.

In addition to his physical therapy practice, Ci-

cero also spends his days hustling with a new business venture in the CrossFit industry, which Cicero has been part of for several years. He was first introduced to CrossFit in 2010 while attending physical therapy school.

"I instantly fell in love with it," said Cicero.

Cicero's passion for CrossFit compelled him to later acquire a CrossFit Level 1 (CF-L1) Trainer Certification in 2015 to coach others. His background in physical therapy makes Cicero very safety oriented when it comes to his coaching. Since he understands what the body can and cannot do, he trains his clients to properly perform dead lifts and other movements to prevent injury. Cicero explained that he is considered the CrossFit physical therapist in town,



THOM BRIDGE, THOM.BRIDGE@HELENIAIR.COM

as he's worked with patients who have sustained injuries from CrossFit workouts.

At the end of the day, Ci-

cero relies on laughter to help get him through all of the challenges that come with running a business.

"Laughter is the only way you'll get through it all," he said. "I wholeheartedly believe that."

THANK YOU
Helena for more than 100
20 Under 40 nominees.

**WELL
DONE!**

We are lucky our community has so many talented, highly regarded young professionals.

Independent Record

helena**ir**.com

See this and other community publications at helenair.com



**CONGRATS
KYLE!**

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HAPPY
FOR YOU!**

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MELISSA LEWIS

Owner, Melissa Lewis and Associates

TOM KUGLIN

tom.kuglin@helenair.com

Melissa Lewis started Melissa Lewis and Associates with a laptop, printer, cellphone and lobbying license.

"I've always had a pretty hardy work ethic – I've been an entrepreneur since age 7 when my brother and I started a lawn business," she said. "I paid my way through college, and that's a big part of who I am because from an early age I've had to pull myself up by the bootstraps and do it myself."

The 39-year-old is the first person in her family to graduate from college, and she has staked a career in state and national politics. After earning a bachelor's degree from Western Washington University in 2001, she got

started working on former Sen. Max Baucus' 2002 re-election campaign.

Lewis worked for a national consulting firm, where she says she learned the importance of working with clients from both sides of the political spectrum.

When she moved with her husband John back to Montana, she registered Melissa Lewis and Associates, but the business just didn't take off.

"I always wanted to own my own business, but I realized I didn't have the relationships to establish a robust client base," she said.

Lewis worked for an engineering firm when in 2011, she "took a leap of faith" to start her own firm. Years later and boasting that cli-

ent base, she still keeps the business flexible, employing an assistant during the legislative session and contracting with associates as needed.

"I love my job, and I like the diversity of issues I get to work on," she said. "I'm naturally a people person. I like interacting with state and local elected officials and Montanans in general, and I'm also kind of a policy wonk."

The most challenging part of her work is balancing family and work with providing service to her clients and being a wife to John and mother to their three kids.

Lewis received 17 nominations for the 20 Under 40 award, including one from Montana Department of Health and Human Services Director Sheila Hogan.



THOM BRIDGE, THOM.BRIDGE@HELENAIR.COM

"I've watched her over the years work at the Legislature and how well she does working across the aisle," Hogan said. "She listens. She brings people together. And quite frankly I'm impressed with a young woman who has been so successful at starting her own business."

One of the most important things for Lewis is sharing her experience with other young professionals.

"I take a lot of pride in mentoring other young professionals and letting them know that starting your own business is totally doable," she said.

We celebrate and appreciate everything you are, and all that you do.

Spectrum is pleased to recognize Melissa Lewis for the 20 under 40 award.

Spectrum

LAURA SMITH

Deputy Director, Department of Public Health and Human Services

PEGGY O'NEILL

For the Independent Record

It must be hard for Laura Smith to sit still and wait for the birth of her first child. The baby is due in September, but Laura is receiving prenatal medical care in Missoula and staying at the Ronald MacDonald House there.

"I'm excited to meet her," Smith said of her soon-to-be-born daughter. "She's a feisty gal. I suspect she's a redhead."

If that turns out to be the case, the baby will have inherited her mother's hair and her mother's energy.

At 35, Smith has had a career that would leave a less passionate person exhausted and ready for retirement.

Among her early accomplishments, even before graduating from the Utah State University with degrees in English and political science, Smith interned at National Public Radio in Washington, D.C., and broadcast two noteworthy pieces – one on a Pancake Mountain dance club for kids in D.C. and another on a seasonal celebrity in Salt Lake City (her hometown) known as Hanukkah Harry.

As a child, Smith said she was drawn to the legal profession, and she ended up earning a law degree with a concentration in public service from the University of Pennsylvania. While interning at the Department of Jus-

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"It was such a gift to be back in the West," Smith said.

After about a year into the clerkship, Smith was hired to be a federal prosecutor for the U.S. Attorney's office in Great Falls. She prosecuted everything from health care fraud to violent crime. She also spent some time prosecuting misdemeanors in Glacier National Park. It was also in Great Falls where she met her husband, Mac Smith. Their first date ended at the Great Falls landmark – the Sip 'n Dip Lounge.

Smith moved to Helena

and worked as the communications director for the Montana Department of Administration. And in January of 2017, Smith became the deputy director of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, under Director Sheila Hogan.

In her spare time, Smith plays violin in the Helena Symphony and enjoys running Helena's trails system.

When asked what keeps her so motivated, she said: "It's the desire to contribute in a positive way and truly enjoying positive work."

Smith was nominated for the 20 Under 40 award by two people, her husband and



PHOTO PROVIDED

Laura and Mac Smith

her current boss.

In her nomination letter, Hogan wrote that as a former federal attorney, Smith "... prosecuted child abuse, domestic violence, and capital cases on Montana's reservation. She felt this work was often the end of the story. She changed occupations to impact the beginning of the story: She is the DPHHS Deputy Director. She focuses on reengineering the

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Mac added in his letter: "She is generally an interesting and talented person. (And I may be a little biased since she is my wife, but most people would say the same thing)."

ZACH BUSHILLA

Co-founder, Stonetree Climbing Center

LACEY MIDDLESTEAD

For the Independent Record

The swinging action of a leg as it shoots up and out to plant a foot in another gap in the rock. The careful unfolding of an arm from the shoulder all the way down to the fingertips as it stretches up to grab another hold. The intuitive way the body flows from one movement to the next, creating a seamless line up a mountainside.

For Zach Bushilla, co-founder of Stonetree Climbing Center, rock climbing is a true art form.

"I love the creativity of the sport and finding a line that looks inspiring to climb," said Bushilla. "It's not just a ladder straight to the top."

A Helena native, Bushilla

grew up loving the Montana outdoors and especially rock climbing. He shared that he was first introduced to the sport while shooting hoops at the YMCA one day. Bushilla noticed a man scaling a small climbing wall nearby and was immediately intrigued. Only a day or two later, Bushilla had purchased his own pair of rock climbing shoes and never looked back.

"I was hooked," said Bushilla, smiling.

Bushilla explained that climbing is very much a puzzle that you have to piece together as you go along. The most subtle movement or body shift can either move a climber farther along their line or cause them to get stuck in



THOM BRIDGE,
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their current position.

"I love the challenge of the sport," said Bushilla. "It's difficult, but it's a challenge that's always within reach."

For the better part of 20 years, Bushilla has worked to hone his skills as a climber. For the past 10 years, he has worked at getting others excited about climbing as well.

Please see **BUSHILLA**, Page 19

Congratulations
Laura Smith
we are proud of you!



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REBEKAH LARSON

Vice President of Financial Services, Helena Community Credit Union

MATT NEUMAN

matthew.neuman@helenair.com

Rebekah Larson is no stranger to being in the newspaper. In fact, it was the first thing she ever did.

As the first baby born in Helena on New Year's Day 1983, she was the Independent Record's centerpiece photo.

She's grown up quite a bit since then, taking on the role of Vice President of Financial Services at Helena Community Credit Union. In seven years, she rose through the ranks from a lead, to a manager, up to vice president.

"When it comes to managing

and coaching, she really excels," HCCU president Greg Strizich, who nominated Larson for the 20 Under 40 award. "She is excellent with her staff, and has developed a highly effective and dedicated team."

Larson is the mother of two young daughters, Elyse, 8, and Calysta, 12, and has been married to her husband Randy for almost 13 years.

In addition to overseeing the financial services division at HCCU, Larson contributes much of her time to the charitable work the credit union sponsors, including

National Alliance on Mental Illness efforts, the Night to Shine program for local youth, and the Empty Bowls fundraiser for The Friendship Center.

She has distinguished herself as an innovator and is responsible for building several critical projects, including HCCU's Phone Lending Center, Strizich said in his nomination of Larson.

Graduating as a salutatorian from Broadwater High School, she went on to study mass communications at MSU-Billings, where she worked full time to put herself through school and graduated

summa cum laude. In her junior year, she started working at Wells Fargo as a teller, and fell in love with financial business. She focused on business for her last two years in college and continued to grow at Wells Fargo.

Her current job at HCCU is a far cry from her first job at the A&W in Townsend, but from the young age of 16, she learned the rewards of hard work and professionalism.

She is grateful for her family's strong support system and her "amazing staff," which makes her so proud.

"I don't look at myself differently



THOM BRIDGE,
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just because I'm in a VP role now," she said. "I think part of the key to my success is I just try to treat others how I would want to be treated."

Bushilla

From 18

As a member of the Helena Recreation Foundation, Bushilla was instrumental in bringing the 11-foot tall outdoor climbing boulder to Centennial Park in 2013. For the past several years, Bushilla has coached a local climbing team called the Thunder Chickens — mostly from a gym constructed in Bushilla's garage. While Bushilla admits that there have been smaller climbing gyms in Helena in years past, there was never a proper facility to really bring together the whole climbing community.

"Opening a climbing gym is a

dream I've had for forever," said Bushilla. "But I never would've been able to do it on my own."

The idea for Stonetree was born after making a climbing connection though the Base Camp one day when Bushilla and his wife, Tiffany, met Tim and Barb Wetherill. The group started talking and found a mutual connection in their love for climbing. As they began to form a friendship, the idea for building a rock climbing facility in Helena got thrown around. The more discussion the families had, the more of a reality the gym seemed.

"We just went for it," said Bushilla.

With three young daughters at home with their mom, Tiffany, and

working full time as an electrician for his father's company, Integrity Electric, Bushilla nevertheless began construction on Stonetree. Working nights and weekends, the two families worked together to slowly give life to the dream of Stonetree.

In October 2015, Stonetree Climbing Center finally opened. The center encompasses 2,100 climbable square feet of 16-18 foot tall bouldering walls, top of the line climbing holds, and industry standard safety features.

Bushilla's ultimate goal for Stonetree was to create an indoor space where outdoor enthusiasts and children could recreate and embrace the sport of climbing year-

round. As a sport, bouldering builds strength and confidence while motivating people to push their physical limits. As a side effect, Bushilla explained, climbing also leads to the development of lifelong friendships and partnerships.

"Zach has been instrumental in building not only the climbing community in Helena, but a community that crosses generations and fosters the future of our town," said a friend, Megan Helton. "He has been instrumental in creating an inclusive, supportive and engaging environment at Stonetree where people of all ages can enjoy the sport of climbing."

Recently, Bushilla made the tough decision to hand over full owner-

ship and management of Stonetree to the Wetherills. With only so many hours in the day, Bushilla admitted that he struggled to keep all the pieces of his life in balance.

"I just wanted to get it going and build community," said Bushilla of Stonetree. "But I am still passionate about coaching and helping the sport and community continue to grow."

Bushilla explained that while the sport of rock climbing is still pretty low key in Helena, it is definitely growing.

"Climbing can come off as a super extreme sport," admitted Bushilla. "But it's a super chill sport in all reality. Nothing is cooler than creating a perfect line that flows"



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rebekah larson

Innovator. Leader. Volunteer.

HCCU Vice President of Financial Services

Congratulations, Rebekah! You are an outstanding HCCU professional, and we thank you for your dedication, your talent, and the volunteer work you do in our community!

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