


Honoring our
2025
Local
HEROES
The MONTANA STANDARD



*St. Patrick, and the Immaculate
Conception Parishes, along with
Montana Tech Catholic Campus
Ministry, would like to
congratulate our local heroes!*

We are so **GRATEFUL** for
your contribution to making our
entire community better!

***“THE GREAT BUTTE RENAISSANCE
HAS BEGUN WITH YOU!”***

★ 2025 ★ Local Heroes

Local Heroes was born out of an idea Father Patrick Beretta had during the pandemic to help recognize and validate the great work of so many in our community. That tradition is still going strong 6 years later. The program honors those who are going above and beyond to help local citizens in our community. The four entities that started the Local Heroes program – Father Beretta, Butte Catholic Community North, Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Stephanie Sorini, Butte Broadcasting CEO Ron Davis and The Montana Standard decided it was too good of an idea to implement just once.

None of this would be possible without the generous support of our program sponsors:

- Butte-Silver Bow Community Foundation
- Copper City Surgery Center
- Intermountain Health – St. James Hospital
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- Steele’s Furniture & Appliance
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- The Springs
- Town Pump
- Valley Bank – Division of Glacier Bank

A luncheon will be held on December 3rd at the Knight of Columbus to honor these outstanding individuals and sponsors.

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Help make the calendar even better by submitting your events today.



Butte Local Heroes honorees Cheryl Frederick and Nova Bartsch are 'angels in disguise'

MIKE SMITH

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It was shortly after 11 a.m. on a windy, brisk November day in Butte when people started filtering into a spacious hall at the Knights of Columbus building in Up-town Butte.

Many are living on the edge, in the societal sense, but on this day, like every Tuesday and Thursday, they can sit down in a warm, safe place and have a hot meal that's on the house.

Some are homeless. Some are getting by but not by much. Some are struggling with mental illnesses and are either on medications or self-medicating.

Some talk with others as they eat, some eat alone in silence, but there are two familiar faces every time they come.

Cheryl Frederick and Nova Bartsch have been planning, cooking and serving the free "community meal" every Tuesday and Thursday at the Knights of Columbus for years.

Butte resident Mary Rowe nominated them as Butte Local Heroes this year and they were among 12 individuals and one group chosen for the honor.

"These women are angels in disguise," Rowe said in her nomination missive. "I truly feel these ladies are what the Hometown Heroes Program is all about."

Raghunath Dasa agreed as he took in a hot meal.

"I've been coming here for about three years," he told The Montana Standard. "I'm a vegetarian. I let them know this and ever since that time, they've been making sure there's an extra meal for me. So yeah,



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Nova Bartsch (left) and Cheryl Frederick

“

I truly feel these ladies are what the Hometown Heroes Program is all about.”

Mary Rowe

they are heroes.”

Frederick started cooking and serving the meals shortly after the Knights of Columbus and Butte Emergency Food Bank started the program in 2012. Bartsch has been her partner in the effort for seven years now.

They're best friends who work from the heart, knowing they're one paycheck short of receiving the meals, not cooking and serving them.

"I've been offered a few full-time, better-paying jobs but this is where my

heart is so I live humbly through this," Frederick said.

The ladies make menus together on Fridays then Bartsch goes to the Food Bank to get what she can for that week's upcoming meals.

It usually includes chicken and hamburger because there are so many different meals you can have with them, but on this particular Thursday, they were able to cook up a nice big ham.

They start cooking around 8 a.m. and start serving around 11 a.m. There are usually 50 to 80 people who come each day and during breaks in serving, Bartsch and Frederick walk about, wiping tables and talking to folks.

They served ham, macaroni and cheese and peas on this day, with water and juice to drink and cookies for dessert. They aim for balanced meals and for a few regulars, like Dasas, they try to accommodate

special diets.

There are roots to their missions.

"My kids grew up going to church and we always did Christmas giveaways," Bartsch said. "We had a soup kitchen at the Salvation Army and we fed people out of that."

Frederick wrote a Christmas wish in 1966 when she was 8 years old. She kept it and now has a picture of it on her cell phone.

"I wish the poor had food and clothing and money," it says. "I sent some food. The poor are the people who do not have food and clothing and money or love or smiles or happiness. Many poor people have food but they

are poor in spirit."

The hall had to be closed for months during the COVID pandemic but their work continued. They prepared sack meals at the Food Bank and handed them out on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Their mission is about more than food.

"There are a lot of people who need encouragement," Bartsch said. "People get down in the dumps and pretty soon they're drinking alcohol or doing drugs or they lose their jobs. Sometimes they just need to be encouraged."

And, she said, "I think they know they can come here and not feel like they're being judged."



Mike Lawson: Serving his country and his community

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Mike Lawson and others saw such heavy combat and suffered so many casualties in Vietnam as members of Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 9th Marines in 1967, they were nicknamed the “Walking Dead.”

Lawson served with the unit for 11 months, got shot, came home, healed up and voluntarily went back for a second tour that included combat during the Tet Offensive of 1968 and lifting a monthslong siege on fellow Marines at Khe Sanh.

Lawson came home for good in March 1969 but service to his country, community and military brothers and sisters never stopped.

He’s a life member of the Marine Corps League, commandant of its Southwest Montana Detachment 724 in Butte and has coordinated its Toys for Tots campaigns in Butte and surrounding areas for 15 years.

He’s a lifetime member of the American Legion and is commander of Post #1 in Butte.

He’s a lifetime member of Disabled American Veterans, has been driving veterans from “point A to point B” as a volunteer for years and is the organization’s transportation chairman in Montana.

He’s a lifetime member of Veterans of Foreign Wars, was a staunch backer of efforts that brought the Southwest Montana Veterans Home to Butte and supported establishment of a Veterans Court here. He’s still a mentor in that.

He’s at virtually every veterans event and activity in Butte-Silver Bow County and speaks at many of them.

He’s been with the Lions Club in Butte since 1993 and is a lay preacher with the Gold Hill Lutheran Church, sometimes doing “funerals or sermons or whatever they call on me to do.”

Scott Parini nominated Lawson as a “Local Hero” in Butte this year and he was among 12 individual or group and nominees chosen.

Even while juggling so many roles, Parini said, “Mike hasn’t slowed and still continues to be a man who wears many hats to serve and better the community and community members.”

When The Montana Standard called Lawson for this story, he was in San Antonio at a gathering of veterans like himself who served in the Combined Action Program, a Marine counterinsurgency



JOSEPH SCHELLER, THE MONTANA STANDARD

Mike Lawson, the Toys for Tots coordinator for the Butte campaign, addresses attendees during the drive’s kickoff event in 2023. Lawson did two tours during the Vietnam War and has also spent a lifetime serving military veterans.

“

Mike hasn’t slowed and still continues to be a man who wears many hats to serve and better the community and community members.”

Scott Parini

operations effort in Vietnam.

The Standard asked Lawson how he finds time to do all he does.

“That’s a good question,” he said with a chuckle. “By the grace of God.”

“What drives you to do all this?” the Standard asked.

“To help my fellow veterans,” Lawson said. “The payoff is seeing the joy they get in getting help and the joy I get from all of us working as a team, working together as veterans like when we were in the service.”

Parini noted that Lawson uses the “Hooch,” a Marine Corps League meeting place in Butte, as “Santa’s Toyland” every December in the Toys for Tots campaign but works on the program “12 months out of the year.”

It gets toys to kids in Butte and Lawson loads a gooseneck trailer “to the top” with toys every Christmas season and delivers them to Dillon, Twin Bridges and Whitehall. His motivation behind everything he does in Toys for Tots is simple but powerful.

“Seeing those parents come get the gifts for their kids and the gratitude they have and the dignity they get in being able to give their kids gifts for Christmas — it’s very gratifying,” he said.

Lawson said he appreciates being chosen as a Local Hero but more than anything, it’s humbling.

So are the roots of all his work.

“We help our fellow man and make the world a little better place,” he said. “That’s what it’s about.”

Jocelyn Dodge: ‘The busiest retired person in Butte’

MIKE SMITH

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Jocelyn Dodge spent her career as a recreation forester for the U.S. Forest Service in and around Butte and has been active in so many organizations and causes, she’s a household name to many.

She hung up her forestry boots in 2019 but her passion for serving and promoting Butte hasn’t slowed a bit.

She’s so active, in fact, longtime colleague and friend Maria Pochervina calls her “without a doubt the busiest retired person in Butte.”

Pochervina nominated Dodge as a Butte Local Hero and she was among 12 individuals and one group chosen for the honor this year.

Dodge is heavily involved with Friends of Thompson Park, a nonprofit stewardship group she helped found several years ago to support, bolster and beautify the park’s 3,500 acres of trees, trails and trestles south of Butte.

She and others clear and maintain trails, raise money for improvements such as and lighting and signage, and Dodge hosts a “Hike Through History” event at the park sponsored by the Butte-Silver Bow Archives.

“Thompson Park holds a special place in Jocelyn’s heart, as she’s frequently seen walking (there) with her dog Cassie,” Pochervina told the Local Heroes selection committee.

Dodge has been president of Butte Center for the Performing Arts and its Mother Lode Theatre for seven years, raising money, obtaining grants and guiding it through major renovations and organizational changes.

The Mother Lode is a gem in Butte, Dodge told The Montana Standard, and “there’s more to come” on keeping it a gem for another 100 years.

Dodge serves on the board of directors for the Butte Convention & Visitors Bureau and Visit Southwest Montana. Both are funded through lodging tax dollars and both are tasked with promoting tourism.

To help do that in Butte, Dodge created an outdoor recreation map for locals and visitors to use. But she’s done so much more.

“She has been instrumental in both entities, helping develop and revise bylaws, contracts and managing projects, as well as providing board advice and guidance and reviewing essential documents and printed materials,” Pochervina wrote.

Butte has a natural calling card “in that



MEAGAN THOMPSON, THE MONTANA STANDARD

Jocelyn Dodge, president of the arts organization at the Mother Lode Theatre, is seen here in November 2021 in one of the 1,200 seats in the historic building located on Park Street in Uptown. Dodge is one of this year’s Local Heroes in Butte.

“

She has been instrumental in both entities, helping develop and revise bylaws, contracts and managing projects, as well as providing board advice and guidance and reviewing essential documents and printed materials.”

Maria Pochervina

ter staff keep things running smoothly in Butte’s largest event venue.

And those are “just a snippet of what Jocelyn has done in our community,” Pochervina said.

The Standard asked Dodge what drives her to do all these things.

“I guess I call myself a ‘triple A’ personality and I really enjoy everything I do,” she said. “I enjoy, for my whole career, being able to work with volunteers and the public and do things the community really appreciates.”

Dodge really loves Butte, too.

It’s such a cohesive community, she said. Even the annual Local Heroes honors speak to that.

“Service in this community is phenomenal when it comes to volunteerism,” Dodge said. “Anytime there is something that needs done here, it’s an amazing community.”

Congratulations Jocelyn Dodge



With heartfelt appreciation, we celebrate Jocelyn Dodge for her outstanding dedication to Butte and Southwest Montana. Through her tireless volunteer work with Visit Butte, Visit Southwest Montana, the historic Mother Lode Theatre, and the World Museum of Mining, Jocelyn has helped showcase the heart, history, and hospitality that make our community shine. Her genuine enthusiasm, countless volunteer hours, and unwavering support continue to inspire everyone who calls Butte home and those who visit. Thank you, Jocelyn, for all you do to preserve our past and promote our future.

*President of the board for
the Mother Lode Theatre*



*Past President of the board
for Visit Southwest Montana*



*Past President
for Butte CVB*



*Volunteer for
World Museum of Mining*



Jim Killoy: 'A living archive of Butte's mining history'

Killoy's expertise has helped catalog thousands of photos at World Museum of Mining

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Stopes. Drifts. Gallows frames. Labor strikes. Soup kitchens. Muckers.

Jim Killoy speaks mining. More specifically, he speaks Butte mining.

He is celebrated for the depth and breadth of his knowledge about the arduous underground quest for copper ore and for his generosity in sharing what he knows. He is especially renowned for his expertise cataloging photos of Butte's hard-rock mining past.

His grandfather, Will Killoy, worked in the mines. As did his father, Edward. The Killoy family's roots are in Ireland.

Killoy finished high school in 1958 and then went to work for the Butte, Anaconda & Pacific Railway as a "gandy dancer" — a slang term for the workers who laid and maintained railroad tracks in the years before the work was done by machines.

He later became a diesel mechanic at

the garage for the Berkeley Pit after a four-year apprenticeship.

He estimates he spent a total of several months underground in various roles.

Killoy, now 85, was still in high school when the history bug bit and it bit hard. His fascination with Butte's rough, rowdy and hard-toiling hard-rock culture grew over time and continues.

He first volunteered at the World Museum of Mining during the 1970s.

To what does Killoy attribute his passion for Butte history?

"I don't know," he said, smiling. "I can't explain it."

Photos with historical significance, many shot by famous Butte chronicler C. Owen Smithers, captured Killoy's imagination as a young man.

Today, he is respected for reviewing old photos and readily identifying headframes, mines and other unique features occupying the landscape of mining in Butte.

Johnathan Hoover is a mining engineer

“

Jim's knowledge of local mining history, especially headframes, is unmatched."

Logan Dudding

with Montana Resources. He spoke about Killoy's prowess in cataloging images.

"He can identify a headframe, usually in seconds, just by looking at the picture," Hoover said. "He can then go on to tell you several stories about the mine."

Jeannette Kopf, director of the World Museum of Mining, says Killoy is "a living archive of Butte's mining history."

See Killoy, PAGE 14



DUNCAN ADAMS, THE MONTANA STANDARD

Jim Killoy, a longtime volunteer at the World Museum of Mining in Butte, is known as an expert who readily shares his knowledge about Butte's mining history. He stands here for a portrait near the museum, with the Highlands in the distance.

Congratulations Jim Killoy



The most deserving man for this award! Your hard work and passion to keep Butte's mining history alive is truly a testament to your love of Butte. The community is so fortunate to have you and so are we!

Love, your family



The World Museum of Mining

thanks

Jim Killoy

for all he does for the community!

2025 LOCAL HEROES

Teaching was always Shani Bailey's end goal

TRACY THORNTON

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Even as a teenager, Shani Bailey was never indecisive when it came to choosing a profession. Teaching was always her end goal.

Her career choice did not surprise anyone. Teaching runs in the family.

Her father, Mike Thompson, is a long-time educator, as were four of his siblings.

"My dad's now 80 and still substitute teaches," said Bailey.

Now in her 32nd year of education, East Middle School's dean of students is glad she never wavered in her decision.

Others are glad as well.

Keith Miller, a school administrator with Butte School District No. 1, nominated Bailey as a Local Hero.

Miller called the long-time educator one of his personal heroes and described her 32-year teaching career as "the epitome of hard work, enthusiasm, and dedication to seeing that all students have the opportunity to grow academically and socially, while they experience success."

Bailey said the honor was unexpected but very nice.

After earning her teaching degree from Eastern Montana College, now Montana State University-Billings, Bailey had a clear view of what she wanted to do next.

"I knew I wanted to be a special education teacher," said Bailey. "It was an area of education I felt I could make a difference."

Which is exactly what she did for the next 15 years. The first three years were spent teaching at Great Falls and the 12 years after, in Butte.



TRACY THORNTON, TRACY.THORNTON@MTSTANDARD.COM

Shani Bailey, dean of students at East Middle School, has been an educator for 32 years.

“

She listens to students and parents and works hard to create win-win situations.”

Keith Miller

"It was very rewarding," she said.

Several of those 12 years as a special education teacher were spent at EMS.

Retired EMS teacher Kathy Foley called Bailey a tireless human being who was an absolute advocate for her students.

"Shani was always on the go," she said.

Foley said Bailey always kept her students engaged in the classroom and involved them in school activities.

"She encouraged them to do things," said Foley. "Her classroom management was phenomenal."

Five years into her career as a special education teacher, Bailey would give birth to her second child, Bryce, who was diagnosed with microcephaly.

The condition is defined as a birth defect where a baby's head is smaller than expected and most often, the baby also has a smaller brain that might not develop properly.

Bailey, who also has a daughter Brooke and a son

Riley, said Bryce, now 26, attends the day program at BSW, a non-profit organization providing services for the developmentally disabled.

"Bryce is doing well," she said with a grin.

Seventeen years ago, Bai-

ley decided it was time for a career change and took the position of EMS's dean of students.

She describes her position as "never boring" and "unpredictable."

"You have to be flexible," she said.

The move was a good fit for Bailey, who was able to keep busy in the classroom as well, teaching Title Math to eighth graders.

As dean of students, Miller said Bailey has always worked for what is best for the students.

"She listens to students and parents and works hard to create win-win situations," said Miller. "She has trained and developed restorative solutions to very difficult situations that allow students to not only get along, but to be better citizens and classmates."

Bailey said the job has been made easier because of the support given by teachers, counselors, the principal and the vice principal.

"We work as a team," she said.

Depending on the student or the situation, the group of educators is able to find solutions.

"We want kids to be successful with their peers and in their classrooms," said Bailey.

Bailey considers herself lucky to be an educator. Her profession, she said, has allowed her to mentor dozens and dozens of students and has given her the opportunity to work alongside some great teachers.

"It has been the highlight of my career," she said.



BUTTE
SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 1

The Butte School District would like to extend our congratulations to **Shani Bailey** for being selected as an honoree for the **2025 Local Heroes!**

Thank you for your commitment and dedication to our Butte School District students, families, and the entire Butte Community. This Butte educator deserves our full recognition and appreciation as a school district and community.

Suzy McClernan and Dena Hamry: Feeding families in need for Christmas

BY LACEY MIDDLESTEAD,
SPECIAL TO THE MONTANA
STANDARD

Former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Winston Churchill once said, “We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give.”

For the past 36 years, the employees of Montana Resources have honored those words through their annual effort to provide Christmas food baskets to needy families in the greater Butte area. The baskets contain everything needed for a traditional Christmas dinner including turkey or ham, milk, fruit, sweet potatoes, cranberry sauce, pumpkin pie, and more.

“It takes a village to pull this program off, and here at Montana Resources, we have a great one,” said Suzy McClernan, the maintenance clerk for Montana Resources since 2009. “I am very proud and honored to be a part of this.”

“So many people help out with this, and honestly, we couldn’t do it without everybody’s help,” echoed Dena Hamry, shipping coordinator for Montana Resources.

McClernan shared that when the volunteer effort launched back in 1989, only about 10 baskets were compiled. This year, their goal is 325 baskets.

Hamry, who has worked for Montana Resources for 13 years, said one of the program’s founders was her boss when she first started working for the company — someone she credits with getting her first involved in the basket effort.

“When she started to



THE MONTANA STANDARD

Suzy McClernan and Dena Hamry are pictured in this 2025 file photo. They are 2025 Butte Local Hero honorees.

think about retirement, Suzy and I took it over, started taking more and more responsibilities on,” said Hamry. “Eventually when she did retire, it kind of fell in our laps to do.”

“It’s one of those things that we can’t let go,” added Hamry.

According to McCler-

nan, the Christmas Basket Program is an employee-run program supported by monetary donations from Montana Resources Employees. Funds raised matched by the Dennis & Phyllis Washington Foundation and all donations go directly toward purchasing food and totes. Everything

“

There’s a lot of people who struggle and just knowing that we can put food on the table for one night makes a huge difference.”

Dena Hamry

else is generously donated.

The planning process for the multi-faceted effort begins as early as July.

There is the coordination of employee volunteers. There is the gathering of names of people in need from both agencies in the area and individual referrals. There is the picking up of food and the actual distribution of the baskets both at the Butte Civic Center and through home deliveries as needed.

But through all the phone calls, shopping trips, donation pick-ups, and overall coordination of people and items, the annual effort is always worth it to Hamry, McClernan, and the rest of the Montana Resources staff.

“There’s a lot of peo-

ple who struggle and just knowing that we can put food on the table for one night makes a huge difference,” said Hamry. “And then when we get those people that come in that didn’t know they were getting a basket and they have tears running down their face and they’re just so thankful to be receiving a basket — that’s what keeps me going.”

“It makes you feel so blessed that we are able to do this for people and just know how fortunate you are that you can help people,” said McClernan. “The employees are a big part of this community.”

**Montana Resources proudly congratulates
Suzy and Dena**



on being recognized as Local Heroes for their outstanding efforts to help feed those in need during the holidays. Their care and commitment embody the spirit of giving that makes Butte such a special community.



**Montana
Resources**

Learn about Butte’s mine at www.montanaresources.com

Callie Parr: Working tirelessly to build bridges for children

Parr also has played a leadership role in suicide prevention

DUNCAN ADAMS

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Mino-bimaadiz-iwin.

Translations of this Ojibwe word include “living the good life” or “the good path” and more.

For Butte native Callie Parr, 37, the word carries special meaning. She started directing her feet toward the good path around six years ago when she embraced sobriety and found solid footing in the cultural heritage of the Little Shell Chippewa.

Today, she is a Local Hero.

Parr was nominated for her service to children, to the Butte community, to those affected or tempted by suicide and to the children of Montana’s tribes and the people who work with them.

Dorea Wilmoth nominated Parr for the honor.

“Callie embodies the very spirit of this award,” Wilmoth wrote. “She doesn’t just face challenges, she actively seeks them out and dismantles them with remarkable determination and a profound drive to make our Butte community a better, healthier and more hopeful place.”

Wilmoth is a multimedia/web assistant for Town Pump Inc. and a past Montana chapter chair for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

Parr’s life had spiraled into addiction after her boyfriend died by suicide in 2017.

“The impacts of that just came barreling down on me,” she said. “And for the next two years of my life I really went down a path of darkness.”

Two key influences led Parr toward a better path. First, she began exploring



DUNCAN ADAMS, THE MONTANA STANDARD

Callie Parr is the Early Childhood Tribal Policy Coordinator for Zero to Five and has been active also in regional suicide prevention activities.

her roots in the culture of the Little Shell Chippewa and started finding support and solace from activities of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

“I remember it very vividly. It was in September of 2018 that I was introduced to the first Out of the Darkness Walk,” Parr recalled. “Me and my children went to the walk and it really changed my life.”

For the first time, she found people willing to talk about suicide and its often staggering effects on survivors.

She struggled for about eight more months before becoming sober in 2019.

Parr works from home for Zero to Five Montana as the Helena-based nonprofit’s Early Childhood Tribal Policy Coordinator, a statewide job that involves, among other things, collaborating with tribal children and families and early childhood professionals to optimize

early learning opportunities for Native children.

Wilmoth described Parr’s impact.

“Callie works tirelessly to support the youngest members of our community and build vital bridges,” she wrote. “Her dedication ensures that early childhood development resources reach families, particularly within tribal communities, fostering stronger starts for children and strengthening the partnerships necessary to support them effectively.”

Parr first became a mother at 16. She said she recognized then and with the two children who followed the need for a strong educational foundation.

Her work with children at the YMCA helped Parr grasp how much she enjoyed that experience. In January 2024, she went to work for Zero to Five Montana. The organization says it “promotes nonpartisan solutions to advance early

“

Callie embodies the very spirit of this award.”

Dorea Wilmoth

childhood policy strategies through innovative approaches and sustainable solutions.”

Becoming the Early Childhood Tribal Policy Coordinator has helped Parr engage with the sustaining wisdom of Native American cultures that were repressed as her ancestors faced coercion to assimilate.

She recently organized a meeting at Fairmont Hot Springs for teams from

eight tribal communities.

“So, there were eight different community teams to get together in one room to focus on early childhood in their community and build action plans that help support them,” she said. “Bringing all those tribes together in one room was monumental.”

Parr’s talent for organizing events was evident during the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention’s 2025 Out of the Darkness Campus Walk at Montana Tech. Parr chaired the event.

“Her impact here is tangible and truly inspiring,” Wilmoth said. “Under her leadership, this year’s walk didn’t just meet its goal, it shattered it — raising over \$17,000, a staggering \$7,000 above the \$10,000 target.”

Meanwhile, Parr’s return to the good path has

included a commitment to her own schooling, with support from her spouse and children.

She will graduate in May from University of Montana Western with an Associate of Applied Science degree in Early Childhood Education. And she is pursuing a bachelor’s degree from Salish Kootenai College.

Wilmoth said Parr’s story is a beacon of hope and resilience.

“She moves mountains within herself and within our community every day,” she said.

Parr said she was stunned when she learned about the Local Hero honor.

“To be called a hometown hero for Butte, a town I love so much, with people here I care so much about, is one of the highest honors I’ve received in my life.”

Callie, your unwavering dedication to saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide is truly inspirational.

Congratulations

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
Montana

afsp.org/Montana
afsp.org/MTech

Mike Mengon and Larry Driscoll: Lending a hand, however they can

BY LACEY MIDDLESTEAD,
SPECIAL TO THE MONTANA
STANDARD

Friends, fun and endless laughter.

For over 50 years, this has been the unofficial life motto of friends and Butte natives, Mike Mengon and Larry Driscoll.

The pair first met around their sophomore year of high school. Something instantly clicked with them, and they've been inseparable ever since.

They both went on to serve the youth of their community through careers in education. Mengon worked as a teacher at both Ramsay Elementary and Butte Central while Driscoll served as the principal at East Middle School.

After retiring, the two felt called to continue giving back to their hometown community as volunteers.

"Being in education you have a pretty good eye on it anyway you know," said Driscoll regarding his awareness of the needs of individuals and families in the Butte area.

For the past seven years, Mengon and Driscoll have volunteered with the Butte Emergency Food Bank. On Mondays each week, as well as other days when needed, they drive around picking up food and then help organize the food boxes that are provided to people. Once a month, they also make food deliveries to home-bound individuals.

"It's a lot of fun and the people are so appreciative, and it makes you feel good about yourself," said Mengon.

According to Driscoll, a mutual friend – Jim Malo-



COURTESY PHOTO

Mike Mengon and Larry Driscoll are pictured in this provided photo.

ney – first helped connect them with the Food Bank.

"Jim had been a long-time volunteer at the Food Bank and he brought us in," said Driscoll.

"Frankly, there's a ton of people at the Food Bank that do so much work...we're kind of just two guys that show up," joked Driscoll.

While the pair remain humble about their personal contributions to the Food Bank, their compassion for those they help, especially the home-bound, runs deep.

"They're really nice people and we're always looking out for them to see if there's

any way we can help them," said Mengon.

"All of us could be in that same situation so it's a pleasant thing to do," said Driscoll.

In addition to their work at the Food Bank, Mengon and Driscoll have also spent the past three years volunteering for the Butte Furniture Bank. They help pick up furniture and accessories from people wanting to make donations and then deliver those items to needy citizens in Butte.

"It's a really good program," said Mengon of the Furniture Bank.

Driscoll noted they are

especially grateful to fellow Furniture Bank volunteers Curt Quist, Dan Steele, Joe Schwarzenberger, Steve

“

It's a lot of fun and the people are so appreciative, and it makes you feel good about yourself.”

Mike Mengon

Miller, Eric Lepkowski, and Jim Woy for helping show them the ropes along the way.

"The Furniture Bank guys are a blast. They're good guys," said Driscoll.

Both Mengon and Driscoll are also members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians and have assisted on their projects at St. Patrick Catholic Cemetery. They volunteer annually with the elementary, middle school, and high school track meets, and during the COVID-19 pandemic, they even helped direct traffic in the Butte Civic Center parking lot for

vaccination clinics in the middle of winter.

The "why" behind Mengon and Driscoll's generous efforts is simple.

"We just try to do what we can do to help people," said Mengon.

"Everybody needs a little hand every now and then," said Driscoll.

That willingness to go above and beyond to serve those in need is something they would recommend to everyone.

"It's really rewarding in retirement because it gives you an activity to do and people appreciate it," said Driscoll. "You also meet a whole group of people you never would have met before in your life."

"It gives you a different perspective on things too," added Mengon.

And no matter what they are doing together or where they are volunteering that day, they always find a way to find fun and laughter along the way.

"I never come home and say, oh man, that was a bad day," said Mengon. "My wife always goes, how was it? I go, 'oh that was fun; we had a good time.'"



Congratulations
to our biggest fan--
Papa Mike
We love you and are so
proud of you!
-Tocher and Miner

Bill Melvin thankful to be ‘just doing his job’

TRACY THORNTON
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Bill Melvin is not too comfortable being honored as a Butte hero.

To Melvin, general manager at the Butte Civic Center, he's just doing his job, and it's one that he is thankful for.

"Butte has enabled me to make a good living and raise a family," said Melvin. "There's a heart here, a sense of community."

Bill McGladdery, director of corporate communications at Town Pump, said Melvin has had a passion for Butte his entire life.

"Bill has always viewed the Civic Center as an economic driver for Butte," said McGladdery. "Certainly, when you think of Bill you think about the tournaments and events that he

has solicited to bring to Butte and their impact on hotels, restaurants and retail stores in our community."

At any given event at the Butte Civic Center, Melvin can be found nearby, greeting people as they file in.

"When Bill brings these events to Butte, he always ensures that visitors receive Butte hospitality to bring them back," said McGladdery.

Marko Lucich, who sits on the Butte Civic Center board, said Melvin has developed a great network in Butte and throughout Montana and is a major factor in the center's success.

"He is a great, great leader for the Civic Center," said Lucich.

Lucich believes the Civic Center has the best hospitality room in Montana and



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Bill Melvin has been the general manager of the Butte Civic Center for the past 20 years.

credits Melvin for that as well.

The facility hosted the Class "B" divisional volleyball tournament Nov. 6-8, and Lucich said out-of-towners couldn't believe the wonderful treatment they received.

Melvin had a good ex-

“

He is a great, great leader for the Civic Center.”

Marko Lucich

planation for the favorable reviews. He told Lucich that he wanted people to feel like this is their home when they are here.

"This is why we get so many events and tournaments," said Lucich.

McGladdery described Melvin as a master organizer who can bring his crew and volunteers together to pull off local annual events, including Empty Bowls, the Butte Chamber of Commerce dinner, and the Butte Rescue Mission dinner.

"With these events and others, Bill is not afraid to get his hands dirty," said McGladdery. "This means handling complaints, staying late, getting up early, working holidays and weekends, all so that others can enjoy an event that shines a positive light on the Civic Center and community."

Melvin just celebrated his 20-year as the facility's general manager.

"My first day here was Halloween 2005," he said. "I have really enjoyed it."

Being at the Civic Center helm, Melvin said one of the many perks of his job is the many people he has encountered through the years.

"I have met some wonderful people from all over the state," he said.

Melvin also credits his staff.

"I have a fantastic staff that makes it a pleasurable workplace," he said.

The variety of events the center hosts throughout the year also appeals to Melvin — from sporting events to the circus, and everything in between. "Doing different things keeps me motivated," said Melvin.

The biggest perk, however, is witnessing, time and time again, when people or organizations need assistance, Butte residents are always there.

"People give unconditionally of their time and resources," said Melvin. "It's heartwarming."

As for being a Butte Hero, Melvin said he is humbled. "I never expected anything like that quite honestly," said Melvin. "I can think of others who are more deserving."

Congratulations,

Bill Melvin

on being honored as a

**2025
LOCAL
HERO!**



Thank you for your commitment to our community and making Butte a great place to live!



**Butte
Civic Center**
Harrison Ave, Butte MT



'Friendship, unity and Christian charity' AOH motto

TRACY THORNTON

tracy.thornton@mtstandard.com

The mining camp of Butte was not even a gleam in anyone's eyes when, in 1836, a national Irish Catholic organization formed in New York and Pennsylvania.

The Ancient Order of Hibernians was comprised of primarily immigrant Irishmen.

Members of the secret society had a set of hard and fast rules to follow, including preserving the traditions and culture of their homeland. Helping newly arrived Irish immigrants acclimate to America was also on its to-do list.

Fast forward to 1880, when more than 3,300 people called Butte home.

A new chapter of the AOH formed in Butte on Feb. 29 of that year, with members adhering to its motto of "friendship, unity and Christian charity."

It's been 145 years since the Butte Hibernians organized. While they are no longer a secret, the promise of friendship and unity still prevails, as does Christian charity.

"We carry the spirit of Butte with us," said Con Sullivan, president of the Butte

chapter. "To carry on that tradition is our purpose."

Remaining loyal to the long-standing motto is why the 122-member organization has been named Butte Heroes for 2025.

Sullivan said he was surprised at the honor.

"We do what we do without any fanfare," he said. "To have this bestowed on us is a good feeling."

Phil Telling was surprised as well.

"This recognition came out of the blue," he said. "Community service is a conduit to get the AOH out in the public eye."

Frank Walsh, vice president of the Butte chapter, said the AOH supplies scholarships for area students, sponsors local Little League baseball teams, and gives monetary donations to several non-profits, including the Butte Emergency Food Bank and the Butte Rescue Mission.

That's just a fraction of what these men have done and continue to do.

For the past 20 years, members have worked to restore and maintain St. Patrick's Cemetery, the final resting place for many of Butte's early-day immigrants.



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Members of the Butte chapter of the Ancient Order of Hibernians have been working on some projects at the World Museum of Mining. The men in the photograph are, from left, John Doran, Rich Quinn, Con Sullivan (AOH president) and Phil Telling.

Kenny Martz, sexton for Holy Cross Cemetery and St. Patrick's, said the men of the AOH have been good to him.

Martz said the Irish organization has bought much needed equipment for St. Patrick's, added a water system, straightened headstones, and repaired sunken graves.

"They're an uplifting bunch of guys," he said.

The historic St. Patrick's Cemetery, once referred to as the Catholic Cemetery, has also been around since 1880. The men of the AOH remain committed to honoring Butte's ancestors and will continue to improve the cemetery, which they refer to

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It's important for the AOH to preserve the history of Butte and its Irish traditions."

John Doran

as their flagship project.

"That's a shining example of giving back to the community," said Sullivan.

"Worthwhile projects bring our members together," added Telling.

These guys have caught the restoration bug because they've been hard at it again these past few months — this time volunteering at the World Museum of Mining.

A team of AOH members has been up at the museum replacing boardwalks, moving exhibits, and building fences.

The work at the World Museum is no big deal to AOH member, Rich Quinn.

"Someone had to step up," said Quinn, "and we were happy to."

John Doran said the World Museum has turned into a big project, but he doesn't mind.

"It's important for the AOH to preserve the history of Butte and its Irish traditions," said Doran.

Jim Murphy of the World Museum is impressed with the AOH and their work ethic.

"They disassemble a boardwalk one day and the next day, a new boardwalk is up," he said.

Murphy said it's obvious the men know their way around tools.

"The quality of work is terrific," he said. "They do it with heart and restore as much as they can."

Murphy is also looking at the bigger picture.

"It's a generous contribution that generations of Butte people will be able to enjoy," he said.

While the men get immense satisfaction from helping others, they enjoy each other's company, too.

"The brotherhood is strong," said Doran.

As for the \$1,000 that comes with the Butte Hero award, the AOH members have plans for that as well.

"We're giving back to the community," said Quinn.

Killoy

From Page 8

Logan Dudding, a project manager for the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, weighed in.

"Jim's knowledge of local mining history, especially headframes, is unmatched," Dudding said.

Aubrey Jaap is the director of the Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives. She said volunteers like Killoy are invaluable.

"In archives and museums, volunteers mean far more than an extra hand on projects—they lend their expertise, knowledge and lived experiences to the work they do," she said.

"In Jim's case, he has shared his considerable understanding of Butte's landscape—particularly the mines of the Butte Hill—to help identify thousands of photographs," Jaap said. "As time moves forward, this knowledge becomes increasingly irreplaceable,

but through his volunteerism in Butte's cultural spaces, Jim is ensuring that his insights are preserved for future generations."

In October 2018, Killoy sat down for an interview with Jaap and Clark Grant as part of The Verdigris Project, an endeavor intended to help preserve an oral history of Butte.

Killoy said his father was 15 years old when he went to work in the mines.

"His dad died," Killoy recalled. "So, somebody had

to go to work. He started at the Diamond Mine as a mucker."

Typically, a "mucker" is a laborer who shovels ore or rock into mine cars or onto a conveyor from which mine cars are loaded.

Edward Killoy tried being a boss for about six months.

His son recalled, "He says, 'I don't like worrying about the mine all day.'"

Edward suffered a broken leg working in the mines and other injuries. An

accident severed a thumb.

"They sewed it back on, but it didn't work," Killoy said. "It was always just like white. Especially when he was cold."

The Killoy family lived on the 900 block of Copper Street. Mining was a close neighbor.

Killoy's primary focus at the World Museum of Mining is cataloguing photos. When he first tackled this task, the identification of a headframe or a mine could require something akin to

detective work.

No more.

"I look at them and I usually know what they are," he said, smiling.

Killoy, a husband to Ann and father of three daughters, said he admires the men who braved the hardships and hazards of mining for a day's pay on the Richest Hill on Earth.

He said he is grateful for the Local Hero honor.

"It's really something. I keep thinking, 'What the hell am I in there for?'"

THANK YOU!
to our Local Heroes for
going above and beyond!
We admire your dedication
and commitment to
our community!



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