



Independent Record

Local basketball standouts

Replays wraps up series on best girls to play in area **B1**



Vietnam veterans event

Observance for 50th anniversary of peace accords set for Wednesday at Capitol **PAGE A2**

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THOM BRIDGE, INDEPENDENT RECORD

East Helena Public Schools Instructional Coach Katherine Senecal works with students in Heather Countryman's classroom at Radley Elementary School in East Helena on Friday.

'Space to take care of the community'

New \$42M hospital to be built in White Sulphur Springs

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Ground is expected to be broken in July on a new \$42 million hospital in White Sulphur Springs that supporters say will meet the needs of the growing community for years to come.

The Mountainview Medical Center will move from its present location at 16 W. Main St. into a larger facility less than a mile away on about 10 acres on Sixth Avenue that will allow for expansion. The new center will be 45,000 square feet, which is 6,000 square feet more than the current facility, Chief Executive Officer Rob Brandt said.

It's being mostly financed through \$38 million in USDA Rural Development loan funding.

"We couldn't do it without this loan," Brandt said. "It was our only means and ability to make it happen."

He said no local taxes will be used. Brandt said the USDA gives better-than-market rates. He added the equity needed for the project is already secured.

"We have a tremendous amount of support for this project," Brandt said, adding that White Sulphur Springs is a community impacted by tourism and is seeing more people who work in Bozeman moving in.

The new facility is expected to open in early 2025. Infusion Architects is designing it and Sletten Construction has been selected as the builder.

The new Mountainview Medical Center will feature 25 inpatient beds, including seven acute care beds, providing nearly 1,900 Meagher County residents with much-needed acute and nursing home care services, medical center officials said. Its design features a central circulation corridor that allows for easy wayfinding, overflow patient waiting, and separate public and patient departmental access. Brandt said the medical center also pulls in people from surrounding counties who live in the proximity of White Sulphur Springs.

The current facility has served the community for nearly 70 years.

Brandt said Mountainview is a "unique animal" in that it offers many of the same services as hospitals that are larger, Brandt said, adding it is equidistance from Helena, Bozeman and Great Falls.

The goal is to make it so

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East Helena educator wins technology teacher award

Radley's Senecal receives honor at regional conference

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Among educators from five states, East Helena Public Schools Instructional Coach Katherine Senecal stood out.

In a surprise announcement on Tuesday during the Northwest Council for Computer Education (NCCE) technology conference in Tacoma, Senecal received the 2023 Outstanding Technology Teacher Award.

NCCE is a not-for-profit educational technology professional development organization. The conference was regional, with educators attending from Alaska, Washington, Idaho, Oregon and Montana.

"I was very surprised. Instructional coaches, I don't think, get put up for a lot of awards," Senecal said. "I was very honored. It was so generous and thoughtful for someone to nominate me."

Senecal originally planned on pursuing a career in psychology before switching to education, following in the footsteps of her mother and both grandmothers. She's been in education for 18

years with all but one year spent teaching at Radley Elementary School in East Helena. In 2020, she moved into her current role as an instructional coach.

"There's a lot of kiddos where (school) is a safe place for them, and they love to learn. I wanted to be a part of that," said Senecal.

As an instructional coach, Senecal works to build partnerships with teachers and to support them in their growth by co-teaching, co-planning, creating material, observations, reading engagement and more.

"I'm very lucky — I work with an amazing staff at Radley," Senecal said. "They're all very open to any kind of support, feedback, and they're all such great teachers. My job is very easy in that regard because they always go above and beyond."

Senecal's co-workers describe her as exemplifying "discovery, innovation, impact, teamwork and fun."

"This brings me tremendous joy hearing that Katherine was selected as the educator of the year," Radley Principal Gus Somerfeld said. "Although it was a surprise, it does not come as shocking news because she is such an exemplary educator. She is an incredibly valuable member of the Radley Elementary crew in

the East Helena Public School District."

Somerfeld added that he leans on Senecal to create a learning environment where the focal point is "success for all."

Some highlights from Senecal's time at Radley include coaching an after-school all-girls For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology Lego League robotics team, the TechnoTiger Queens, who won first place at state in Core Values this year. They also won the regional championship in Helena and first place in Core Values at regionals. The Core Values award goes to a team who exemplifies discovery, innovation, impact, inclusion, teamwork and fun.

She also championed a grant from Farmers Insurance to establish a regulation room at Radley, which is essentially a space for children to enter to help establish some calm when they're having trouble balancing their emotions from a hypoactive or hyperactive state. There's a space for sensory needs, an exercise area, games and more in the regulation room.

"The regulation room is designed for anyone (on staff) to go in there and teach

(students) to recognize how they're feeling and find things that work with them to calm them down," Senecal said. "... We are teaching children those skills because those are those skills you need as an adult to go 'OK, I'm not feeling myself' instead of using other means to do that."

Senecal is the new coordinator of the 10th annual EdCamp MT-West on Aug. 23 that focuses on participant-driven professional development.

"It kind of gets roped into being just an East Helena thing, and it isn't — it's open to any educators who would like to come," she said. "The teachers come together and decide what they want to work on professionally then break off into groups and collaborate. It's free, and there's six renewal units."

NCCE Executive Director, Bobby Myers states that Katherine goes above and beyond her regular duties from coaching to creating engaging videos and more.

"We are so proud to have a Montana educator be recognized by her peers as being NCCE 2023 Outstanding Teacher of the Year and appreciate her years of dedication and mentoring others," Myers said.

UM scientist looks at camouflage and climate change

Study examines how jackrabbits adapt as snow cover declines

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MISSOULA — Dressing for snow when the snow doesn't come can be a life-and-death matter if you're a jackrabbit.

But new research shows the rabbits' color-change survival strategy might not be as vulnerable to climate change as originally assumed.

"It ended up being, in my mind, a surprisingly hopeful study," said Jeff Good, a Uni-

versity of Montana professor of ecology and evolution who coordinated the study. "When we first set out with it, it looked like this species was going to be really confronted with a ton of environmental change that was going to lead to its decline."

While Good said there's a chance that fear could still be true, the research pointed to a key component of how the color camouflage works. His team discovered that white-tailed jackrabbits actually have a pretty robust response to the changing climate.

This week, their latest chapter in a series of studies to better understand animals' camouflage

and seasonal camouflage was published in Science Magazine in an article titled, "The evolution of white-tailed jackrabbit camouflage in response to past and future seasonal climates."

The study focuses on white-tailed jackrabbits and how they can change the color of their coats to match their environment in changing seasons by tracking light instead of snow. When the animals find themselves in wintry, snowy terrain, their coats change from brown to white.

Climate change brings shorter winters, which can lead to a color

Please see **JACKRABBITS**, Page A7



Jeff Good, a University of Montana professor of ecology and evolution, coordinated a new study that shows white-tailed jackrabbits might be able to adapt their color camouflage in a changing climate. The study discovered genes that determine jackrabbit color variation depending on snow cover.

TOM BAUER,
MISSOULIAN

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