

HOMETOWN HELENA OBSERVER REPORT

League of Women Voters of the Helena Area

Mary (Mickey) Harlow, Observer

September 19, 2024

Refugees Welcomed to Helena: Valerie Hellerman, Hands on Global and HARRT, the Helena Area Refugee Resettlement team, provided information that on August 24 after 24 years in the Tanzanian refugee camp, 10 members of a family from the Democratic Republic of Congo, vetted by the Department of Homeland Security and the Office of Migration, were granted asylum and welcomed to Helena. The family consists of grandmother, mother, father and seven children between the ages of two and 17, all born in the refugee camp. The family needs job offers and a vehicle. Volunteers are needed to assist the family in integrating into the community by giving rides and invitations to local events. Call 406-422-1199 to volunteer.

Hope Center Ministry: The Women's Hope Center opened in Clancy in 2020. Over 200 women with substance abuse issues have been treated there. The center uses the 12-step model and houses 24 women who live together for a year. Life skills as well as conflict resolution are taught to the women during their stay. Most of the staff are recovered substance abusers. Sixty percent of the graduates stay clean and are gainfully employed. Two Native American women presented their life stories and their success with the program.

September 26, 2024

Helena Food Share will be opening its new 20,000 square-foot facility on October 7, 2024. Ribbon cutting and open house will occur October 15 at 4:30 p.m. The building, located near the intersection of Montana and Boulder Avenues, will feature an inside welcome lobby for customers, a market, commercial kitchen, large warehouse, loading docks, a community room, cooler, freezer, and a room that can be changed between the two offices and a breakroom for volunteers. Food Share says that one in seven Helena residents is hungry, one in five children don't have enough eat, one in five seniors don't know where their next meal will come from.

Candidate Introductions: Candidates for HD75 - Nancy Jane Lien, and the new redistricted HD79 (open seat formerly represented by Becky Beard) Luke Muskiewicz and Jill Sark, and HD38 Jeff Benson and now Becky Beard were given four minutes each at the meeting to present their biographical information and their pre-election platforms. The dominant issues brought forward by the candidates were using public money for private schools, more funding for public schools, support for Medicaid expansion, and property tax relief.

Praise for the League of Women Voters: Jim Smith, host of Hometown Helena gave a shoutout at the meeting to the Helena Area League of Women Voters noting that the League really stepped up their efforts to educate the community this year. The county commissioner candidate forum held this week and the upcoming October 7 League-sponsored forum on the proposed Constitutional initiatives CI-126, CI-127, CI-128 were announced by Jim.

More words acknowledging the work of the League: Several attendees at the meeting provided the observer with praise for the work of the League of Women Voters and their work in the community to educate and sign up voters. The League's efforts in the community are being noticed and appreciated.