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Montanans Recognized for Exemplary Community Volunteerism

Lieutenant Governor Kristen Juras to present annual service recognitions

HELENA, MT- Lieutenant Governor Kristen Juras, and the Montana Commission on Community Service today announced the recipients of the 2022 “ServeMontana Awards”. These awards are presented every year to outstanding community volunteers and organizations for their service to Montana.

Honorees represent the best in positive change through service, volunteerism, innovation, and community leadership. The annual awards ceremony and luncheon will take place on June 24th at the Capitol.

“It is such an honor to celebrate hardworking recipients of the ServeMontana Awards,” said Lt. Governor Kristen Juras. “These Montanans have dedicated their time, skills and lives to serving others, helping strengthen our communities one act of service at a time.”

2022 ServeMontana Award Recipients:

Individual:

Chue Vang (Missoula) has been serving the Missoula community since he came as a war refugee in 1979. Chue works with Hmong clients, has served on the board for the Refugee Assistance Center, and became a Senior Companion with AmeriCorps Seniors in 2011. He serves by providing translation services, advocacy, and education totaling nearly 14,000 hours and driving over 24,000 miles to help older adults remain living independently in their home.

Elijah Gopher (Great Falls) is a light to countless individuals who utilize Alliance for Youth’s Resource Center, a drop-in center for youth to receive food, access to showers, and range of social services. Whether serving dinner, cleaning or working with youth, he is always enthusiastic and compassionate. Elijah has volunteered hundreds of hours working one-on-one with youth providing guidance, love, and support.

Judy Reighard (Sunburst) has been a vital and active part of her community for nearly 50 years. She belongs to several organizations including the Coutts Sweet Grass Lions Club and the American Legion Auxiliary and is a volunteer at the North Toole County Athletic Department, as well as being a member of the Quilt Guild. Judy has logged countless hours working on

fundraisers for various projects including Sunburst Gala Days, as well as the Pie and Rummage Sale, and offers her time to read scholarship applications and essays.

Becky Nelson (Great Falls) is a long-time resident of Cascade County and a fierce advocate for students, teachers, families, and Career & Technical Education. Becky holds various roles with Business Professionals of America (BPA) and Future Farmers of America (FFA) and was instrumental in starting the Electric City FFA Chapter. She also gives much of her energy to support the Great Falls Rescue Mission (GFRM) from volunteering in their kitchen to donating items to the shelters, as well as organizing the Back-to-School Rally that provides backpacks and supplies to children in the county.

Service Legacy:

Florence Wacker (Roundup) was with AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP for 20 years and donated nearly 4,000 hours of service, 400 of those hours in 2021 alone. She volunteered in the Senior Center Kitchen where she was a cashier and helped with dining room set up. Florence was always the first to volunteer for special events such as selling raffle tickets, the Christmas Stroll, and Halloween Costume Contest to name a few. When asked why she chose to volunteer every day, she would say, “it keeps me young!”

Group:

Sunburst Arts and Education (Eureka) is very much a community organization and most of the work to provide their spectrum of programs is made possible by volunteers. Sunburst volunteers write grants to help bring world-class musicians for community concerts and provide outreach programs to schools and the local nursing home. They organize rotating art exhibits in Eureka, Trego, and Fortine post offices and schools, as well as sell tickets and operate concessions for the five-concert winter series. Volunteers help clean up the Kootenai Rails-to-Trails, and tutor and support individuals working on their GED/ HiSET during the school year.

Lewis & Clark Literacy Council (Helena) provides a vital service to their community by offering reading and writing classes, conversational English, and one-on-one tutoring for people who would like to expand their education. From basic math to HiSet prep, the Lewis & Clark Literacy Council strives to strengthen the Helena community, and recently extending their services to Afghan refugees who are resettling. The council offers workforce and life skills so adults and their families can have an improved quality of life, and increase their participation in their work, their communities, and even their own families.

The ServeMontana Awards are sponsored by Montana’s Credit Unions. The Governor’s Office of Community Service expands and promotes national service and volunteerism in Montana and engages citizens in service. To learn more, please visit serve.mt.gov.

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