

Smelter City Seniors

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MARCH 2026

Meet the Grand Marshals

Page 2



The Anaconda
Leader

Meet the grand marshals set to lead the St. Patrick's Day Parade

'We work hard and we play hard': Billie Holmlund selected as the LAOH grand marshal

KASEY EDGE-FAUR
COPY EDITOR

Billie Holmlund has been a member of Anaconda's Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians since 1989, but she said she didn't realize how many years had passed – and how many things she and the LAOH had done in those years.

"You just do things, build them up, year after year after year, and you don't realize how important they are," Holmlund said.

Although Holmlund, who was named the LAOH's grand marshal for this year's St. Patrick's Day parade, has recently been told that many of her LAOH sisters have been discussing her nomination for months, she had no idea and was blown away by the news.

"I was so surprised," Holmlund said. "Totally, totally surprised. It's such an honor."

One thing Holmlund said she didn't realize about the grand marshal position is how much recognition people bestow.

See LAOH on page 3



Billie Holmlund, left, and Jack Mehrens are this year's LAOH and AOH St. Patrick's Day Parade grand marshals. Leader photo: James S. Rosien

'We do a lot of good': Jack Mehrens tabbed to lead AOH St. Patrick's Day Parade

JAMES S. ROSIEN
EDITOR

The Mehrens name is practically synonymous with the Ancient Order of Hibernians, with multiple generations of the family involved with Anaconda's own Division 1 of the AOH in Montana. Yet interestingly enough, while the family traces their Irish heritage on the maternal side, "Mehrens" is actually a German name.

That was one of the interesting factoids that Jack Mehrens, the AOH's grand marshal for this year's St. Patrick's Day Parade, shared with the Anaconda Leader in an interview about his being chosen as grand marshal.

The family's AOH involvement stems back at least as far as Mehrens' grandfather, John Monahan, who he said was a member in the 1930s, and it's been part of the family ever since.

Yet in Mehrens' own case, while he was a

See AOH on page 4



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LAOH from page 2

She said since she was named this year's grand marshal, she has received many phone calls, kind words, notes of congratulation and gifts from people, which has touched her deeply.

"Just the people that come up and congratulate you," Holmlund said. "It's amazing, and it gets more amazing every day. I didn't realize how important they made you feel."

In her 36 years in the LAOH, Holmlund has volunteered "for numerous committees and in leadership positions in our local division as well as a State LAOH Board Member," according to an email written by fellow LAOH sister Colleen Riley regarding Holmlund's nomination.

Included in this list of positions, Holmlund has been the Anaconda Division Secretary and the state LAOH secretary.

Riley said in her email that "Billie's years of experience in those roles helped me understand how to compile and submit the required annual reports and keep our

documents organized!"

Holmlund said she also has served as treasurer for the Anaconda LAOH and historian, which she particularly enjoyed.

"Billie is not a member who seeks out attention but is a member who looks for opportunities to help others and to help our organization be successful in our community," Riley email said.

Despite all these positions she's served in and everything she has accomplished as part of the LAOH, Holmlund says her greatest accomplishment is the friends she's made and kept within the group.

"Our motto is 'Friendship, Unity, and Christian Charity,'" Holmlund said, adding with a laugh that they adhere to that motto 99.9% of the time. "We take care of our sisters. We're just a good group of ladies. We work hard and we play hard."

Although the grand marshal can ride in the car during the parade, Holmlund said she intends to walk.

"I'll march as long as I can," she said.

Holmlund shared that her grandson and his girlfriend got her



Billie Holmlund is pictured with the Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians banner at the AOH Hall in Anaconda. Leader photo: James S. Rosien

a green tiara to wear in the parade, which she will be donning for the occasion.

Whether it be the LAOH or her position on the Smelter City Senior Citizens Center at the Metcalf's board of directors, Holmlund said she likes to give her all.

"If I'm going to belong to something, I want to belong,"

Holmlund said. "I want to do."

One particularly fond memory Holmlund's LAOH sisters have of her is when she visited Knock in Ireland, and visited the group's patron saint, the Lady of Knock, and collected and brought back holy water that she shared with her fellow LAOH sisters at their annual Lady of Knock Celebration.

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AOH from page 2

member prior to the smelter's closure, after the closure and losing his job he gave up his membership.

"I was out of work for two years," Mehrens said.

He would finally get hired on as an officer at Montana State Prison, crediting the late state legislator from Anaconda, "Red" Menahan, for helping him get the job.

Mehrens ended up working at the prison for 36 years.

"I didn't think I'd be there 36 minutes, let alone 36 years," he said.

But it wasn't until his retirement 2011 when Mehrens got back involved with the AOH, and he's continued to be involved practically every year since.

Some of his involvements include assisting with the St. Paddy's Day Race Food Drive that's kicked into high gear this week ahead of the race on Saturday, as well as the AOH Christmas Movie, and this year he'll be helping cook at

the Irish "Ceilidh" celebration on Sunday, March 15 at the AOH Hall.

"We do a lot of good stuff," he said. "I think we do a lot for the community.

Yet last year was one year where he unfortunately wasn't able to help out - and in fact it's fortunate it wasn't his last: Mehrens developed blood clots that required he be transported by LifeFlight to Missoula for life-saving treatment.

"It was really touch-and-go," he said.

And yet he still kept his spirits up throughout, right up to a request he made when he arrived at St. Patrick's Hospital in Missoula when he asked for a Mo Burger from the Missoula Club.

"I didn't get one," Mehrens said, laughing.

Speaking of St. Pat's, when asked what his reaction was to being named AOH grand marshal for this year's St. Patrick's Day Parade, Mehrens was humbled.

"I didn't believe them," he said. "There's a lot of guys in the AOH



Jack Mehrens stands beside the Division No. 1 Ancient Order of Hibernians banner at the AOH Hall in Anaconda. Leader photo: James S. Rosien

who do a lot and don't take credit for anything."

Still, he said "it was pretty exciting" when he got the news.

"It's exciting, especially knowing other people in my family have been involved," he said, adding that it's also special

that Billie Holmlund will be the LAOH grand marshal as he had worked with her late husband, Toby, on the smelter.

"He was a good guy," Mehrens said.

AOH concludes on page 5

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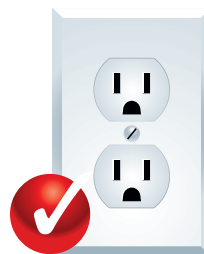
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All in the family: Ancient Order of Hibernians members Colin, left, Mike, Bob, Ian, Jack, Joe and Tom Mehrens celebrate Ian's induction into the AOH at their Steak Fry at Washoe Park in 2022. Photo courtesy of Jack Mehrens.

AOH from page 5

One thing Mehrens said he'd like to see is more young people joining the AOH and getting involved.

"There's some really good kids out there. We need to get them

involved," he said.

He's already seeing that happen himself with his own family – his son, Bob, has been very involved with the AOH since 1999, and now two grandsons are members as well. The family celebrated the

induction of his grandson, Ian, at the AOH Steak Fry in 2022 at Washoe Park.

Join Mehrens, Holmlund and the AOH and LAOH in celebrating the St. Patrick's Day Parade on Tuesday, March 17 at 2 p.m. in Anaconda.

St. Patrick's Day +

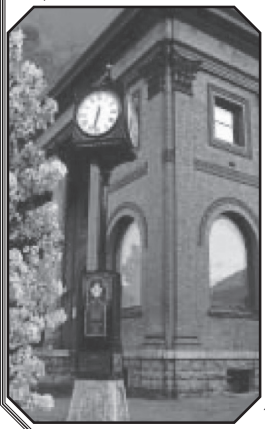
Prepare yourselves for a very busy St. Paddy's Weekend in Anaconda:

- Friday, March 13:
 - A Celtic Celebration, 7:30 p.m. at the Washoe Theatre.
- Saturday, March 14:
 - The St. Paddy's Day Race, a 3- or 6-mile race in Anaconda; 11 a.m. at the AOH Hall, 106 Cherry St.
- Sunday, March 15:
 - The Irish Ceilidh celebration at the AOH Hall; Irish entertainment from 3-5 p.m., corned beef and cabbage dinner at 5 p.m.
- Tuesday, March 17:
 - Hibernians will meet at the AOH Hall at 8:30 a.m. and march to St. Peter's Church for Mass. Breakfast at the AOH Hall at 10:30 a.m.
 - St. Patrick's Day Parade at 2 p.m. from the AOH Hall down Commercial Avenue to Hickory Street and back to the hall via Park Avenue. (parade lineup at 1:30 p.m.)

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Metcalf director: senior center levies will help sustain the food program, keep center maintained, if passed

KASEY EDGE-FAUR
COPY EDITOR

There are several levies set to be on the ballot for the upcoming primary election in June, including two from the Smelter City Senior Citizens Center at the Metcalf.

The senior center's director, Leigha Bates, said one of the levies is for the center's food program, which is currently its biggest expense, and the other is for the center itself and transportation. Bates said the levies are independent of each other.

If the center's levies – which both run for two years – were to pass, the property tax impact would be \$4.56/year on a \$100,000 home, \$13.68/year on a \$300,000 home, and \$32.16/year on a \$600,000 home.

Bates said that as of now the

senior center is not solvent.

"We're in the red," she said, explaining that much of that was due to its food program, which serves in-house lunch Monday-Thursday and Meal on Wheels Deliveries Monday-Friday to clients, many of whom are homebound.

"Even with the wonderful fundraisers and donations we've had, we're still not solvent," Bates said. "We want to continue as is and do not want to pass the cost on to clients."

She said in addition to general donations, some people will buy pay-it-forward meals.

"That is huge because it gives those unable to pay dignity," Bates said.

The prices are \$7 per meal, but Bates said the center will never turn anyone away because of inability to



Braiden Cole, Lia Liedle and Rebecca Faulkner serve up lunch at the Smelter City Senior Citizens Center at the Metcalf on Tuesday, March 10. The Metcalf is seeking a levy to support its food program. Leader photo: Kasey Edge-Faur

pay.

Bates said the kitchen staff in recent months has worked hard to cut costs while still delivering

filling, delicious meals as much as possible, and have been coming in

See METCALF on page 7

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METCALF from page 6

under budget.

"Our kitchen staff has done a phenomenal job and have virtually eliminated food waste," Bates said.

Every month, any excess meals get stored in the fridge and sold at a reduced cost of \$4, Bates said. Right now, they are selling meals from February for \$2 a meal.

After a month passes, although the meals are good for six months in the freezer, the senior center donates the food to the Project Care Food Bank.

Bates said the food levy, if passed, will cover actual food, supplies to cook food, kitchen staff wages, and incidentals such as cooking oil.

On the center and transportation side of things, the levy would go to covering deferred maintenance for the center and transportation costs.

Bates explained that the levies would not go to fund the center's capital projects, such as its roof repairs or structural work, things Bates said will be expensive and that she is applying for grants to cover the cost of.

Rather, the levy will cover regular maintenance like sewer cleanouts that need to be done at least once a year, and cleanings of the coolant system in the kitchen, which needs to be done every month or two.

Bates said that one of the things she wants to accomplish is opening the center on Fridays to both senior-aged clients and the community.

"We're trying to be creative with how we can increase our services even if the mill levies don't pass," Bates said.

Bates has also been planning more events, such as visits from both Head Start and high school students, a book reading and signing by local author Bernd Bergmann on April 1; a Spring Fling community dance on April 10; and a fitness and health fair attended by nursing students from Montana Tech on April 22 and 23.

"We've been lucky that our speakers have been donating their time," Bates said.

METCALF concludes on page 8



The bus for the Smelter City Senior Citizens Center at the Metcalf sits ready outside the center's entrance after dropping off patrons for lunch. The levy for the center's operations includes its bus service. Leader photo: Kasey Edge-Faur

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METCALF from page 7

The senior center recently started offering trips to local grocery stores such as Stokes and Albertsons, and would like to be able to offer trips for seniors to local community events like the library's book sale, which is something levy funds would go toward. They would help fund gas, vehicle maintenance and wages to support the center's bus driver working more hours.

One thing Bates emphasized was that the levy funds would not be used for things that could be

considered frivolous. For example, clients will be riding in the St. Patrick's Day parade, throwing out candy and wearing headbands, all purchased with donated funds. She said this is the sort of thing levy funds would not go toward.

She said she's gotten comments expressing frustration about levies and their effects on people's taxes.

Bates said she understands, and believes the center is a needed resource in the community.

"We would very seriously look at everything we spend money on with the levies," Bates said.

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Metcalf Center patrons were recently joined by the "patrons" of another agency that's also up for a levy this year: the students of Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Head Start, who sang for the seniors on Tuesday, March 10 before dining with them afterward. Leader photos: Kasey Edge-Faur

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Actions to take if you have been a victim of financial abuse or scam

The Smelter City Senior Citizens Center at the Metcalf was packed on Wednesday, March 11 to hear from AARP Fraud Ambassador Susan Bivins, an Anaconda woman who was defrauded out of her life savings and has made it her mission to ensure that the same thing doesn't happen to others.

About 45 patrons at the Metcalf heard her presentation on March 11, which included the following information Bivins has put together to help guide her fellow seniors to avoid scams – and to know what to do if they have been targeted by and/or victimized by scams.

The first and most important step is to report to local law enforcement, who should have information packet to help guide you through steps to take to report:

- Complete local police department form and get case number;
- Complete Department of Justice Office of Consumer



Left: AARP Fraud Ambassador Susan Bivins speaks at the Smelter City Senior Citizens Center at the Metcalf on March 11. Right: The talk was well attended, with about 45 patrons getting tips on avoiding fraud. Photos courtesy of Leigha Bates.



Protection reporting form to be sent to DOJ office in Helena; www.contactcp@mt.gov 1-406-444-4500 or toll free 1-800-481-6896 or www.dojmt.gov/consumer;

- Report to FBI and get a case number/agent assigned;
- Complete online Federal Trade Center (FTC) reporting form (only data gathering, not an investigating body);
- Talk with FBI agent assigned-make sure he/she understands this is a crime;
- and complete IC3 form (FBI data gathering form only);

If you realize you have sent money via wire transfers or money grams or gift cards, immediately do the following:

- Submit a “fraud complaint” to IC3 (ic3.gov);
- Contact your bank to report;
- Contact the local FBI field office (walk-In, if possible), explain that you have reported to IC3 and your bank, request a guardian complaint, and ask them to forward the complaint to the FBI Rapid Recovery Team (RAT);
- Time is of the essence; after 72 hours there's little chance of

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And contact the DPHHS Adult Protective Services to report abuse,

See SCAM on page 10

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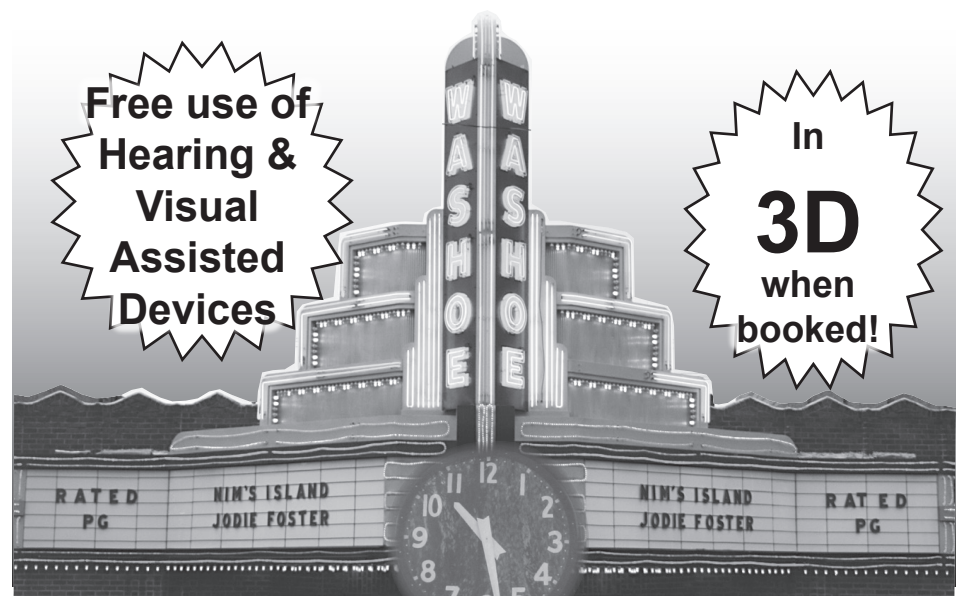
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SCAM from page 9

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You also can contact AARP at www.aarp.org, the AARP Fraud Watch Helpline, 1-877-908-3360; www.aarp.org/FraudWatchNetwork, and for emotional support; www.aarp.org/online-support-sessions.

Another important contact is the Commissioner of Securities and Insurance (CSI). You can report to the CSI Financial Abuse Specialist Team (FAST). This is available for elder exploitation referrals with a time sensitive, targeted evaluation by securities and insurance specialists: www.csimt.gov/fast-team or call 406-444-2040.

For help in understanding how you are perceived when you tell family and friends about what has happened to you, check out: Words Matter: www.aarp.org/wordsmatter.

It's extremely important to discuss these scam requests with your family/friends, especially

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And absolutely do not give out any personal information (date of birth, SS number, address, etc).

Amazon never calls you. Go into your account to see if there have been charges made on your account, contact them.

Government employees never send you copies of their badges via text or email.

Keep notes on every person you talk to, every report that you complete, and every action that you take. Keep copies of wire transfers, money grams, gift cards, etc. And really know who you are sending any money to.

And most of all, don't be embarrassed or ashamed that this happened to you. These criminals are very well trained to con people. Anyone can become a victim. This is a crime. Don't let anyone tell you it isn't. You can survive.

For more information, contact Susan Bivins at (707) 357-3839, sbivins4220@gmail.com.

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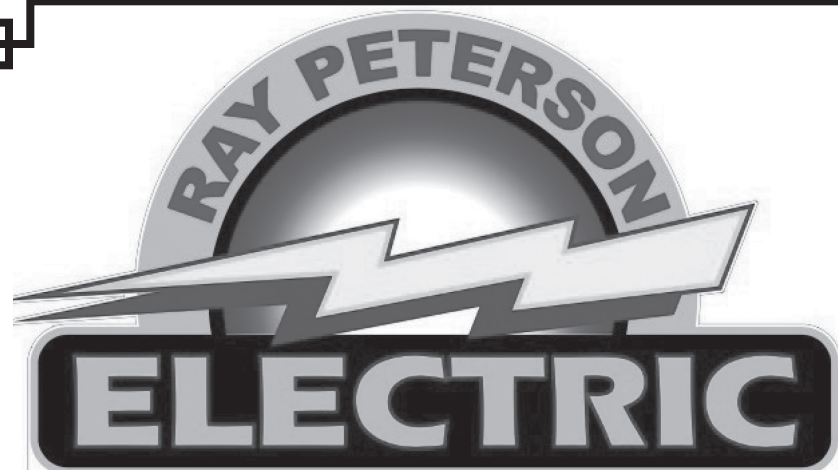
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'The Cupid Crew' at the Metcalf |



Top: Leigha Bates, left, Metcalf Center director, holds up a card and rose that AARP "Cupid Crew" members Susan Bivins and her granddaughter Abby gave out on Valentine's Day at the senior center. Above: Abby places a rose into a Metcalf Center patron's bag. Leader photos: James S. Rosien

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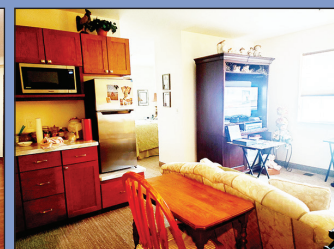
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Salute to Seniors: Croatian Fraternal Union & Mesopust



The St. Peter and Paul Society Lodge No. 84 of the Croatian Fraternal Union got the Lenten season started with their annual Mesopust dinner on Feb. 22 at the Croatian Hall. "Mesopust," a Croatian word meaning "without meat," is a fun inter-generational feast and celebration of Croatian culture and an annual tradition going back over a century in Anaconda. Above: The Mesopust committee is comprised of Rosemary Gross, front row left, Tom McKay, Angela Blaz, Stan Blaz, second row left, Marion Strelnik, Rosie McKay, Logan McKay, Tanna Andrews, Ben Andrews, Drew Conrady, back left, Jase McKay, Kristy McKay, Russ McKay and Gary Blaz. Above right: Stan and Rosie sing "O Marijana," a Croatian folk song, at Mesopust. Leader photos: James S. Rosien



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