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## **Spring Clean Up Scheduled for 31 Helena Homes 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Spirit of Service - May 13<sup>th</sup>**

Helena, MT On Wednesday, May 13<sup>th</sup>, a small army of workers will participate in Helena's eleventh annual Spirit of Service (SOS). Helena businesses and nonprofits sponsor this annual spring community service project. Over 250 employees will devote the day to trimming, weeding, scrubbing, sanding, and painting for 31 homeowners who are not physically able to tackle such chores themselves. "It's a labor of love," says Rose Felter, Project Coordinator and RMDC Executive Assistant. "We're fortunate to live in Helena, to have employment and health. We look forward to the opportunity to give a little something back."

Sponsoring organizations and homeowners have been mapping out chores and choosing paint colors together for several weeks. Sponsors provide cash support, tools, materials, and the work crews for the homes they tackle. All SOS assistance is free to homeowners. Typically, crews remove trash, clean-out rain gutters, cut grass, trim hedges, wash windows, and paint—all exterior tasks. "We assist a different group of properties each year," notes Felter. "We respect folks who are working hard to stay in their own homes, but routine yard work, little repairs, and climbing a ladder are tough for many folks who have lost mobility."

Between 1995 and 2025, Montana's senior population is expected to grow by 140%, among the top ten states in the nation for such projected growth. More than one in four Montanans will be over 65. "That means," says Dale Field, Vice President of Commercial and Consumer Lending for American Federal Savings Bank, "that we need to have creative community services in place to help older adults facing physical challenges. We feel like this program sets an example for many other nonprofits and businesses."

Field will be part of the American Federal work team, which is tackling several properties, including Jean Bowlds' home in East Helena. A widow for 28 years, former ranchwoman, Mrs. Bowlds has always taken pride in her home and yard. At 83, lifting, reaching, and mowing have grown too difficult. So, she welcomes the Spirit of Service crew from American Federal with open arms. Her circumstances echo those of most other homeowners.

2010 partner organizations include Anderson ZurMuehlen & Co., PC, Employee Benefit Resources LLP, Rocky Mountain Development Council, the City of Helena, Wal-Mart, Heritage Propane, Morrison-Maierle Inc., American Federal Savings Bank, Student Assistance Foundation, and St. Peter's Hospital. Costco, Allegra Print and Imaging, and Mountain West Bank have joined the project this year as partners-in-training.

For further information about the SOS event including homeowners and work crews to interview, contact Rose Felter, SOS Project Coordinator, at Rocky Mountain Development Council, 457-7303 or cell, 461-2471.

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