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Vol. 4, Issue 16 January 26th, 2026



## Great Falls wins fifth straight contest against Butte

**Sports** By Kevin Scott: January 24, 2026 - Great Falls, Mt



Photo credit Michael Noel Photography

With three remaining head-to-head meetings remaining, the Great Falls Americans (22-13-1-1) and the Butte Irish (9-26-0-0) have already met four prior times on the ice, with Great Falls going undefeated. Butte has been held to no more than three goals per game.

Since the Great Falls Americans 6-3 win in Butte, Montana, on January 3rd, the Irish have made some changes to their lineup. On January 13th, Butte sent standout player, Easton Langemo, to the

top-ranked Sheridan (WY) Hawks in exchange for Anthony Launderville and Josh Halvorson. In addition to the trade, they also released eight players from head coach Marc Brodeur's squad.

Great Falls was looking to go 2-0 at home against their Montana opponent on Saturday afternoon after winning three at the Butte Community Ice Center earlier this season.

Reid Lezubksi, Jordan Murray, and Gordon Jennings all lit up the

*(Continued on page 3)*

## City Commission Appoints New Municipal Court Judge

**City** By Karen Anderson: January 24, 2026 - Great Falls, Mt

During its meeting on January 20, 2026, the Great Falls City Commission appointed Cassidy Blomgren as the Municipal Court Judge for Department A. This decision came after the Commission interviewed the top candidates the week before. The position became available due to the retirement of Judge Steven Bolstad on January 1, 2026.

Blomgren has been serving as a City Prosecutor for Great Falls since December 2023. She hails from Missoula and holds an undergraduate degree from Oregon State University, as well as a law degree from the University of Montana.

Her legal career began in 2009 when she worked as a public defender for the

*(Continued on page 2)*



Cassidy Blomgren. Photo courtesy of City of Great Falls



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Editor: Karen Anderson  
Publisher: Andy Anderson

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## City

### New Municipal Court Judge (Continued from page 1)

Office of the State Public Defender, representing clients in the Great Falls Municipal Court. In 2013, she served as a law clerk for Municipal Court Judge Nancy Luth. Later, she worked as a prosecutor for the City of Great Falls until 2021 before working with Alluvion Health on crisis diversion programs. Blomgren rejoined the City of Great Falls as a prosecutor in late 2023.

With the opening of a second municipal courtroom in October 2025, Blomgren indicated that one of her main goals will be to collaborate with Municipal Court Judge Mark Dunn (Department B) to ensure the smooth operation of both courtrooms. She also emphasized her commitment to exploring innovative strategies for tackling mental health and substance abuse issues in the community.

"I am truly humbled by the support and encouragement I have received throughout this process," Blomgren stated. "Judge Bolstad made a lasting impact on the Court and this community, and I am grateful for the opportunity to carry that work forward as I begin this next chapter."

Blomgren is set to be sworn in as the Municipal Court Judge for Department A on January 30, 2026. She will hold this position until the next municipal general election in November 2027, at which point voters will be able to elect a Municipal Court Judge for Department A.



1. Name The Kingston Trio song about the Boston subway.
2. Which group wrote and released "Baby Come Back"?
3. Name the artist who released "Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue."
4. Who released "Man of the World"?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "All my bags are packed, I'm ready to go, I'm standing here outside your door."

#### Answers

1. "M.T.A.," also known as "The MTA

song." MTA is short for Metropolitan Transit Authority. Originally written as a campaign song in 1949 (Steiner/Hawes), the Trio's 1959 version was released on their "At Large" album.

2. Player, in 1977. The song shot to the top of the chart and stayed there for three weeks.

3. Crystal Gayle, in 1977. Gayle won a Grammy for Best Female Country Vocal Performance. The song has been covered by artists around the globe, in several languages, including French, Cantonese, Czech and German.

4. Fleetwood Mac, in 1969.

5. "Leaving On a Jet Plane," by John Denver, in 1966. Singer-songwriter Denver did a limited release of the song, calling it "Babe I Hate to Go." The title was changed a year later. Peter, Paul and Mary followed with a cover in 1969.

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# Sports

## Great Falls wins fifth straight contest against Butte (Continued from page 1)

lamp in the Great Falls Americans 3-2 victory over the Butte Irish during Toyota Night at the Great Falls Ice Plex on Saturday afternoon. Cooper Clouse assisted on all three scoring drives.

Great Falls outshot Butte 22-8 as the first period came to a close, but it was the Irish taking the early lead. Butte's Logan Weber took advantage of the Americans in the penalty box and got the puck in the net off a pass from teammates Andrew James and Jack Whitelaw with 1:16 left before the first intermission. Weber, a native of Beaverton, Oregon, currently leads the Butte NA3HL franchise with 15 goals and 34 points. Great Falls had their fair share of unsuccessful scoring opportunities.

The Americans came out of the locker room for the second period ready to go. The Americans needed one minute to even the score (1-1) on a score by Reid Lezubski, with Fisher Hannesson and Cooper Clouse gathering the assists. Jordan Murray, who came over from the Yellowstone (WY) Quake earlier

this season, picked up his first goal as a member of the Americans (he scored twice while with Yellowstone this season) less than two minutes after Lezubski's score. Cooper Clouse, the team leader in assists made, captured his 46th (assist) while Keegan Hanson acquired his sixth assist to give Great Falls their first lead (2-1) of the afternoon. Clouse is currently ranked No. 10 in the NA3HL for point scored with 63. The penalty-free frame saw 22 total shots being taken.

Seven minutes into the last period of regulation, Butte and Great Falls traded goals. Kaleb Ivens scored his first goal of the season as the Irish tied the game, 2-2 with 12:23 left. Jack Whitelaw and Andrew James each added their second assists. The Great Falls offense raced down the other way and answered back 22 seconds later with Cooper Clouse earning his third assist of the game and Aidan Mulharen getting his fourth when they found an open Gordon Jennings to help the Americans regain the lead (3-2). The score by Gordon Jennings proved to be the

game-winner as both teams skated out the remaining twelve minutes.

Great Falls tamed Butte's offense as they produced 53 shots-on-goal, with 31 coming after the first intermission. Butte ended their road game with Great Falls with just 20 shots attempted.

Each squad capitalized by scoring on one of their power play chances.

Kaden Rhyder remained perfect (4-0-0-0) when facing the Irish this season. The standout goaltender swatted away 18 shots and allowed one goal in the first and third periods. He is now 11-5-0-1 in 18 appearances for Great Falls.

The Americans offense kept Butte netminder Mathieu Chernauckas (3-8-0-0) busy in the net. The returning goalie from last season played the entire sixty minutes and finished with 50 saves in his second loss at the hands of the Americans. On January 3rd, Great Falls got by Butte, 6-3, in Butte, Montana.

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# Living

## Pet Paw-See Animal Spotlight - Miles

By Lisa Hudecek, Pet Paw-See: January 22, 2026 - Great Falls, Mt

### Meet Miles

Miles is around 8 years old and has been through more than most cats ever should. His journey began in a shelter in Georgia, and after multiple transitions, he eventually found himself in Great Falls—still searching for stability and safety.

He is FIV-positive and had all of his teeth removed due to a severe mouth infection. While Miles does well in a calm environment, stress

causes his mouth issues to flare up. The busy PetSmart habitat is overwhelming for him, and he is in a truly urgent situation.

Miles desperately needs a quiet, low-key home as soon as possible where he can relax, heal, and finally feel safe. He is a gentle, sweet boy who is ready for someone to give him the peace and permanency he has always deserved.



Photo credit Pet Paw-See



## Library's Free Black Heritage Evening on Thurs., Feb. 5 to Feature Speakers, 'Soul Food' and Music

By Jake Sorich, Great Falls Public Library: January 23, 2026 - Great Falls, Mt



Photo courtesy of Great Falls Public Library

The Great Falls Public Library hosts a special event celebrating the Heritage of Great Falls' African American community

on Thursday, February 5, from 6 to 8 pm in the Cordingley Room. The program features African American culture, history, and cuisine. This free program, open to the public, is co-sponsored by the Alma Smith Jacobs Foundation, a non-profit promoting education, the Alexander Worship Temple, and the GFPL.

Kathy Reed, with the Alma Smith Jacobs Foundation, will serve as MC again for this event. Some of the night's highlights include the AT Praise Team, a historical lesson from Ken Robison titled "When the 'Dean of African American Composers' Created Music for Great Falls High School", and dancing with the Little Saints Hip Hop group. Bishop Marcus Collins is our keynote speaker.

Shannon Newth will be providing clips of the documentary Fiesty

Women featuring the story of Alma Smith Jacobs. A sampling of "soul food" will be provided by the Alexander Temple and Antonio Hicks will perform on the piano during dinner.

This program is free and open to the public.

For more information, contact Jake Sorich at [jsorich@greatfallslibrary.org](mailto:jsorich@greatfallslibrary.org) or 406-453-0349 ex. 220.



Photo courtesy of Great Falls Public Library



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## Frosty temps result in cold paws



DEAR PAW'S CORNER: My cat "Fiero" is a robust outdoor cat who loves being outside all day and comes in at night. Recently, he came in limping a bit. I couldn't see any damage to his paws, but the pads felt really cold and he didn't like me touching them. Can cats' paws freeze in the cold? -- Fred S., Madison, Wisconsin

DEAR FRED: Yes, cats absolutely can be injured in cold weather. While they are more inclined to find a warm and cozy spot, away from ice and snow, cats are still at risk of frostbitten paw pads, cuts from jagged ice or salt, hypothermia and possible poisoning from licking ice melt off of their paws.

I suspect that Fiero's paw pads are

frostbitten, and he may have gotten slightly hypothermic as well, especially if it was bitterly cold outside. Contact the veterinarian for guidance so that he recovers quickly from the injury.

While Fiero is happiest outside, you can create a space for him inside to watch birds and wildlife outdoors. Set up a window shelf that he can relax on while looking out of the window. Another option is to stream a "cat TV" channel. These increasingly popular live streams -- found mostly on YouTube -- are designed to draw cats' attention to twittering birds and curious squirrels on the screen.

Additionally, give him an outlet for his excess energy. Place scratch pads throughout the house so he can sharpen his claws without destroying the furniture. Try different cat toys to get him to chase and play.

For less-bitter-cold days outside, set up a covered shelter in a sunny spot next to your house for Fiero to rest in. This can reduce the risk of a cold injury. Send your tips, comments or questions to [ask@pawscorner.com](mailto:ask@pawscorner.com).

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# Obituaries

## Obituary of Darwin Gene Laverne Johnson

Darwin Gene Laverne Johnson, 82, of Hinsdale, Montana, passed away on January 13, 2026, in Lewistown, Montana.

Born on June 5, 1943, in Glasgow, Montana, to Ruth and Lester Johnson, Darwin grew up splitting his time between school in Hinsdale and working on the family farm and ranch north of town. Those early years instilled in him a strong work ethic, ties of brotherly love, and an appreciation for the simple joys of rural Montana life.



As a student, Darwin excelled in mathematics and lettered in basketball and football. After graduating as salutatorian of his class from Hinsdale High School in 1961, Darwin went on to complete two years of training in electronic

engineering at Weltech College in Salt Lake City, Utah, before enlisting in the United States Navy in 1964.

In 1967, while stationed at Lakehurst, New Jersey, for the commissioning of the USS Camden, he met a fashionable and vivacious young woman named Sandy. She captured his heart, and just seven months later, they were married—beginning a loving partnership that would last 49 cherished years.

Darwin's naval service took the young couple to Bremerton, Washington, and Long Beach, California. In 1968, Darwin contemplated accepting an offer of employment with the International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) but ultimately chose to return to his Montana roots. There, he and Sandy built a life together, raising wheat, cattle, and their two children, Matthew and Paige. The Johnsons made their home on "Happy Flats" just east of Hinsdale; over the decades, they steadily expanded their acreage to include neighboring farm properties in the Genevieve area.

Always willing to give back to the community that shaped him, Darwin served as a board member for Hinsdale Schools, the Farmers Union, the North Valley Grazing District and the Farmers Elevator. He was also an active member—and former commander—of the Willie L. Nelson Post #45 of the American Legion.

He will be remembered for his distinctive smile, easygoing personality, and the quiet strength he brought to everyday tasks. Darwin modeled kindness, patience, faithfulness, and love—not only in soft-spoken words, but in the way he lived his life, especially toward his family and friends. He valued family, hard work, and quiet contentment.

Darwin is now reunited with his beloved Sandy in heaven, in the presence of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He was preceded in death by his parents, Ruth and Lester Johnson, and his cherished wife, Sandy. He is survived by his children, Matthew (Sonja) Johnson and Paige (Jason) Miller; his brothers, Dennis (Annette) Johnson and Donald Johnson; his grandchildren, Chaz (Venus) Johnson, Brett Johnson, and Gabe Miller; great-granddaughter Rayne Miller; and many extended family members and friends who were blessed by his gentle spirit.

Darwin's legacy lives on in the land he loved and the family he cherished.

A visitation will be held at the American Legion in Hinsdale on the evening of Friday, January 23, 2026, from 3-6:00 p.m.. A celebration of life will follow on Saturday, January 24, 2026, at 11:00 a.m., with interment at the Hillview Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the Hinsdale American Legion.

**Obituary and death notices are a difficult fact of life. They are a reminder of those we have loved and lost. The Great Falls Gazette does not require payment for submission of local obituaries or death notices, however, you are welcome to donate to our many programs to help people in our community to receive newspapers that they can enjoy. To submit an obituary or death notice, email them to [info@gfgazette.com](mailto:info@gfgazette.com) or call us at (406) 952-3021**



## Obituary of Michele Hazelton

It is with deep sorrow that we say, 'Her work here is done'. Michele Hazelton, daughter of Gloria and Denis Miller, was born on August 30, 1974, and transitioned out of this life on January 14, 2026. Born and raised in Fresno, California, she became a resident of Great Falls, MT the summer of 2009. Through her journey of 51 years, she touched many lives with her friendship, humor and an unwavering spirit of perseverance.

With Michele's departure, we remember a life lived with love and a constant sense of caring for those whose lives she touched. Marked by compassion, strength, and devotion to her family. The greatest lesson she shared with us is the importance of kindness and the act of showing love to one another.

Since childhood, Michele had a love of anything that had Mickey Mouse on it, to which she acquired many wonderful and unique items. You could enjoy a piece of toast with the imprint of Mickey that was buttered on the Mickey cutting board while having a cup of coffee in a Mickey mug. She carried the nickname Mick for much of her life.

She was incredibly passionate about animals and felt abundant joy in the presence of all dogs. Her greatest "puppy love" was Suki, who passed on in 2018. Her most recent companion, Peanut, whom she loved and cared for dearly, was by her side at her passing.

Often in the presence of others, her exuberant and joyful personality would light up any room. She could be heard or seen always laughing, yelling and clapping the loudest for her kids and grandkids.

Michele could be found coloring, doing word searches or playing board games to pass time. She enjoyed cooking for others, her beef stroganoff for dad was a favorite and shopping days with lunch to follow, was a pleasure for her and her mom.

Michele shared a close bond with her sister, Yvonne Garcia, who stood by her through every chapter of her life. Later in her life, Michele gained two step-siblings, Robbie (Heidi) Miller and Christi (Ronnie) Pond. Into adulthood, Michele had the opportunity to meet her oldest sister, Rebecca Price. She is survived by her children, Devon (Sydnee) Hazelton, Chandler Hazelton and Elyssa Hazelton. There are two grandchildren, Alora and Silas who will miss "Grama Michele" dearly and one grandson, Everett who will be greeting her, as he has preceded her in death. Michele was an aunt to nine and great aunt to eight loved ones.

She leaves behind a legacy of love, strength, and compassion that lives on in all of us. A treasured daughter and sister, a loving mother, a doting grandmother, and a kind soul. As we mourn her loss, we also celebrate the love, joy, and kindness that were the essence of Michele's being.

A memorial service celebrating Michele's life on this side of heaven will be held on January 28, 2026,



at 2:00 p.m. at Schnider Funeral Home (1510 13th St South in Great Falls, MT 59405). We invite all who knew and loved Michele to join us in honoring her memory.

In lieu of flowers, we encourage you to honor Michele's passion of caring for animals by making a donation to: Great Falls Animal Shelter at 1010 25th Avenue NE, Great Falls, MT 59404. This, we believe, would be the sweetest tribute to her beautiful life.

Condolences for the family may be shared online at [www.SchniderFuneralHome.com](http://www.SchniderFuneralHome.com).

  
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Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions forward, backward, up, down and diagonally. Unlisted clue hint: SHE IS A STAND-UP —

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Puzzle answers can be found on page 11.

## Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



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\* "I feed my kitty cat outside on the back porch, but she eats a little at a time, and whenever she took a break, the ants would be all over her food. Now I serve my little princess in a teacup and saucer I found at a thrift store. I put the food in the cup and then put a little water in the saucer. The teacup sits in the water on the saucer. The ants won't get the food ever, because they can't cross the water to get to it. Kitty is very happy now that she can take her time." -- O.W. in Arkansas

\* "To distinguish your keys, especially house keys that have similar stamps, simply paint the key head with different colors of nail polish. You could even add a very subtle dot of the matching

polish on the key lock. Reapply as needed." -- S.L. in Oregon

\* Use a flat iron to iron your collar if it's rumpled. This also works to straighten out button holes that have crimped.

\* "To mark the end on a roll of tape, save your bread tabs. Stick it on the end and it will be ready and easy to start the next time you need tape. If it's a thick tape, you can use two clips -- one at either side of the tape. This way, it won't split on you." -- M.E. in Maryland

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 1800 Pembroke Dr., Suite 300, Orlando, FL 32810.

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# Local Weather For Great Falls

NWS Forecast for: Cascade County below 5000ft  
Issued by: National Weather Service Great Falls, MT  
Last Update: [1:32 pm MST Jan 25, 2026]

**Monday** Patchy blowing snow before 11am. Increasing clouds, with a high near 42. Southwest wind 16 to 18 mph, with gusts as high as 25 mph.

**Monday Night** Mostly cloudy, with a low around 24. Southwest wind 9 to 11 mph.

**Tuesday** Mostly sunny, with a high near 44. Southwest wind 9 to 11 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph.

**Tuesday Night** Partly cloudy, with a low around 25. Southwest wind 6 to 9 mph.

**Wednesday** Mostly cloudy, with a high near 48. Southwest wind 7 to 14 mph, with gusts as high as 23 mph.

**Wednesday Night** Mostly cloudy, with a low around 28. Southwest wind around 11 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph.

**Thursday** Mostly sunny, with a high near 50.

**Thursday Night** Mostly cloudy, with a low around 31.

**Keep an eye on the weather all week long, you can get a monthly subscription to Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday of the Gazette for about the price of three large lattes!**

## Hey You!!!

Do you have a great idea for a news story, a news tip, or would you like to even write a story? We'd love to help get the word out! I love news about all of our communities, and you can help us get it out there. It's easy, and in some cases you can even get paid.

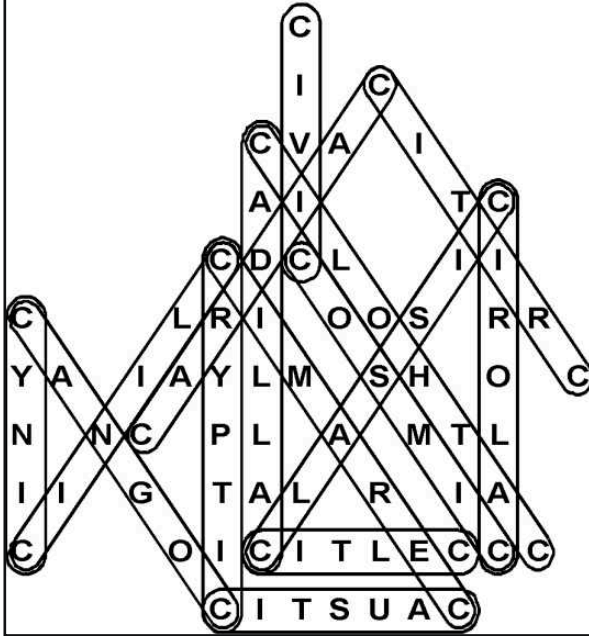
Everything from Human Interest stories, news items, sports reports and scores, even a review of the local school talent show or science fair, everyone in your community needs YOU to help get the word out. Call (406) 952-3021 and speak to the news desk today!



## Celebrations

*Celebrations is a great way to say "Happy Birthday", "Happy Anniversary", "Congratulations", or other positive messages to share with the whole city. It's a great way to be positive in a challenging world; it's fun, and it's FREE! You can even include a small (tastefully fun) photo! Just email [info@gfgazette.com](mailto:info@gfgazette.com) or call 406 952-3021, and we'll get the positive word out.*

**BEGINNING AND  
ENDING WITH "C"**



**Civilized letters to the editor may be sent to [letters@gfgazette.com](mailto:letters@gfgazette.com) or mailed to Letter**

**To The Editor, 1601 2nd Ave N, Suite 345, Great Falls, MT 59401. Letters must include name (we print first name, last initial), hometown, and either a phone number or email address.**

**Letters that attack others, are patently untrue, or are of a harmful nature WILL be rejected!**



# CrimeStoppers Most Wanted



Donate to CrimeStoppers here

Great Falls/Cascade County Crimestoppers, the Great Falls Police Department, and the Cascade County Sheriff's Office make every effort to keep the Most Wanted list current. We cannot guarantee the currency of the information. If you have reason to believe that any of the information contained on the list is inaccurate, call the Cascade County Sheriff's Office at (406) 454-6820 Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.

If you have any information to report, please call (406) 727-8477 (TIPS) or go to [P3TIPS.COM](http://P3TIPS.COM) (For a situation in progress, call 911). All callers remain anonymous and a reward can be paid for tips leading to an arrest. Help keep our community safe by sharing this information.



**Rutherford, Samuel Casey:** 33 yoa, white male, 6'3", 215#, brown eyes, brown hair, wanted on: violation of bail conditions on criminal mischief, felony, criminal trespass to property, misdemeanor, disorderly conduct, misdemeanor. Total bond \$30,000.

## The Gazette is Looking for Freelance Writers

Excellent opportunity to make extra money on the side.

Help your community by reporting news and events!

Work at your own pace.

Earn \$5-\$100 per week, working at home!

Contact us for more information  
(406) 952-3021

Psst... Real news isn't a secret, share your story with the Great Falls Gazette! We only care about the Great Falls area! Call (406) 952-3021 and speak to the news desk!



We have issues!



Did you miss an issue? Need more to share with friends, family and that person you just love to drive *insane*? Call or come to the **GREAT FALLS GAZETTE** office and we can fix you up with any issue of the **GAZETTE** going back to the very first one.

(406) 952-3021

1601 2nd Ave North, Suite 342  
Great Falls, MT 59401

## Need a side gig that really delivers?



- Work the hours YOU want. Routes and scheduled shifts available every day of the week!
- Earn \$25-\$200 every day, both regularly scheduled routes and point to point courier work.
- Newspaper, courier, and light package pickup and drop off.
- Earnings you can bank on. Get paid every week!

Call (406) 952-3021 to get the full scoop!



## After 2024 and 2025, it's time for some **DEFLATION!**

Here at the Gazette, we've decided it's high time that Great Falls Experience a little deflation after all the inflation we've dealt with for the past few years.

We're announcing lower cover prices, with more publication days starting in February, 2026. The Great Falls Gazette has proven that we are all about Great Falls, and we are already the go-to source for local information, life stories, events, and all the news we can all use. The little paper that did will finally be a daily that you can look forward to, with news that matters to you!

Call (406) 604-0323 to find out how you can have the paper right at your door 6 days a week.