

BIG SKY

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BEAR-LY THERE

A deputy responded to a report that every car door on Rose Hip Circle had been opened and trash was all over. It was found that a bear had opened the car doors. | **POLICE REPORTS, PAGE A7**

Companies, innovators honored at annual business awards

By **LEWIS KENDALL**
Chronicle Staff Writer

Several local companies and entrepreneurs were honored Thursday night as part of economic development organization Prospera Business Network's annual Business Excellence Awards.

Out of a pool of 31 nominees, winners were chosen in five separate categories from economic leadership to business of the year.

"It's amazing what we do here in the Gallatin Valley," said Prospera Executive Director Paul

Reichert. "That's why we're here, to celebrate the people and businesses that make this community special."

Around 300 people attended the event, held at the Bozeman Best Western and styled as a celebrity awards show, complete with red carpet and instrumental introduction music. The Chronicle was a sponsor for the ceremony.

"I'd like to thank the academy," Serena Rundberg joked upon receiving her award for Entrepreneur of the Year.

Rundberg and her busi-

ness partner Sean Lehmann own the Nova Cafe, Feed Cafe and the newly resurrected Tart boutique.

"I'm really honored to be up here," she said. "Without (my team), anything we do would not be possible. I'd like to thank my community as a whole. I absolutely love you, Bozeman."

The event also included a bit of housekeeping for Prospera, the economic advisory nonprofit for Gallatin and Park counties, with outgoing board president Dennis O'Brien handing the reins to local lawyer Lilia Tyrrell.

"The vibrancy of this community is difficult to state," O'Brien said, noting several business ventures that Prospera has helped fund, including Heeb's grocery and Simms Fishing Products. The organization facilitated \$1 million in loan activity in 2016, according to Reichert.

Many of the winners hailed Prospera in their acceptance speeches.

"Six years ago I walked into (Prospera) and said 'I think I should start a physical therapy clinic.' And since then, they've held my hand the whole way,"

said Darcy Cook, owner of Granite Sports Medicine, who won the Montana Women's Business Center Startup of the Year.

Others pointed to the strength and support of the local business community.

"It's a cauldron of excitement and things happening," said Larry Johnson, president of the Montana Photonics Industry Alliance, who won an award for economic leadership.

Product development company Salient Technologies received the award for Innovator of the Year, while the night's highest

honor, Business of the Year, went to pet product manufacturer West Paw Design.

Founded in 1996, West Paw employs around 70 people at its Bozeman facility, where it produces a variety of toys and beds. The company was recently certified as a B Corporation as a testament to its focus on employees, the community and the environment.

A full list of nominees and winners can be found on Prospera's website.

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Annual Bridger Ski Foundation fundraiser today



RACHEL LEATHE/CHRONICLE

Dawn Hamilton helps organize skis on Friday at the Gallatin County Fairgrounds for the Bridger Ski Foundation's annual Ski Swap. Hamilton has been volunteering for the swap, which starts today, with her dad since she was a young girl.

By **TROY CARTER**
Chronicle Staff Writer

The 49th annual Bridger Ski Foundation Ski Swap will be held this weekend at the Gallatin County Fairgrounds. Thousands upon thousands of lightly used skis, boots, coats and snowboards will be on sale.

Dylan McKenna, 23, was dropping off a pair of ski boots Friday, entering the bustling exhibition hall where he paid a \$1 check-in fee and tied them together with orange bailing twine

before handing them over to volunteers.

"They're my girlfriend's. She wanted new ones. These don't fit her anymore," he said. The boots were in pretty good shape. He hopes to get \$50 for them.

The boots went into the next room with thousands of other pairs and dozens of barrels full of ski poles. If McKenna gets his price, 20 percent will go to the foundation.

The Bridger Ski Foundation is a nonprofit community ski organization. It offers recreational, educational and competitive programs for all

ages, year round, in Nordic, alpine, freeskiing and freestyle skiing.

The organization also grooms a network of cross-country ski trails throughout Bozeman — including Lindley Park, Highland Glen, Sourdough Canyon and Bridger Creek Golf Course — and assists the Forest Service's

grooming efforts in Hyalite.

The programs and trails are open to everyone, and they strive to keep skiing affordable through fundraising, scholarships, financial aid and equipment assistance.

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IF YOU GO

General admission for the Bridger Ski Foundation Ski Swap starts at 10 a.m. Saturday and costs \$2; it is free on Sunday. Members of BSF get in free both days and also get early entry into the Ski Swap on Saturday morning.

Death-row inmates question expert witness' testimony

By **MATT VOLZ**
Associated Press

HELENA — Attorneys for two Montana death-row inmates are questioning whether state Department of Justice officials told a witness to change his testimony to bolster their failed argument that a substitute drug met the legal requirements for use in executions.

District Judge Deann Cooney has scheduled a Nov. 18 hearing on the issue raised by ACLU of Montana Legal Director Jim Taylor, one of the lawyers representing inmates

"Had the expert not changed his testimony, we would not have gotten to trial. We want to know what happened. We just want a hearing and we've been trying to get a hearing for a year."

— Jim Taylor, Legal Director of ACLU of Montana

Ronald Allen Smith and William Gollehon.

"Had the expert not changed his testimony, we would not have gotten to trial," Taylor said. "We want to know what happened. We just want a hearing and we've been trying to get a hearing for a year."

Department of Justice spokesman John Barnes did not immediately return a telephone message seeking comment.

In court documents filed in response to the inmates' request to preserve evidence and re-open the case, Assistant Attorney General Ben Reed said the accusation is groundless and Auburn University pharmacy school dean Roswell Lee Evans' testimony was consistent.

At the trial last year, District Judge Jeffrey Sherlock effectively

blocked executions in Montana after ruling that one of the two drugs to be used in lethal injections did not meet a requirement under state law to be an "ultra-fast acting barbiturate." The state does not have an alternative barbiturate to use in lethal injections.

Montana originally used sodium pentothal as the barbiturate, but that drug is no longer available

in the U.S. for executions. State officials named pentobarbital as a substitute.

State attorneys argued unsuccessfully at trial that pentobarbital, which has never been used in a Montana execution, meets the requirement. Their expert, Evans, wrote an expert declaration in March 2015 that did not address the "ultra-fast acting" question. In April 2015, he supplemented that declaration by adding pentobarbital could be considered "ultra-fast acting" but that it is classified differently.

Taylor wrote in his request to re-open the

case in March that Evans testified in a separate case in Tennessee in which he was asked about his testimony in the Montana case. According to a transcript, Evans was asked whether the Montana attorney general needed him to say pentobarbital was ultra-fast acting and he wrote that it could be.

"Could be," Evans answered. "That's not how it's classified."

Based on that testimony, Taylor wrote, it appears state attorneys persuaded Evans to change his original declaration.