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## ARCH Recognizes That 911 Should Not be a Long-Distance Call



Michelle Griffith has led ARCH through a variety of projects, including the Ellsworth Inn repurposing and housing for nurses, teachers and county employees.

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Thursday, November 7, 2024

STORY AND PHOTOS BY KAREN BOSSICK

In early August Blaine County School District employees eagerly moved into four 3-bedroom homes and a studio apartment built for them across the street from Hailey’s Hop Porter Park.

“It’s been life changing. It also makes us feel really valued as employees of the school district,” said Will Wulf, a former Jackson Hole, Wyo., resident who now works as an administrative assistant in Finance for the school district.

The new housing, which school staff are renting until they can purchase a home, was made possible by in large part by grilled salmon dinners with maple bacon and corn fritter appetizers and lemon poppyseed cake. That is, ARCH fundraising dinners that lure Wood River Valley residents who are willing to open their wallets and pocketbooks to provide affordable housing for workers who are stymied by Sun Valley’s high cost of living.



Cody and Kim Colombo were among those attending the fundraiser.

“Affordable housing is extremely needed in the community so, when we can, we give back,” said Cody and Kim Colombo.

ARCH Community Housing Trust has been working since 2005 to create affordable and deed-restricted housing in the Wood River Valley. But it held just its third fundraising dinner this past summer under towering cottonwood trees at the lovely riverside estate of Pete and Deb Lemman.

The dinner attracted an array of movers and shakers, including Michael Mars of the Mars chocolate company, who shared that Dove bars were the ideal chocolate for s’mores, as the chocolate melts slower and contains such yummy gourmet flavors as caramel.

“I’ve been coming to Sun Valley every year for 27 years,” he said. “I love this community and I think it’s important to address the issues that organizations like ARCH, the Wood River Land Trust and Mountain Humane do.”

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Lisa Marie Allen and Peter Hendricks were there to celebrate the City of Sun Valley's collaboration with the City of Hailey and ARCH.

Pete Lemman told those gathered at his home that ARCH is about community in the Wood River Valley.

“And the community really needs some help,” he added. “There are people who don’t fall into the category of low income, but they’re struggling to find a place to live because of the high cost of housing. And we need to help them because they’re our firefighters, our teachers. And ARCH gets the job done.”

Michelle Griffith, the executive director of ARCH, noted that her organization was finishing up three units of housing for the Blaine County School District, in addition to the five units that went online this summer.

ARCH will cut the ribbon on Friday on five townhomes in the Sunny Gulch neighborhood in the Sunbeam subdivision in Hailey in a partnership with Blaine County. The organization finished building several housing units for St. Luke’s employees in conjunction with St. Luke’s Health System last year.

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Guests began their paddle raises at \$100,000 and worked their way down.

And it's building 19 apartments and cottage on the estate of the century-old Ellsworth Inn in a partnership with the City of Sun Valley, which bought the estate for \$2.3 million.

"We wanted to pursue workforce housing but we realized how difficult it would be to buy land in Sun Valley," said Sun Valley Mayor Peter Hendricks. "This is a unique project for us involving what some would say is a haunted building. But in ARCH you have a focused, dedicated leadership and a get-things-done organization. And because of you here tonight we're making a contribution to housing situation."

Griffith noted that the Ellsworth Inn, a 1911 Craftsman-style building, was ARCH's first foray into repurposing building. While it is not on the National Register of Historic Places, it was important to Hailey to maintain the structure to preserve some of the charm of historic Hailey, she said.

"It's the first project two cities in this valley have worked on. It's not just for employees of Sun Valley, Hailey or the county—anyone who qualifies is encouraged to apply," she added.

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Jeanne Herberger, who sat with Blaine County Commissioner Muffy Davis, offered a \$1 million Match Challenge to those who attended the fundraiser.

Hendricks held up a hammer in his hand.

“I knew nothing about building houses and Michelle took me by the hand and walked me through the various processes.”

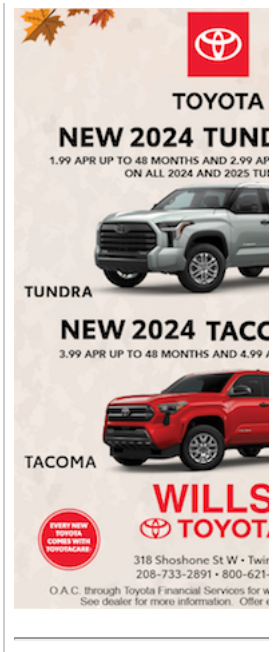
One speaker after another noted that the people who take care of those in Blaine County should live in Blaine County—that 911 shouldn’t have to be a long-distance call.

“Don’t give until it hurts. Give until it feels good,” they exhorted.

Jeanne Herberger took it to heart just as she did with earlier fundraising dinners fundraising for teacher housing. She offered a \$1 million Match Challenge to those who attended the fundraiser. And, just recently, she recently offered another \$1 million Match Challenge to raise money to build the cottages on the Ellsworth Inn estate.

“I’m truly blessed to live in such a wonderful place,” she said. “And it fills my heart with joy to give back.”

Want to know more? Visit <https://archbc.org/>.



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