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LIGHTING THE WAY
One family’s quest to spread hope and cheer

Generous ‘Helpings’
Why MOW delivers 85,000 meals a year

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FFBF fuels Laramie County’s youth

Greg Dyekman, A Scout Among Men
Humble leader & community steward

Building a Better ToMORROW
The spark plug behind Day of Giving

Ann Esquivel Redman, Trailblazer
Only focuses on the positive

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Walking among the over 300,000 twinkling lights in the Hemi Lighted Forest of Hope, located just east of Cheyenne, douses visitors with instant holiday cheer, but the trees represent so much more than that.

The magical forest is a celebration of life for over a thousand children across the world who have undergone the hemispherectomy, a surgery to remove one-half (hemisphere) of their brain in hopes that the child will live free of severe epileptic seizures, explains Gary “Papa” Kelley, who created the forest with his wife Nancy and help of many volunteers.

Their granddaughter Jessie Hall, at six-years-old, underwent the radical surgery in 2008 as a result of Rasmussen’s Encephalitis, an inflammatory disease that relentlessly attacked the right side of her brain causing debilitating seizures.

The resulting surgeries, she has had more than 11, left Jessie permanently disabled, but without them the disease would have eaten away at her brain causing frequent seizures, paralysis, and possible death.

Today, Jessie is 16 and going to high school, says a very proud Papa Kelley. Despite the challenges, she’s been a cheerleader and served on student council, as well as being a good student.

Her enthusiasm for learning new things inspires Papa Kelley who taught his granddaughter to drive the ATV and fly a drone.

“If you have a little patience, it is amazing what these kids can eventually accomplish.”

These proud grandparents spend months each year decorating their yard, large outdoor water feature, and two indoor displays for the annual Hemi Lighted Forest of Hope, located at 6565 Ashley Drive, just
over 4 miles east of Cheyenne. The forest is free and open to the public 6 to 8:30 p.m. seven days a week until the end of January. Hayrides and the indoor displays are only available through Dec. 31 and include hot chocolate, as well as a free stuffed animal for all children who come. Donations are welcome at the Hemi Forest or make your donation directly to the Hemi Foundation at www.hemifoundation.org.

Lighting up the trees in their front yard initially was just a way to make Christmas memorable for their granddaughter who was planning to visit them in 2010. But Papa Kelley wanted to go much bigger and light a tree for every child who had to undergo a similar surgery. That ended up equating to 2,000 feet of underground wiring with 22 service points, 450 trees, 450 extension cords, and 65,000 LED
When her grandson Lazerous Gilbert was 8 years old, Susan Lyday's holiday wishes came true when a stranger from Laramie adopted their family for Christmas through the Community Action of Laramie County's adopt-a-grand-family initiative.

That was about 10 years ago, and the same woman has continued to provide for all Lazerous' Christmas presents since then.

Lyday's finances have been pretty strapped. Retired, living off of a fixed income, she ended up with guardianship of her grandson, when he was just three.

“He’s such a remarkable, smart child,” Lyday says, fondly. She homeschooled Lazerous, who has been diagnosed with high-functioning autism, as well as ADHD.

As part of the adopt-a-grand-family initiative, Lyday received a gift card to buy shoes, clothes or other items needed plus a special gift. She bought Legos when Lazerous was younger but, for many years now, all he wanted was books. “He reads every night until midnight.”

Lyday calls the gifts a “blessing.” “She’s a good lady. That’s all I can tell you.”

The adopt-a-grand-family initiative is part of the older relative caregiver program, available through Kinship Support Services at Community Action of Laramie County. The program serves people who are 55 years of age and older who are caring for someone, a relative or a family friend who is under the age of 18. The program is mostly supported through federal dollars funneled through the Wyoming Department of Health’s Aging Division but also receives funding from United Way, community services block grants, and donations.

The older relative caregiver program has 63 clients, who care for well over 120 children in the county, said Debbie Walter, Kinship Support Services Access Care Coordinator.

“While there were 28 people on the list for the adopt-a-grand-family initiative, I could list all 63 people,” Walter said. “They all need help.”

Walter explained that at least 80 percent of the clients are caring for children because the parents have either abandoned them.
completely, are homeless, are drug users, or are incarcerated.

“It’s not that the parents don’t love their children,” Walter adds. “Whatever situation they find themselves in, mostly drug abuse, the grandparents are the only ones left who can care for children.”

These grandparents are on a very fixed income, many well below the poverty line, often just living off of Social Security. They’re usually well past retirement age, and many suffer from health issues.

One grandmother, who is raising two grandkids, came to Walter for help. She had only a monthly income of $208 plus received some assistance with her rent and food stamps.

Walter said, “It’s hard to deal with because you know they’re struggling. It just is heartbreaking to me.”

As part of the older relative caregiver program, Walter can arrange for a variety of services such as a Lifeline, sidewalks being shoveled in the winter, a ride to the doctor, home modifications like railings, or provide Happy Meal coupons. The third Thursday of the month, the program also has a group support meeting at the North Christian Church that includes dinner and respite workers to take care of the kids for the evening.

That is why the adopt-a-grand-family initiative makes such a difference in these families’ lives during the holidays, Walter said.

The program asks the grandparents for a list of things that the kids need and then things that the kids would love to have. “The people who volunteer typically are so incredibly generous, trying to fulfill the wish list of the kids,” Walter said.

One single grandmother, who was barely getting by, took on her three grandchildren, removing them from a pretty bad situation. Her family was adopted for the program last year.

She told Walter, “I don't know what I would have done without you guys last year. I had no money for Christmas and was panicked, absolutely panicked.”

Walter completely understands the situation these grandparents find themselves in. She has been raising her grandson for 11 years.

When grandparents come to Walter, they are devastated by what is happening. “There is the heartbreak that you feel for your grandchild who is going through all of this. Then there’s the heartbreak that you feel because your child isn’t stepping up to the plate or isn’t able to.”

Walters is genuinely grateful for having her grandson in her life, though raising him hasn’t been easy. She doesn’t have the same energy that she did when she raised her kids.

“But I would do it all over again. He’s the light of my life. I adore him. I, just like the grandparents in this program, do it because we love them.”

Lyday agrees.

Being Lazerous’ guardian has taken away from her ability to be just a grandma, Lyday says, but “I wouldn’t change it for the world.”

Lazerous recently told his story in a letter, explaining the difficulty of growing up without his parents. Starting at his birth, his mother would abandon him at his grandmother’s house 10 hours at a time until Lyday gained guardianship of him. His mother has now set her life straight, gotten off of drugs and alcohol. His father stopped visiting him when he turned 3.

“In my mind, I already had a mother, and that person was my grandmother. She loved me and took care of me, and I love her,” Lazerous said. “But living without the discipline of a father was hard. I had no one to show me how to be a young man, no one to talk with about my problem.”

He adds that he got through his childhood, but it was hard. Today, still living with his grandmother, he attends Laramie County Community College working to earn an associate’s degree in Computer Information Systems with a goal to attend the University of Wyoming for engineering.

Lyday, who uses a walker to get around, says that she is fortunate to have Lazerous in her life. “If it wasn’t for him now, I might be in assistant living. I was there when he needed me, and he is here when I needed him.”
When Greg Dyekman joined Boy Scout Troop 101 at 11 years old, he was like most Cheyenne boys his age, eager for scouting adventures. However, the values of citizenship, community service, and leadership he learned while in Boy Scouts have had a profound impact on his life.

Dyekman, a well-respected Cheyenne attorney, recently received the 2018 Daniels Fund Ethical Leadership Award for his commitment to living a life of integrity during the Governor’s Business Forum. The statewide award is given by the Wyoming Business Alliance, the Daniels Fund, and the University of Wyoming (UW) College of Business.

That recognition was totally unexpected, Dyekman admits, humbly. “All these values - I live out mostly unintentionally. It all started with the values I received when I was a kid in Boy Scouts. Scouting gives kids an ethical and value foundation for citizenship and leadership for the rest of their lives.”

Dyekman grew up in Cheyenne, the oldest of four children whose father was the first Dean of Boys at Carey Junior High School and whose mother was a music teacher. He joined Cheyenne Boy Scout Troop 101, which met in Lions Park and included scouts from all over town, not just localized to a specific neighborhood.

Troop 101 was a very strong scouting unit with wonderful adult leadership, Dyekman recalled. The troop camped a lot, did all the outdoor things, and focused on trying to get the troop members to advance in rank. “We had plenty of chances to decide whether to do something that was right or was wrong. We didn’t always make the correct choices, but we were well coached when we didn’t do the right thing.”

The troop placed a heavy emphasis on public service projects beyond what was required for advancement in Boy Scouts. “The troop really had a strong ethic for us to be out helping other people and that
really influenced me,” he said. The troop did fun public service events like helping the Lions Club with their Broom-A-Rama selling items door-to-door, catching pancakes at the Pancake Breakfasts during Cheyenne Frontier Days and cleaning the stands at Frontier Days. Troop members also came up with other service projects as part of their advancement requirements.

Shortly after turning 16, Dyekman achieved the rank of Eagle Scout and was later involved with the Explorers. “Achieving Eagle Scout was the first goal like that I had ever really tackled and accomplished with lots of good pushing from my family and leaders.”

Dyekman credits the scouts with giving him the first formal leadership training he ever received and his mother for a strong work ethic. “My mother always pushed me pretty hard because I was capable of much more than I demonstrated as a young kid.”

But her encouragement didn’t fully click until he attended a student council leadership camp between his junior year and senior year. When he came back, he started working harder, getting straight As. “I became convinced that I had the potential to do better, which is what my mother had been telling me all along. You hate it when your mother is right.”

He went to the University of Wyoming on a debate scholarship and started a lifelong pattern of taking on leadership positions with nonprofits. He signed up for the judicial council in the dorms then served as dorm president and was the president of the debate team and a couple of other honorary groups during college, including the campus-wide leadership honorary.

When he was 18, just a college freshman, Dyekman won the national Explorer public speaking contest for his 6 and half minute speech about recovering from Watergate. The contest finals were in Washington, D.C. and as the winner, he gave the speech at a breakfast of 600 that included members of Congress and their staffs. At the long head table to his immediate right sat Vice President Gerald Ford.

The news of the Watergate scandal had just come out, and at the time of his speech, there was a lull in national attention. Dyekman pointed out his speech was more encouraging than negative, and the Vice President appeared to like it.

Later on the same trip, Dyekman would meet President Richard Nixon in the Oval Office to make the annual Report to the President, where the President gave him a presidential tie clasp. Dyekman laughed that the President didn’t know the topic of his speech, which was probably a good thing. Later Wyoming Senator Cliff Hansen had his speech transcribed and published in the Congressional Record.

During the trip, the 12 student speaking contest finalists were escorted into a room to learn the “secret” of the scouting program. “We all thought, oh man, maybe it’s a secret second handshake, or maybe there’s something really mystical about it.”

Instead, the scout leaders from the national office told the students that scouting is much more than just fun outdoor skills. Dyekman recalls what they were told, “We’re trying to make you the very best citizens that you can be. We’re trying to teach you to be leaders and the values of what is right and wrong. And we’re teaching you to live productive, happy lives as good citizens in your communities.”

A giant lightbulb went on for Dyekman. “Up to that point at
Thank Goodness for Friday

Friday Food Bag Foundation fuels Laramie County’s youth

By Rachel Girt

Starting a little bit after 5 p.m., twice a month, Friday Food Bag volunteers, young and old, scurry through two food lines, placing each item in a brown paper bag. Their goal is to make 3,600 bags a month to feed kids who otherwise might not eat well, or at all, during the weekends.

Started in 2007, the Friday Food Bag Foundation provides approximately 900 bags filled with nutritious food each Friday while school is in session to children who get free or reduced-price breakfast and lunch at school in Laramie County School Districts 1 and 2. Currently, 43 percent of all kids in Laramie County School Districts 1 and 40 percent of District 2 are eligible to receive free or reduced-price breakfast and lunch while at school.

The program hits only 20 percent of the need, said Eric Miller, Foundation Board President. “We’re not servicing all the children who need food because financially we can’t do it.”

The effort has come a long way but it has a long way to go, noted Judy Weickum, who has been a board member for seven years.

The effort began with Holland and Hart Law Firm, which launched the Food Bag program in a back room of its Cheyenne office in 2007 as a way to celebrate the firm’s 60th anniversary.

The program hit only 20 percent of the need, but with the community’s generous support, has grown to 900 a week.

Each bag costs $5.45 and contains nonperishable, easy to prepare items like Chef Boyardee pasta, Vienna sausages, mac and cheese, applesauce, diced fruit, two granola bars, and Rice a Roni. The recipients can be as young as kindergarten up through high school, so the items need to be easy to prepare.

The big community filling happens twice a month, the second Tuesday of the month and the fourth Wednesday, starting at 5:15 p.m. Smaller organizations help out at other times as well.

The effort made 50 bags a week the first year and, with the community’s generous support, has grown to 900 a week.

The volunteers, numbering around 300 representing a multitude of organizations, pretty much show up on their own to help. Sports teams, cheerleaders, high school students, Veteran’s Administration, Boy Scouts, Rotary, Kiwanis and even retirement homes have come to pack food. Some volunteers have designated jobs, like the volunteers who recycle or deliver food. The rest grab a bag and go through the line.

The board has grown to 14 members and held its first major fundraising event at Little America this past fall. One young lady told the crowded room how she would hope and pray that all her siblings...
would all get a food bag to get them through the weekend.

“It’s just heart-wrenching, and we hear many stories like that," Miller added.

Miller hopes that someday that zero bags will be needed. “The reality is that we don’t expect to see the need go away.”

The foundation works with little to no overhead. The social workers at the schools identify the students in greatest need. Volunteers do all ordering, purchasing, unpacking, filling, recycling, and delivering to the schools. Element Church lets the foundation use, without charge, a portion on the north side of their building to load and store the bags. JoEd Produce, a local business, gives the foundation discounted food and delivers the cases at no extra charge.

“Virtually all of the donations go right back to the kids," Miller added.

The foundation is constantly searching to find any grants or donations. Miller added, “The success of this program depends on the volunteers’ help but to grow it we need more money.”

When they are at school, students in need will receive free or reduced-priced meals; however, when school is not in session, this becomes more challenging, explained Mary Quast, Community Relations Director for Laramie County School District 1, called the program “an invaluable service to our students, many of whom would not have access to nutritious food on the weekends.”

“We are grateful to live in a community where people are so willing come together to donate their time and resources to help our children," Quast said.

The foundation must raise money to pay for the food, which costs $5.45 per bag. Photo by Rachel Girt.
Offering much more than nutritious food, Meals on Wheels of Cheyenne, Inc. helps elderly and other homebound people remain in their homes for as long as possible.

“Our clients are the people you don’t see,” Executive Director Sharon Benson stressed. “They’re not about town eating and shopping. They’re homebound and very lonely.”

Benson explained that Meals on Wheels uses meal delivery as a tool to check on clients’ well-being. Delivery drivers, who are volunteers, have rescued clients who have had a stroke, heart attack or even fallen. Last year, volunteers did 1,400 emergency interventions, saving four lives by getting them to the hospital on time.

If a client doesn’t answer the door, the driver calls the office, which immediately calls the emergency contact person, the hospital, or the doctor. “If we can’t find them, we call 911 and may break down the door.”

In 1970, Church Women United started Meals on Wheels to help feed the homebound, operating out of the basement of Saint Paul’s Lutheran Church in Cheyenne. Benson, hired in 1990, helped the organization obtain its first main building, located on South Greeley Highway, and added a kitchen, using the 1980s equipment from the church.

The program has gone from making 60 meals a day to producing at least 300 meals a day, equating to about 85,000 meals a year. Meals on Wheels sends out maybe 250 meals daily, Monday through Friday, and then makes another 50 to 80 frozen meals for the weekend and the evenings for people to eat.

Without these meals, most of the clients, who are homebound, would not have any food to eat.
The program offers therapeutic diets like a hospital would, offering renal, diabetic, and heart diets or whatever the client needs to maintain their health. Their in-house dietitian develops the menus and identifies all the alternates of that meal for each kind of diet. They also try to honor food dislikes.

“My philosophy is if they don’t like it, they’re not going eat it, and we want them to eat to stay healthy,” Benson said.

“Most of the people who we serve cannot cook for themselves,” Benson said. “They have health problems or aging issues like dementia in which they no longer can do the daily acts of living. They can’t shop for food to cook. They can’t cook anymore because they leave the stove on or they can’t see the dials anymore.”

Becoming a client is simple, Benson explains. Those who are interested just need to call in with their basic information, health conditions, allergies, and medications, so Meals on Wheels can prepare the correct diet. Meals are delivered as soon as possible. The program also includes a personal visit for an in-home assessment of living skills, how mobile they are, and nutritional risk analysis.

“We gather information, like mobility problems, so we know what kind of emergency we might be dealing with if they cannot answer the door,” Benson explained. “We also try to coordinate other services like hearing aids or dental if they need it.”

Some clients get two hot meals a day, so they can warm one meal up for the evening. They can have as many frozen meals in a week as they want, plus a few frozen meals to carry them over the weekend. The program sends out birthday cakes and cards, as well as Christmas stockings or dyed hard boiled eggs at Easter. Volunteers also pitch in to buy presents or gift cards.

“They get excited as little kids because we remembered them on their birthday and holidays,” Benson added.

While the organization has some staff, the volunteers are the heart and soul, making a huge difference in clients’ lives, Benson said. “Our volunteers always tell me that they get more out of it than they give.”

Ed Olson, who has volunteered for 13 years, used to be a delivery driver and helps in the kitchen until he needed supplemental oxygen. Today he helps organize which meals go out on the routes, four days a week. He calls the complicated process a “well-oiled machine.”

Volunteers drive 25 routes a day, Monday through Friday. Most drivers only drive one route one day a week, though some drive more. Some local businesses, military organizations, state agencies, and nonprofits have adopted a route and have different employees take turns delivering meals.

Nicole Kaiser-Mills, who works at Gold’s Gym, takes her Friday lunch break to deliver meals. “Delivering doesn’t take much time and giving back is very satisfying.”

Each route is localized to a specific area in Laramie County with generally between five and 14 clients receiving meals. The drivers take a little time to check on each individual, some offering to help them with chores. Delivering the meals takes a little over an hour.

With the demand for meals growing, the kitchen has reached maximum capacity, and Meals on Wheels is the process of building a much larger kitchen, replacing their old equipment. The kitchen will be complete by March, and the rest of the remodel is scheduled to be complete by early summer. Meals on Wheels is raising money to complete the current expansion.

Benson notes that less than 28 percent of the organization’s $1 million budget comes from federal, state, city, county government funds. To raise funds for the operating budget, Benson relies on donations, grants, and funds raised through sales at the Meals on Wheels Mart, a thrift store. Without the Mart, almost 100 people would have to be placed on a waiting list.

Benson suspects that the demand for meals will continue to increase.

By 2055, Wyoming’s population of residents age 85 and older will grow by 227 percent and make up more than 5 percent of the state’s population, according to a recent study by AARP.

“The Meals on Wheels program is a very cost-effective way to provide preventative care for seniors and other people with health problems and keep them in their homes,” Benson added.

According to the Wyoming Association of Senior Project Directors, one year of senior meals served equals six days in a nursing home and one day in the hospital.
When cancer took away Greta Morrow’s ability to teach English full-time, this compassionate woman became the spark that launched the Day of Giving in Cheyenne.

“God and I had a lot of conversations when I was in MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston receiving treatment,” explained Morrow, who had been diagnosed Stage 4 low-grade Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma and Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia.

“I thought if I get to live that I want to help people who are sick or who can’t provide for themselves life’s necessities.”

The Day of Giving started in 2006 with just 15 congregations participating. The first year’s efforts helped Needs, Comea Shelter, and the Salvation Army, raising $800 and collecting two pick-up trucks of food donations. Last year, 77 congregations plus numerous businesses, community groups, and individuals helped 17 nonprofit organizations, raised over $50,000, and collected 12 tons of food, personal care items, and craft items.

Morrow received the Wyoming Tribune Eagle’s 2007 Community Spirit Award for her volunteer efforts. She, however, refuses to take sole credit for the event’s creation.

“I don’t like to say I started it. Maybe I was the spark plug. It was my idea for maybe two weeks; then it was our idea because many people came together to help in our community.”

Seeing some of her students struggle with homelessness and hunger stuck with Morrow, who taught English at Central High school from 1982 until her battle with cancer forced her to stop teaching in 2002. “One student told me he hadn’t eaten anything since breakfast the day before. I had another kid who lived in a U-Haul trailer with his mother. That was their home.”

The Day of Giving helped quench Morrow’s thirst to give back. “We all belong to this community, and we can all join together and help each other.”

Morrow’s desire to help others started young, and she isn’t surprised that she became an English teacher. “I was a real bookworm when I was in school, reading under my covers with a flashlight late into the night. I played teacher during the summer when I was in grade school.”

Her family, which included a younger brother and sister, lived on their hobby farm, 15 acres a little bit north of Fort Collins, Colorado. Her father was the water commissioner in the area, and her mother was a stay-at-home mom.

“My parents were very conservative, hard working farm people. The Protestant work ethic was very much instilled in us, and I think that served me well down the road.”

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Ann Esquibel Redman, Trailblazer only focuses on the positive

By Rachel Girt

As a young girl growing up in Cheyenne, Ann Esquibel Redman, now 83, was once advised to forgo her dreams of having an office job because of her Hispanic heritage and having Esquibel as a last name.

She didn’t let that negative advice hold her back, though it took several years to build up her confidence. Redman went beyond a mere office job, working for several governors, and has spent many years being a tireless advocate to help others.

Today countless organizations have recognized Redman’s efforts on behalf of women and minorities. She has received the Small Business Administration’s 1996 Minority Advocate of the Year, the governor’s 2000 Service and Volunteer Award, the Wyoming Student Leaders of the University of Wyoming’s 2009 Woman of Distinction Award, Wyoming Council for Women’s Issues’ 2016 Woman of Distinction Award, and the 2017 Woman of Influence Lifetime Achievement Award by the Wyoming Business Report.

Redman humbly points out that her beginnings were quite simple. Annabelle Esquibel was born in 1935 in her grandfather’s house in a tiny farming community called Ledoux, located in the mountains of New Mexico. The close-knit Spanish speaking community was filled with her extended family. She is the oldest of nine children.

“At the time, there few vehicles in the community, and we’d get mail every two weeks on horseback,” Redman said. She rode her horse a few miles to attend a primer school, like kindergarten. Spanish was her first language until she attended school.

At some point in the early 1940s, the family briefly came to Cheyenne for work and then moved to Covina, California so her father could work in the orange groves.

“California was where I first experienced that people saw us differently,” she said. Redman recalls kids laughing that she couldn’t pronounce words correctly and another time when her cousins and brothers who had darker skin were not allowed in at the local swimming pool.

When she was in fourth grade,
the family moved to Las Vegas, New Mexico. Her father had developed pneumonia from the smudge pots that they used in the orange groves to keep them warm, and doctors advised him to leave California.

Eventually, her father left the family in Las Vegas to work construction and on the railroad in Cheyenne. Her father brought Redman to Cheyenne the summer of 1950 to work as a bus girl at the Valencia Restaurant downtown. Several months later, the entire family joined them.

As a teenager, Redman had dreams of going to college but had little self-confidence of being able to do so. “I was told that nobody would hire someone whose last name was Esquibel to work in an office. People would tell me I couldn’t do this; I couldn’t do that because of who I was.”

“When I was growing up in Cheyenne in the 1950s, we were not allowed to eat in some restaurants,” Redman said. “There were signs outside that said no dogs, no Mexicans, referring to citizens of Hispanic ethnicity. People of color were not allowed to live north of Pershing.”

Thanks to the support of her boss Ed Yarter, who owned the Sky Trail restaurant located at the airport, and Lola Homsher, who was the first Wyoming state historian, Redman was able to obtain her first office job and eventually an associate degree.

Homsher met Redman while she was waiting tables. Impressed by her, Homsher offered her a job at the state museum. At first, Redman worked selling souvenirs but eventually became Homsher’s secretary.

After a year of working at the museum as well as waiting tables, Yarter asked Redman what she wanted to do with her life. “I wanted to go to Parks Business College in Denver, but it was $900 to attend. My family couldn’t afford it.”

Yarter paid for Redman to go. “There were a lot of people that didn’t believe in me, but he did.”

Redman continued to persevere, despite stereotyping, even in Denver. When she asked the college superintendent for help finding an office job, he insisted that she aim for being a store clerk. “He said quite frankly Ms. Esquibel I don’t think you’re capable of having an office job. I’ll never forget those words.”

Redman courageously rebutted, “I don’t think you are the judge of that.”

The next day he set up an interview for Redman with two young lawyers on South Broadway. She got the job, working for them in the afternoon after attending college. Redman graduated Parks Business College with an associate degree in business, something that she never dreamed was possible as a teenager. She continued to work for the law firm of Reibscheid and Machol.

After graduating, Redman married her husband Ralph who served in the U.S. Air Force. Redman traveled with her husband and their four sons all over the nation and world during his 20-year career.

While stationed in a very cold Limestone, Maine, Redman worked for the exchange officer where she dealt with high ranking officers. The job increased her confidence level. “I thought if I can relate to these high-ranking officers I can do anything. Every job that I have had has given me the confidence for the next.”

The family eventually returned to Cheyenne to settle down, and Redman launched a prestigious 22-year career working for the State of Wyoming.

Shortly after Governor Ed Herschler was elected, a young Dave Freudenthal, who was the State Planning Coordinator, hired Redman as an assistant. Redman continued to work for the next several State Planning Coordinators up to Governor Mike Sullivan’s administration. Governor Sullivan appointed her as International Trade Assistant and Protocol Officer, which included special projects like Wyoming’s centennial celebration.

Eventually, the trade office, and along with it Redman, moved underneath the Wyoming Department of Commerce.

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Unfortunately, seizures kept Jessie home in Texas for another surgery that year, but she made it the following year in 2011. By that time, the Hemi Lighted Forest of Hope had grown with the addition of an indoor garden scale railroad, a hayride, and 108,000 lights. To help fund the project, the Kelley’s sold their motorhome, boats, and other toys.

Gesturing to the permanent indoor display in their garage that includes a large parade-size train set, Papa Kelley emphatically says, “We use this and share this way more of our life than anyone every shared with their motorhome.”

Each year the lights and the displays grow more elaborate, taking longer to decorate. This year High West Energy employees and folks stationed at F.E. Warren Air Force Base came out to help set up. So far the 2018 display is up to over 300,000 lights, 900 extension cords, and over 630 trees. Papa Kelley never stops decorating, adding more lights, and tweaking the design right up to the end of January when he starts taking down the lights.

His granddaughter loves the lights, Papa Kelley said. “Her eyes sparkle when she goes out, walks through the trees and looks at everything. You can walk for 10-15 minutes and never leave the property and never see the same tree twice.”

Beyond delighting visitors, one of the goals behind creating the Hemi Lighted Forest of Hope is to bring awareness about Hemispherectomy Foundation, started by their daughter Kristi Hall and son-in-law Cris.

At the time of Jessie’s surgery, no organization existed for the Halls to seek support and resources about the surgery and its lingering after-effects. The Halls decided to create the foundation to become a one-stop shop for parents of “Hemi kids” across the world. Funds raised support medical research, as well as children who have had hemispherectomy surgery as a result of intractable epilepsy.

Soon after creating the forest, the Kelleys started to place photos of the children who have had a hemispherectomy below the trees.

“We have so many kids registered with the foundation now that they have to share trees,” Papa Kelley says, noting the indoor display has a stocking with each child’s name on it as well.

“When you walk through the Hemi Forest, you get an idea of the thousand kids worldwide who are part of the Hemispherectomy Foundation and who are going through that same challenges that our granddaughter’s gone through,” Papa Kelley says.

Visitors from as far away as Russia, India, Turkey, Europe, Canada, and Mexico have come to see their child’s tree. Just recently families from Casper, WY and North Carolina stopped by the forest and were moved to tears when they found their child’s tree.

Papa Kelley explains showing these families that they are not alone and giving them hope is precisely why the forest exists.

To visit Forest of Hope, go east on U.S. Highway 30 from College Drive about 4 miles to Reese Road. Go north on Reese 1 mile to Beckle Road. Turn left and go one block west to Ashley Drive. Go north on Ashley to the fifth house on the right.

The Hemi Lighted Forest of Hope has over 300,000 twinkling lights outside, and an indoor display has stockings for all the children who have had a hemispherectomy. Photos by Rachel Girt.
Dyekman from 9

18-years-old, I didn't think that's why I had been in the Boy Scouts. And then it was suddenly clear that that's exactly why I was in the Boy Scouts.”

Dyekman earned his Bachelor of Arts Degree in Accounting from the University of Wyoming in 1977, and then went on to earn his Juris Doctorate in 1980 from the UW College of Law. He received a job offer with a Cheyenne law firm where he'd had a summer internship. He became a partner in that firm in a little over two years and practiced with what eventually became Dray, Dyekman, Reed & Healey, P.C. for the next 38 years. Today, he serves as a senior counsel with Long Reimer Winegar Beppler LLP in its Cheyenne office.

The support of his partners has allowed Dyekman to pursue community service. Dyekman went back to being an assistant scoutmaster in Cheyenne immediately after graduating from law school. He soon joined the Cheyenne Symphony Board and then the YMCA board.

The dire financial times in the 1980s were tough on nonprofits. “I was breaking my teeth serving with organizations that were having financial problems,” he said, noting he even had to give a personal guarantee for the Cheyenne Symphony Orchestra to secure a loan to make it through one of its first professional seasons. “I learned a ton, as much from mistakes as from successes, I think. But I felt the need to serve.”

Wyoming Secretary of State Thyra Thomson noticed Dyekman's fundraising skills at a Boy Scout dinner featuring former President Gerald Ford and encouraged him to join the Board of Visitors at the UW College of Arts and Sciences. That one invitation started a now 20-plus-year career serving on boards at the University for the College of Arts and Sciences, College of Business and the College of Law Dean's Advisory Board. He has also served on the UW Foundation Board as a member and the chairman and currently is an emeritus member.

Dyekman confesses, “I tend to be willing and happy to serve in leadership positions. Sometimes it's fun, and sometimes it's challenging. But the combination of service and leadership has given me many opportunities and allowed me to work alongside some amazing people.”

He has been on the Boy Scout Council Board of Trustees since the 1990’s and the treasurer for the First Presbyterian Church 32 years. He has also served as the chairman or president of the Foundation for Meals on Wheels of Cheyenne, an annual campaign for United Way of Laramie County, Cheyenne Kiwanis Foundation, Cheyenne YMCA Board of Directors, and the Cheyenne Symphony Orchestra Board.

On the professional side, Dyekman has tried to give back with a fair bit of pro bono work over the years and has mentored young lawyers to do it as well. “In the legal profession, we have an obligation to serve the underserved and help those people who need access to legal services.”

Many entities have recognized Dyekman for his leadership and commitment to others. He has received the Wyoming State Bar Leadership Award, Wyoming Bar Foundation Pro-Bono Public Service Award, and the Thomas G. Gorman Excellence in Professionalism Award. He is a Distinguished Alum of the University of Wyoming (2012), the UW College of Business (2014) and the UW College of Law (2016). The Greater Cheyenne Chamber of Commerce named him Person of the Year in 2008; Wyoming Tribune Eagle awarded him the 2014 Community Spirit Award, and the National Eagle Scout Association recognized him as an Outstanding Eagle Scout in 2017.

Dyekman explains that serving others is what fulfills him, not accolades. “I see how well the symphony's doing and how the community's supporting it and that's the kind of thing as a board member that you can be proud of.”
Morrow from 21

the bookworm majored in English at Colorado State University loving the challenge of studies and the independence of living in the dorm. She met the love of her life, Al, the last semester of her senior year, marrying him almost a year later in 1970.

Her very first job teaching remedial reading at Northglenn Junior High School was initiated by fire, Morrow said. At the time, the teenagers placed in remedial reading included those who had difficulty reading as well as those with behavioral issues. At 22, she was just eight years their senior, and reining in some of the behavior was difficult.

“I have always enjoyed teaching. The big lesson of teaching is that you don’t try to be the kids’ friend. My very favorite class at the end of the year because I didn’t have the structure I needed.”

Morrow became department chair but burned out after three years. She briefly took a job as secretary to the division manager at Farr Better Feeds in Lucerne, Colorado, but the job didn’t challenge her.

In 1974, Mountain Bell hired her husband, and they moved to Cheyenne. Morrow became a homebound teacher, a perfect part-time job that allowed her to continue to teach while raising their three sons. For ten years, she taught students who were homebound due to an illness, injury or even pregnancy, helping keep up with all their subjects.

In 1982, she started at Central as a full-time English teacher. “I enjoyed high school kids, especially teaching literature and composition. High school kids you can talk to about ideas like life, death, beauty, truth and what it means to be courageous.”

“Teaching was always quite a challenge,” Morrow said. “But that’s what makes life interesting, all those challenges.”

She was diagnosed with cancer in 1995. At first, she received treatment in Cheyenne but eventually had to seek treatment at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. Determined not to miss work, Morrow would arrange to fly to Houston for treatment on a Friday and be back at school on a Monday.

Even with health insurance, having cancer is expensive. Recognizing this, Morrow’s Central’s students held ice cream socials, raising over $1,000 to help cover travel expenses.

“When the president of Student Council handed me that check, I just dissolved. It still brings me to tears today to think how wonderful those students were.”

In October 2000, she went down to MD Anderson Cancer Center for a clinical trial, thinking that she would be gone for just two weeks. One day she bent down to pick up the newspaper but could hardly straighten her back up again. She had fractured five vertebrae in her back.

Needing surgery to place a titanium rod in her back, Morrow couldn’t go back to teaching. The doctors then told her that she would die unless she had a bone marrow transplant.

She had her bone marrow transplant in July 2001. The doctors at MD Anderson Cancer Center forthrightly told her that the experimental treatment might only give her a few extra months and at one point even considered putting her in hospice. Morrow didn’t give up. “The long-term treatment didn’t work right away, but it worked eventually. Now my bone marrow is all my donor’s bone marrow. I don’t have any of my own.”

Morrow had to stop teaching, permanently. “After my bone marrow transplant, I didn’t have the energy. Being a good high school English teacher, for me, was a 60 to 80 hour-a-week job to teach students how to read, be critical thinkers, and how to write about what they read.”

Recovering from her bone marrow transplant took a while, but Morrow was driven to give back. She volunteered with cancer support efforts, served on the board of Meals on Wheels and as a driver, tutored in the GED program at Laramie County Community College, and was a Deacon at First Presbyterian Church of Cheyenne. She also became an advocate for insurance reform and coverage for clinical trials, serving as an Ambassador to the 2006 Celebration on the Hill in Washington D.C. to lobby for increased funding for cancer research and access to healthcare.

In 2005, she became the chairman of the blood drive committee for the First Presbyterian Church. “I decided to invite every single congregation in Cheyenne to come and have volunteers register as bone marrow donors, as well as give blood.”

That first drive was very successful, but Morrow wanted to grow the event. She emailed her church pastor asking if the event could be broadened to all of Cheyenne, held at a community location, and include blood donations, bone marrow donor registration, and food collection.

Her pastor agreed and the Day of Giving started, growing larger each year.

The event, held on the second Friday of May, is not limited to a single day anymore, Morrow points out. “The Day of Giving has grown to be a major effort where we use financial donations to make purchases throughout the year that help area agencies meet the needs of clients and then have our Youth Event and yearly event in May to bring a huge influx of donations to give them an enormous boost.”

The outpouring of caring about other people continues to amaze Morrow.

“Everybody helps out, not thinking about what they’re going to get, but thinking about how they can give.”
Redman from 17
Redman still worked on special projects and became involved in the commissioning of the USS Wyoming. Gov. Jim Geringer appointed Redman to the Industrial Siting Council. When her former boss Freudenthal ran for governor, Redman served on his campaign, chaired his inauguration ceremony, and worked in his transition office.

While working for state government and after she retired, Redman remained passionate about improving the lives of others, providing educational opportunities to Hispanics, and battling to end domestic violence.

Chief among her contributions are helping launch several impactful efforts, including the Cheyenne Hispanic Festival, the Hispanic Organization for Progress and Education organization (HOPE), and the Wyoming Latina Youth Conference. Plus she is an original member of the Wyoming Latina/Latino Coalition. She has also served on Wyoming’s Silent Witness Initiative, Wyoming Women’s Foundation, Saint Mary’s School Foundation, and the USS Wyoming Committee.

The idea for the HOPE evolved from an organization called Somos, based out of US West. When most of the originators transferred out of Wyoming, the effort came close to dying, but Redman and few others refused to give up. Through their efforts, HOPE achieved its own 501(c) (3) in 1994 and has supported countless Hispanic students in Laramie County seek higher education by annually providing scholarships to Laramie County Community College (LCCC), the University of Wyoming as well as other four-year educational institutions.

The Wyoming Latina Youth Conference evolved from Redman heading up a group of eight Wyoming women at a regional women’s conference in Sacramento, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health. Inspired by the national conference, the group created the Wyoming Latina Youth Conference in 2000 to empower fifth grade to twelfth-grade girls of Latino descent through mentorship, education, and awareness.

Redman convinced the LCCC Foundation to provide the umbrella for the Latina conference until it was able to go out on its own. Today the conference is hosted at the University of Wyoming, attracting 170 girls from all over the state to participate in workshops on topics related to health, education, careers, and culture.

Education and growing confidence made a considerable difference in Redman’s life, though she admits that she didn’t believe in herself for a long time. That is perhaps, why she has been so driven to help Hispanic youth and others.

She shakes her head in dismay, saying that Hispanic youth still tell stories of being profiled by stores and having parents who only speak Spanish. “They have some of those same barriers that I experienced growing up.”

“I tell them not to let other people define who they are,” Redman says in her quiet, determined way.

Redman explained that she just wants to leave the world a better place than when she entered it. She also says, “if you want to see change you have to be part of the solution.”

If the Latina Conference or HOPE can provide support and provide these youth with some confidence, we’ve done our job.”