



Helena school honors its architect

Central unveils Klint Fisher Memorial for man who left ‘lasting ripple’ in community

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The Klint Fisher Memorial was presented at Central Elementary School on Tuesday, honoring the architect who designed Central and several other schools in the Helena area.

The memorial, a wave-like structure named “The River Klint,” sits near the school’s pickup and drop-off area to give parents and children a place to reconnect at the end of the school day. His loved ones hope the memorial serves as a reminder that thoughtful design can create accessible, welcoming environments where children can learn and thrive.

“May this place encourage others to slow down, share stories, build relationships, and leave a lasting ripple in the lives

of those around them — just as Klint did,” the memorial plaque reads.

The memorial includes a custom color shade the team calls “Klint Orange,” which Central Elementary has since adopted as an official school color in recognition of Fisher’s contributions to Montana’s schools.

Fisher, an architect with A&E + SMA Design, died of cancer in 2024. Central Elementary, where his children attended school, was the project he was most proud of.

“He was so passionate about creating spaces where kids could grow and flourish,” said his wife, Jesika Fisher. “His favorite project was definitely this one.”

Tim Meldrum, one of Fisher’s longtime colleagues, said he was proud of how the community came together to create the memorial. Fisher’s firm ran an internal design competition for the project, drawing about a dozen submissions from team members eager to honor him.



SONNY TAPIA, INDEPENDENT RECORD

A crowd gathers at the Klint Fisher Memorial in front of Central Elementary School on Sept. 15 listening to speakers.

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DOWNTOWN HELENA

BUDWEISER CLYDESDALES TROT THROUGH TOWN



SONNY TAPIA, INDEPENDENT RECORD

Budweiser Clydesdales walk through downtown Helena on Last Chance Gulch delivering beer to local bars on Sept. 16.

Horses deliver cold ones, receive warm welcome

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The Budweiser Clydesdales trotted through downtown Helena on Wednesday afternoon hauling cases of beer and donning glimmering metal equipment, bringing out hundreds of Helenans to see the famed horses.

The horses, all of which stand over 18 hands tall, wore red and white roses in their manes and had

city residents lining the streets of downtown snapping photos and marveling at the majestic animals.

Pulling a wagon, they started at Women’s Park and made stops at local establishments including The Gold Bar, Brothers Tapworks, The Rialto, The Windbag and Miller’s Crossing.

Many looked on as handlers prepared the horses for their journey downtown, placing yokes over

their heads, attaching reins and more.

This was the third stop for the horses and workers in the Helena area this week; similar events took place in East Helena on Monday and Townsend on Tuesday.

Stops along the way at their East Helena and Townsend trips included Town Pumps, the Fishtale Tavern, Smith’s Place, The Commercial Bar and more.

Next steps unclear for \$25M in rural health funds

Montana dropped contract with out-of-state firm over potential conflict of interest

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Six weeks out from a key deadline, the Montana health department on Wednesday was light on details for how it will move forward with a \$25 million initiative that was stymied due to a potential conflict of interest.

The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services has until Oct. 30 to decide how it will spend the money, part of a larger pot of federal funds meant to bolster rural healthcare through the Trump administration’s Rural Health Transformation Project.

If it can’t meet next month’s cutoff, the state may have to forfeit the cash infusion altogether.

“DPPHS is working closely with the [Department of Administration] to figure out what our next steps are,” said Director Charlie Brereton. “Time is of the essence here.”

Last week, state officials quietly voided a plan to award \$25 million over the next two years to Indelible Health Solutions LLC, a Florida-based consultancy firm, to spearhead Montana’s rural health transformation efforts. Contract negotiations were halted after it was revealed that one of Indelible’s primary subcontractors, McKinsey & Company, had previously worked with the Montana health department to secure the federal funds now being distributed through this same grant.

About \$1.2 billion will hit Montana over the next five years as part of the Rural Health Transformation Project. The federal government metes out payments in yearly installments, but there are strings attached, including



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City: 5 water main breaks linked to Crosstown Connector project

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Five water mains in downtown Helena broke in two days after city crews began preparing for the second phase of a major water system project, the city said Tuesday.

In the long term, the \$3.1 million, four-phase Helena Crosstown Connector replacement project will make maintenance easier, Helena staff previously said.

The connector itself is a key part

of the city’s water system, but when the project was approved in 2025, it was “in need of an update and upgrade,” city documents stated.

The large water transmission main connects the Ten Mile Water Treatment Plant outfall main near Williams Street to water storage facilities on Mount Helena and at the Missouri River Water Treatment Plant outfall, according to city documents.

The main was constructed

through separate projects in 1960, 1971 and 1974. Because of how the outdated system is built, maintenance sometimes requires significant water service to be shut down.

It also sets the city up for water loss and damage if something breaks and there aren’t valves set up to quickly stop the bleed, a city engineer previously told commissioners.

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CHRISTINE COMPTON, INDEPENDENT RECORD

Helena city crews respond to a water main break at the intersection of Stuart and Garfield streets on Sept. 15.