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How to help ease the 'epidemic' of pet abandonment

By JULIE ENGLER
Whitefish Pilot

Columbia Falls resident Brooke Hall saw a Facebook post last month about a man who found a small, grey kitten in the woods near Mud Lake and delivered it to KittyMom's Rescue Organization.

Hall and her sister grabbed a humane trap, went to the location 22 miles up the North Fork Road and, over the course of a few days, captured two juvenile cats and four very young kittens.

"I chased the little white and tabby one through the deep brush. She didn't really have a lot of energy ... and then the little boy kitten was trying to climb up a tree so I just grabbed him," Hall said. "The two juveniles -- one was trying to go up a tree and the other one I caught with a net while she was eating. I had her distracted with food."

Two more kittens were caught in the live trap the women

monitored. Their search continues for more cats that have been seen in the area.

"It was mind-boggling to think somebody dumped all these cats," said Bonnie Hodges, longtime Whitefish animal advocate. "I just find that so unconscionable. I don't care if you're a cat lover or not a cat lover, it's a life. It's a life."

Hall and her husband recently opened Legends Restyling in Evergreen and, along with their three children, also opened their home to four of the found cats, one of whom is pregnant. Hall's sister is caring for two cats, and her sister-in-law has another pair.

"There's no reason why these cats should be being dumped," Hall said. "There are so many different people who would gladly take on vetting them and taking care of them until stable homes can be found. I'm not sure why people think that



Columbia Falls' Brooke Hall holds Violet, a pregnant juvenile. Violet is one of several cats Hall saved from the woods near Mud Lake recently. (Photo provided)

See PET HELP, A3

Mix-up sparked premature fireworks display

By KELSEY EVANS
Whitefish Pilot

Just as the sun began dipping behind the horizon at Whitefish City Beach, the first fireworks of the annual Whitefish Fourth of July show took off into the sky, to the delight but also surprise and confusion of thousands of spectators.

The annual fireworks show was scheduled to start at 10:30 p.m. per usual, but a combination of miscommunication and operator error led to the pyrotechnic crew activating the fireworks early at about 9:50 p.m., according to the Whitefish Chamber of Commerce, the organizers of the annual event.

An Air Force helicopter had just completed a special fly-over around City Beach and was departing toward Big Mountain when the first firework boom cascaded over the lake.

The flyover and a DJ with patriotic beats synced to the show were arranged to make America's 250th celebration grander.

"We've never had a DJ and we've never had flyover before,"

See FIREWORKS, A6

Couple celebrates 50th anniversary with foreign exchange students

By MAGGIE MERCER
Whitefish Pilot

Ray and Jerrie Boksich celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary last week at the Moose Lodge in Whitefish, alongside friends, family and nine of their 25 former foreign exchange students.

Over the years, the Boksichs have been extremely involved with many aspects of the Whitefish community including but not limited to the Winter Carnival, Meals on Wheels, Shepherd's Hand, city council, the school board, and the American Field Service, an organization centered around connecting foreign exchange students with host families.

The Boksichs always knew that they were interested in hosting a foreign exchange student after being exposed to different cultures. Originally, they planned on waiting until their own two children, Merika and Garth, were high

school aged to bring another student in their home. This plan changed when they got a call from the American Field Service about an exchange student from Hong Kong in the late 1980s.

"Traveling the world was not really something that was going to happen for us at this point in our lives, so we thought, 'Well, this is a great way to bring the world to our kids and make them a little more globally aware,'" Ray said.

They both appreciated the opportunity to expose not only their own children but all of the students at Whitefish High School to different cultures.

"We wanted the high school kids to see that our world is a much bigger place than just Whitefish," Jerrie said.

The Boksichs always encouraged the students that they were hosting to get involved in



See BOKSICHS, A3

Jerrie and Ray Boksich pose with their wall of family photos that includes their many foreign exchange students over the years. (Maggie Mercer/Whitefish Pilot)



86	83	86	86	84	82	85
54	51	55	56	58	58	58
Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues

“When you volunteer, you get back as much as you give.”

— Jerrie Boksich

90

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