



Whitefish Pilot

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Nicole Heavirland at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs. (Photo provided)

Whitefish Olympian sets sights on 2028 Summer Games

By KELSEY EVANS
Whitefish Pilot

The city of Whitefish's 2021 proclamation declaring July 23 as Nicole Heavirland Day recognizes not only the Olympian's athletic prowess, but also her pride for representing her hometown.

This year on July 23 the three-time Team USA rugby player will be busy trans-

lating her work ethic and fitness into not one, but two new sports while training at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs.

Heavirland is aiming for the Los Angeles 2028 Summer Games in shooting.

"I am going for the fourth Olympics," she said. "But that's the outcome of the goal. I'm trying to just enjoy the journey."

Heavirland has been in a transition period since the 2024 Olympics in Paris. Six months before the Summer Games, she broke her left fibula during a rugby match against Australia.

"We rehabbed it so fast. I was walking by day 11. While I rehabbed in the months leading to Paris, my right Achilles took a beating," she said.

Heavirland was able to keep playing. During the Pacific Four Series, competing against Canada, Australia and New Zealand, she felt a strong tug on her Achilles tendon after a long travel day and heavy session on the field.

Two days later she broke her hand too, "just thinking about the Achilles," she said.

See OLYMPIAN , A4

Habitat Flathead breaks ground

By JULIE ENGLER
Whitefish Pilot

Habitat for Humanity Flathead is celebrating its first ground-breaking in Whitefish in 15 years as construction starts on a pair of three-bedroom townhomes on Whitefish Avenue.

The project is the first in the nonprofit's Grounded in Whitefish campaign that aims to build 10 homes in Whitefish each year for a decade. The group currently has 10 houses under construction in Columbia Falls.

The ceremony last week included short speeches by Habitat's Board President Matt Venturini, Whitefish City Manager Dana Meeker, Whitefish Community Foundation CEO Alan Davis, Jamie Goguen from the Whitefish Advisory group, City Councilor Giuseppe Caltabiano and MaryBeth Morand, executive director of Habitat Flathead.

Morand said the grassroots campaign is intended to help solve a national socioeconomic problem of affordable housing and that the assembled crowd represented the movement well.

"We're taking private sector businesses, we're taking philanthropy, and we're taking the city government, and we're all coming together to solve this as a team," she said. And that's why I'm so confident that we will get 100 houses built within 10 years.

"I'm willing to bet with anyone we'll get it done before 10 years," she added.

See HABITAT, A4

New principal Tyler Jones strives to keep Whitefish Middle School on course

By KELSEY EVANS
Whitefish Pilot

As Whitefish Middle School's new principal, Tyler Jones will work to bring joy to every school day and maintain a culture of respect.

When the principal position opened earlier this year, Jones, the school's assistant principal of six years, saw not only an opportunity, but a way to ensure the building continues to function at its best.

"I'm a people person, putting kids and staff's needs first," Jones said. "I thought, I'll put myself out there and see what I can do."

"I don't want to come in and make a bunch of changes. I want to stay the course of the groundwork that's been laid before me, so that we continually

build relationships and that we're a safe, welcoming place."

Challenges that may arise won't be out of the ordinary, he said.

"I like the steady feeling of knowing what to expect," he said.

Jones said former principal Josh Branstetter set a precedent of being visible to students, and he will be missed.

"Working with Josh is every educator's dream, as far as a boss," Jones said. "He goes above and beyond for everybody -- students, parents, families, staff."

"The culture that he inherited, and then built on, is amazing. And to get to be a part of that is so much fun. And I think that's what makes not only Whitefish Middle, but our Whitefish school district a



See PRINCIPAL, A6 Tyler Jones is the new principal of Whitefish Middle School. (Kelsey Evans/Whitefish Pilot)

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If you name a thing in Whitefish that's extraordinary, and you can't believe a small town has it, those people made it happen.

— Rhonda Fitzgerald

#15

Years since Habitat has built in Whitefish

93	91	92	91	86	88	88
60	61	58	57	53	55	55
☀	☀	☀	☀	☀	☀	☀
Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues