



WHITEFISH HALLOWEEN

COSTUME CONTEST & BAR CRAWL 10.31.26 / 7-10:15p

Register at The Firebrand or Tupelo starting at 7p
Visit all 9 downtown Whitefish bars by 9:30p
Head to 101 Central for the finals at 10:15p

SINGLES \$5 / COUPLES \$10 / GROUPS OF 3+ \$25

Cash & prizes worth over \$500 for Best Individual, Best Couple & Best Group Costume

Visit firebrandhotel.com or scan the QR code for more info.



Sports: Snow Ghosts make debut **B1**

WHITEFISHPILOT.COM

Whitefish Pilot

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\$1.50



Whitefish Community Foundation board and staff members pose with the record-breaking \$10.8 million fundraising total from the 2026 Great Fish Community Challenge. (Kelsey Evans/Whitefish Pilot)

Sustainable tourism and workforce housing go hand in hand, survey finds

By **KELSEY EVANS**
Whitefish Pilot

Asked what they most valued about living in Whitefish, residents overwhelmingly named “the people and knowing your neighbors,” a recent study on tourism found.

The results of the survey conducted by the Whitefish Sustainable Tourism Management Plan Committee last spring were presented Oct. 23 at a tourism town hall.

There’s a lot of tourism competition from adjacent states, said Zak Anderson, executive director of Explore Whitefish, the Whitefish Convention and Visitors Bureau.

“But there’s something that I think a lot of these communities don’t have, that we do, and that’s an authentic, real, year-round community filled with great people who live and work here.

“We get a lot of feedback from guests, ‘Oh, it’s so friendly, there’s a real sense of community.’ For me, that’s the through-line on this idea of a more holistic management approach, where we’re not just investing in advertisements, but we’re investing in the research, in nonprofits, in affordable housing. We’re part-

See GREAT FISH, A6

See TOURISM, A4

Great Fish Community Challenge raises record \$10.8 million for nonprofits

Whitefish Pilot

Whitefish Community Foundation announced a record \$10.8 million raised for 89 Flathead Valley nonprofit organizations at the Great Fish Awards Ceremony Thursday evening. The total included \$9.1 million donated by more than 4,000 individuals, families and businesses during the month-long campaign, \$1.7 million from the Great Fish Match, and \$62,000 in incentive grants and special awards. The grand total of \$10,841,320 raised represents a 34% increase over last year’s Challenge.

This year’s Great Fish Match was the largest in the Challenge’s history, fueled by the continued growth of Whitefish Community Foundation’s Circle of Giving and additional gifts to the Great Fish Match Fund. The Circle surpassed 300 members for the first time this year, unlocking a \$300,000 bonus gift that helped increase the Match available to participating nonprofits. Circle of Giving members contribute

New Housing Whitefish program coordinator ‘the connecting piece’

By **KELSEY EVANS**
Whitefish Pilot

As the first point of contact for people struggling with housing-related challenges, Shannon Root lends a listening ear, an empathic heart and a plethora of resources.

Root joined Housing Whitefish as the new program coordinator in August. She describes her role as “the connecting piece.” She connects to people seeking housing assistance, answering questions and helping with applications.

Root joins executive director Daniel Sidder, effectively doubling Housing Whitefish’s staff from one to two. The new role was created to respond to growth in the organization, its programs and the number of people it serves.

“I think a lot of people just want to be heard, especially with housing, because it’s such a stressful and uncomformable position to be in,” Root said. “And you want to know that someone is on the other line, and they’re not just going to say, ‘Sorry, there’s nothing I can do for you.’ I’m saying, ‘I hear you. Let’s see if we can figure this out.’”

A Minnesota native, Root graduated from Flathead High School and Flathead Valley Community College. She’s worked in early childhood education since 2011 and has three young kids.

Root said her background has made her an adaptable



Housing Whitefish’s new program coordinator Shannon Root aims to be a helping hand for housing challenges. (Kelsey Evans/Whitefish Pilot)

See HOUSING, A4



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41	43	45	47	46	46	47
30	25	25	30	29	28	28
Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues

“The tradition, the legacy, is important. It’s cool to be a part of something that’s bigger than ourselves.”

— Coach Brett Bollweg

#17

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House District 3

POWERS for the People!

Paid for by Powers for the People, P.O. Box 792, Whitefish, MT 59937, Treasurer Richard Hildner//Democrat