



‘I’M GOING TO MAKE IT MY OWN’



THOM BRIDGE PHOTOS, INDEPENDENT RECORD

Penny Krienke, in blue, poses with her staff at the new Rise N Shine Cafe, formerly Steve's Cafe, on Dec. 10.

Steve's Cafe on North Montana rebrands into Rise N Shine Cafe

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Huckleberry-stuffed French toast is still on the menu, but one of Helena's two Steve's Cafes is taking a new look.

Steve's Cafe at 630 N. Montana Ave. will rebrand into Rise N Shine Cafe under the sole ownership of Penny Krienke, formerly Vincelli. It's set to open Jan. 2.

"It's the same great service, great food, great staff," Krienke said. "It's just getting a fresh look."

Krienke co-ran Helena's two Steve's Cafe

locations with Steven Vincelli since 2009, originally retiring in 2018 and returning in 2023.

The North Montana Avenue location near the state Capitol opened in 2013, and Krienke saw it as her baby.

It was far from Helena's prettiest spot when Kreinke and Vincelli first leased it, she said with a laugh, but she was determined to dress it up. That's one of the reasons the restaurant was surrounded by bushels of flowers.

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Diners receive their orders at Steve's Cafe on the morning of Oct. 12, 2023.

NUGGETS FROM HELENA

Local schools, 1969-1975: Students are all shook up!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

"My Catholic family: I regret to inform you that the Helena Diocese will close all schools at the end of this school year."

In February of 1969, the Catholic Diocese of Helena announced they would close all first-12th grades at the end of the 1968-1969 school year. This action would send an estimated 1,000 students into Helena Public Schools.



DAVID CURD

The Helena School Board had six months to plan for the large increase in students. The board began by considering the purchase of Helena Catholic Central High

School, the land and the building.

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DAVID CURD

The old Cathedral High School

What's next for 'pro-life' movement in Montana?

Advocates gear up after state enshrines abortion protections in constitution

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While supporters celebrate the passage of Constitutional Initiative 128, others are taking a moment to lick their wounds before gearing up for another fight. Exactly what the playbook for anti-abortion efforts in Montana will look like remains undetermined, but there's reason to believe they won't fade quietly into the background.

Voters recently passed a citizen-led ballot measure to amend the Montana Constitution to include an explicit right to abortion. Effective July 1, CI-128 guarantees access to the procedure before fetal viability. It marks the latest win for abortion rights advocates and another setback for state lawmakers who worked the past two legislative sessions — some, even longer — to restrict abortion.

Montana was one of seven states nationally to pass abortion protections via ballot measure this past November. That includes multiple electorates that went for president-elect Donald Trump, a sign that banning abortion altogether isn't a homerun issue for Republicans and forcing a reckoning among some national anti-abortion politicians and leaders.

Anti-abortion groups purport to be undeterred, though open to rethinking their strategies.

"With the election barely behind us, the abortion lobby gloats about their new 'powers,' believing their ivory abortion towers are built to last," a memo from Students for Life America, a national organization opposed to abortion, reads. "Or so they think."

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East Helena school board discusses moving offices

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The East Helena Public Schools board at its Dec. 9 meeting discussed the possibility of relocating its central offices, but one board member requested the item be tabled for further discussion citing the district's budget constraints.

The school district's current central offices at 295 E. Clinton St., next to Radley Elementary School, sit in a building that is overall in poor condition, according to SMA Architecture and Design's facilities master plan.

Superintendent Dan Rispens presented a brief proposal to the board Monday at its monthly meeting about the possibility of moving the district's central offices by the summer, based on the master plan recommendation.

The current building houses the superintendent's office and other administrative offices, but a building next to Prickly Pear Elementary School has sat vacant for about a year and a half.

The current central office building, which houses administrative staff, is about 1,580 square feet, but the unused clinic building is about 1,800 square feet, according to a 2023 facilities condition report from SMA Architecture and Design.

Rispens said Tuesday the unused building has a better floor plan and use of space. It has the potential for six or seven offices whereas the current building has three with a reception area.

The architectural firm said if the building near Radley Elementary School were to be demolished, it could improve vehicular and pedestrian circulation.

Please see **EAST HELENA**, Page A2

VA to hold virtual town hall for vets Thursday

INDEPENDENT RECORD

Veterans are invited to join Montana VA virtually to discuss updates on policies, programs and services from 5-6 p.m. Thursday at a Virtual Veterans Town Hall.

This town hall will discuss issues ranging from veterans' benefits, community care, tele-health, travel benefits and more.

Duane Gill, Montana VA's executive director, will discuss how policies and programs have evolved and answer questions from veterans.

"We are looking forward to updating Montana vet-

erans on our latest policies and programs," Gill said in an email.

Participate either by calling 866-478-3358 or livestream the townhall at www.access.live/MontanaVA-TownHall.

Program experts will share overviews of their services and resources for the first section of the town hall. The final 30 minutes are reserved for a question-and-answer period for veterans.

Montana VA serves over 49,000 enrolled veterans across Montana with a staff of 1,400 at 18 sites of care.

Rise N Shine

From A1

She has a similar attitude approaching the rebrand now.

In the past few months, she and Vincelli decided to split the two restaurants for personal reasons.

On paper, Krienke is still the co-owner of the original Steve's Cafe at 1225 E. Custer Ave., but in January, it'll be officially in only Vincelli's hands, Krienke said.

Likewise, the North Montana Avenue building will remain Steve's Cafe until Dec. 31. After that, Krienke will be the sole owner of Rise N Shine Cafe, which officially takes over Jan. 2.

"I'm going to make it my own," she said.

To help differentiate Rise N Shine from its former look, she's pursuing a rustic, "Montana casual" theme, featuring barnwood and photos of fluffy Highland cows from her ranch. The new logo shows a sunrise peeking over a Highland bull's horns.

Other changes include hours. Breakfast and lunch will now be served all day, and it will be open 6:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Wednesdays through Sundays.

The menu will still be centered on American brunch with a roughly \$10-20 price range, but the restaurant will evolve with its own specials and twists to favorite dishes.

Krienke will have a staff of 18 full- and part-time employees, most of whom

worked at a Steve's Cafe before the rebrand.

Some of her closest staff members have been under her wing for years.

Krienke was an understanding boss, General Manager Dave Marshall said. When employees had car troubles or hiccups in life, she made sure they had the help they needed.

Kitchen Manager Sequoiah Steice remembered moving eight times in her first year in Helena. She was struggling with housing, and there were days where she didn't want to leave work.

Krienke helped her through it all. Steice even lived on Krienke's ranch during a winter, she said.

After leaving a few years before, Marshall returned to Steve's Cafe to help Krienke through coming out of retirement. She took care of her employees, and he saw it as paying it back.

"We want Penny to be proud of this place," Marshall said. "Penny deserves to retire."

Although the Steve's Cafe location was previously for sale, Krienke said she plans to stay in charge for the time being. She's not sure what the future will bring, especially as she gets older, but she hopes Helenans continue to enjoy her food under a new name.

For more information about Rise N Shine Cafe, visit RiseAndShineCafeMT.com.

Christine Compton is a reporter for the Helena Independent Record.

East Helena

From A1

PureView Health Center occupied the clinic under the name East Helena Public Schools Health Care Clinic for about five years and moved out due to possible issues involving clients having trouble finding the location, Rispens said.

The building would need some remodeling like new paint, electrical work, flooring, door locks, security cameras, signage and more if

the district decides to move.

It could cost the district around \$40,500.

The board took no action to move forward with the project after trustee Tristan Ulmer cited the district's budget shortfall and other financial constraints.

Rispens' discussion was tabled to a future meeting, so the board could have more discussion.

Sonny Tapia is a criminal justice and education reporter for the Helena Independent Record.

WEATHER TRIVIA

Helena's three wettest winters came in the 19th century. The winters of 1880-81 and 1883-84 tie as wettest, each with 6.27 inches of precipitation. The winter 1894-95 comes second, at 4.40 inches.

Abortion

From A1

Groups like Students for Life say it's possible to carve a different path forward, even if more narrow, focused instead on regulating abortion as a legal procedure versus criminalizing it as a whole.

It's a strategy that reproductive rights advocates know well. Now that abortion is legal, they anticipate attacks against the accessibility of abortion and caution their supporters against complacency in the wake of CI-128.

"Having the legal right to an abortion does not make it accessible," Nicole Smith, executive director of Montanans for Choice, said during a press call on Monday. For example, although North Dakota's ban was recently overturned by the courts, there are no clinics in the entire state.

Even before CI-128, Republicans in the state Legislature had repeatedly failed to restrict abortion rights.

"We are going to continue to do what we have done before and work to promote the human dignity of the unborn in any way we can within the existing legal infrastructure," Danielle Pimentel from Americans United for Life told the Montana State News Bureau before the November election.

What could happen in Montana

Montana's anti-abortion bloc in Helena will be without a few key members this year, including Lola Sheldon-Galloway, a Republican lawmaker from Great Falls who lost her primary race for the Senate and had sponsored multiple such



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In this Jan. 27 file photo, close to 100 people gather in the Capitol Rotunda calling for an end to abortion during the Montana Pro-life Coalition's Personhood Rally.

bills in 2023.

Who, if anyone, will emerge as the leader on the issue is yet to be seen.

Rep. Braxton Mitchell, R-Columbia Falls, a member of the Montana House Freedom Caucus, said he wouldn't personally spearhead specific legislation related to abortion, but he anticipates some bills coming forward that would still carry caucus support.

Seemingly small incursions with outsized consequences could be the name of the game.

"We believe life begins at conception, so we believe in protections for life from conception onwards," Danielle Pimental said. "But given the political climate with ballot measures such as CI-128, incrementalism is the next best thing."

Medicaid funding of abortion, for example, could be one area of focus. The timing could suit anti-abortion Republicans looking for leverage since Medicaid expansion must be reauthorized this session before it sunsets.

Montana allows state dollars to flow through its Medicaid program to fund abortions, going beyond federal standards that bar

states from using federal funds for abortion save for certain exceptions. Smith called Montana's current reimbursement rates for abortion "abysmally" low.

In 2023, the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services introduced restrictions on Medicaid-funded abortions through the administrative rulemaking process. It's currently blocked temporarily by the courts as the legal challenge proceeds.

Member organizations in the Montana Sexual and Reproductive Health Collective, a statewide coalition, say medication abortion is likely to be a target of anti-abortion efforts.

Students for Life America issued a memo last month detailing a playbook that backs up the hunch of abortion rights advocates. It calls on state governments to restrict mifepristone and other medications used for abortion during the first trimester.

Though anti-abortion groups such as the Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine allege that medication abortions are dangerous, the FDA and World Health Organization have de-

clared otherwise.

Weems said that about 52% of all the abortion care the clinic provides is medication abortion by mail.

Beyond abortion

Many opposed to abortion use the moniker "pro-life" to describe their points of view. It's a term critics have latched on to, arguing that simply being anti-abortion doesn't amount to supporting the dignity of life. True pro-life policies, they say, would support children and families well beyond birth.

Traditionally, many of those priorities — things like paid family leave, child care and a robust social safety net for parents — have been considered part of the Democratic agenda.

But as the New Yorker reports, many parts of the conservative coalition are rebranding their efforts as pro-family, focusing not only on abortion but also on policies that pave the way for the "traditional" nuclear family unit and promote seeing pregnancies through to birth.

Trump said during the campaign he wouldn't sign off on a national abortion ban, a claim Weems called inauthentic. While in office for his first term, Trump said he would support national paid family leave.

No matter what happens from the halls of Helena, federal law trumps state law when they conflict.

Weems said he doesn't know if the votes would be there to support a national ban. But regardless, the threat of federal policy standing up incremental barriers to access should be heeded in Montana.

Carly Graf is the State Bureau health care reporter for Lee Montana.

Nuggets

From A1

The land and building sat on 24.5 acres that the Catholics bought in 1964 for \$13,000. The building itself, finished just before the 1965-1966 school year, cost \$1.4 million. The building location is near the intersection of Custer Avenue and Green Meadow Drive.

Today, it is known as Capital High School.

Both parties had the land and building appraised. The purchase price was agreed upon and the Helena School Board set May 27, 1969, for a bond vote to purchase the Catholic high school.

The building of high schools in Helena had been going on for 10 years. In April of 1955, the Catholics opened a new high school, Cathedral High School, at the corner of 11th Avenue and Warren Street. In September 1955, the public high school, Helena Senior High, was opened at 1300 Billings Ave.

Early in 1963, the Catholics needed a building larger than Cathedral High. They picked the site of St. Joseph's Orphans Home (built 1893, demolished 1973) at the northeast corner of East Custer and

Montana avenues (formerly York Road and Highway 91). Today, this is the area of Applebee's restaurant.

This site was dismissed after the airport board informed the Catholic School Board that this location was in a flight path. The private school went looking farther west, to the Sunhaven Addition, and here they found the 24.5 acres.

By late summer of 1964, the contractors were tearing up the ground for the new school, Helena Catholic Central High School, a stone's throw from the Home of Peace Cemetery, a Jewish Cemetery.

Nearly five years later, in late May 1969, the purchase of Helena Catholic Central High School by the Helena School Board was approved by the voters. The building was renamed Sunhaven School.

To determine which students would attend Sunhaven, the school board pulled out a map of Helena and put a pencil at the intersection of Oro Fino and Grizzly gulches, and moved down Last Chance Gulch to Montana Avenue, then north on Montana Avenue.

This created the division: east-side students here, and west-side students there.

The east-side freshmen and sophomores attended

Helena Junior High School, now Helena Middle School, on Rodney Street. The west-side freshmen and sophomores attended Sunhaven.

Those freshmen and sophomores who rode a bus from the valley or East Helena would attend Sunhaven. Those freshmen and sophomores who boarded in town during the school week were east-siders or west-siders, depending if they lived at Canyon Ferry Lake or Rimini.

All junior and senior high school students attended Helena Senior High School.

Students in many grades were shuffled from one school to another. Former St. Mary's Catholic Elementary students went to Bishop Gilmore (near the Cathedral), then to either Helena Middle School or Sunhaven, and then to Helena High School. Others went to Bishop Gilmore, then to C.R. Anderson, then to Sunhaven, then to Helena High School.

Sophomores in the fall of '69, '70 and '71 would transfer from Helena Middle School or Sunhaven to Helena High School. The freshmen students at Sunhaven in the fall of 1971 completed their high school years at Sunhaven/Capital High School. They were the first four-year

class at CHS.

Capital High School was so named at a school board meeting in September 1972. It was a very busy meeting. The following morning someone asked, 'how do we spell the name: with an 'a' or an 'o'? The correct spelling was found, and so it is: Capital. Except for the boy's cross-country uniforms; they were printed with an 'o'.

Only the pessimistic would have said this intermingling would not have succeeded. But it did, and the numbers indicate such. The following is the number of graduates from each school during the 1969-1975 years:

1969, Helena Catholic Central High School:	69
1969, Helena High School:	446
1970:	547
1971:	583
1972:	551
1973:	594
1974:	619
1975:	259
1975, Capital High School:	309.

The Lewis and Clark County Heritage Tourism Council provides the monthly "Nuggets From Helena" column. David Curd was a carpenter/contractor for 46 years before retiring in 2021. He enjoys Helena and Montana history.

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