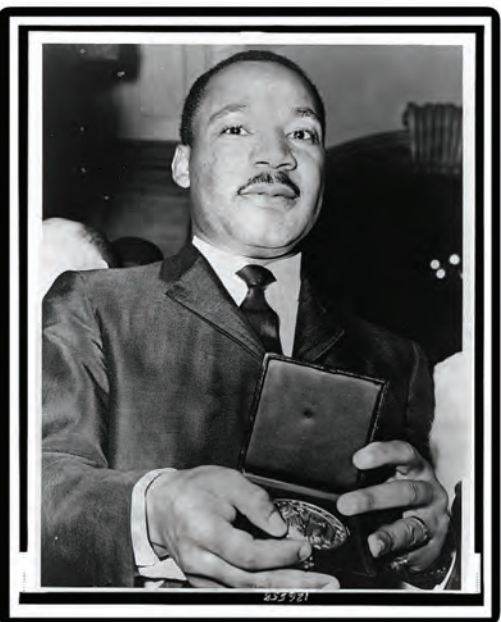




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MONTROSE DAILY PRESS

montrosepress.com | Saturday, January 18, 2025



Martin Luther King Jr. was one of the most prominent leaders of the Civil Rights movement in the United States until his assassination in 1968. That year of his assassination, legislation was introduced to recognize King — in 1983, President Ronald Reagan finally made MLK Day a federal holiday, though it took years longer for all 50 states to formally recognize the day. This year, the city of Montrose is celebrating King with a ‘Day of Service.’ (Photos/Library of Congress)

In farewell speech to nation, Biden warns of threat of ‘extreme wealth, power and influence’

By SHAUNEEN MIRANDA
COLORADO NEWSLINE

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden issued a series of warnings Wednesday night during his farewell address to the nation, while emphasizing the work still left to be done as the octogenarian soon caps off 50 years in public service.

Biden, in remarks from the Oval Office, highlighted what’s at stake regarding the threat of climate change, artificial intelligence and “a dangerous concentration of power in the hands of a very few ultra-wealthy people.”

“Today, an oligarchy is taking shape in America of extreme wealth, power and influence that literally threatens our entire democracy, our basic rights and freedoms and a fair shot for everyone to get ahead,” Biden said.

He echoed concerns about a “tech industrial complex,” noting that “Americans are being buried under an avalanche of misinformation and disinformation, enabling the abuse of power.”

See BIDEN page A14

CELEBRATING WITH SERVICE

MLK Day Montrose is a chance to look back and give back

By KYLEA HENSELER
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With the nation celebrating Martin Luther King Jr. Day for the 30th time Monday, members of the Montrose community thought it would be the perfect time to start a new, local tradition honoring the civil rights activist.

“This is the 30th anniversary of the recognition of MLK Day in the United States, and our hometown has done

nothing to recognize that; nothing on a corporate scale,” said Tonya Maddox. “To make a difference in the world, we need to honor the people that have already made a difference.”

Maddox, the CEO of Our Town Matters, pitched the idea for the celebration to local business, civic and nonprofit leaders in the hopes of starting an annual event that would inspire the community to do good.

The result is the inaugural MLK Day Mon-

trose Day of Service, and it’s a full-day affair with plenty to do.

Maddox noted that while King is best known as a civil rights leader, he was ultimately a humanitarian and community champion, and she believes encouraging residents to participate in community service is a fitting way to honor his legacy.

“What I hope the community will get out of this is a heart for action,” she said.

One highlight of the

day is service opportunities, which allow participants to lend a hand to local nonprofits.

The day will kick off with an opening ceremony Monday morning at 9 a.m. at San Juan Brews. Community and business leaders including Pastor Buddy Cook, Maddox, Montrose Daily Press Publisher Dennis Anderson, State Senator Marc Catlin, Montrose Mayor J. David Reed and Montrose County Manager Frank Rodriguez will all offer remarks, and

Maddox said everybody is excited to participate.

“The whole goal with this event is to honor this day and to have activities and speakers that are a reflection of the community that we live in,” Maddox said.

Immediately after the opening ceremony a walk/march will leave from Centennial Plaza and make its way downtown, in honor of the marches King famously participated in.

See MLK page A4

Posse fundraising letter goes out as volunteers log 5,500 hours of service

By KATHARHYN HEIDELBERG
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Last June, a man waited at the bottom of Bobcat Trail, his severely injured ankle preventing him from coming up the trail on his own. His friends called for help, and when they called, the Montrose County Sheriff’s Posse came.

The posse ultimately helped get the injured man up the trail and to help by working with then-Olathe Police Chief Frank Rodriguez and local ranch hand Jody Haskell, who used horses. The successful mission was but one of many the all-volunteer posse conducted in 2024 — along with other public services, such as traffic control during parades and scene control at crashes and other serious incidents.

“Our posse does great things,” Sheriff Gene Lillard said. “They’re a very valuable tool for the community.”

The Bobcat Trail mission was part of about 5,500 hours of expert-level work. If you were paying a large group of people for that kind of work, or if the county was paying for posse services, including standby time, the figure would run into hundreds of thousands of dollars. Instead, posse services are provided to the county through its volunteer members, many of whom have and maintain their own equipment. Still, there are annual operational costs and the community that benefits is again being asked to consider chipping in.

January marks the posse’s one and only

annual fundraiser. County residents can this week expect a letter from the posse, inviting them to make a donation of any size. The posse will not call or email solicitations, but the letter is legitimate, posse public information officer and director Mark Rackay said.

“If you start getting a phone call, it’s not us. We don’t knock on the door. We just ask,” he said.

The posse needs help offsetting operational costs.

“We’re kind of suffering along with everyone else,” Rackay said, noting insurance has gone up. The basic operational costs hover around \$40,000 a year, plus there are training and equipment maintenance costs. “It’s a lot that could not be done without the members having their



Posse members engage in the search for a missing college student in 2024. They later assisted in recovering the young man’s body from the Black Canyon. (Mark Rackay/Special to the MDP)

own equipment and taking care of their own stuff,” Rackay added.

“As an organization, we put in over 5,500 hours. That’s a bunch of work, a bunch of people, time out there, and community service.”

In terms of search and rescue missions alone, the posse logged 14 in 2024, as well as the heartbreaking search for a missing Delta woman at the end of 2023. The posse is glad to assist other jurisdictions, who return the favor. “It’s

nice having those organizations out there to come and put boots on the ground with us, but at the same time, we have to be ready to stand with them,” Rackay said.

See POSSE page A4

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POSSE

FROM PAGE A1

Eight missions entailed trekking through rugged terrain to find stranded motorists, some of which were “pretty darn critical” cases, he added.

The rescues included a family and their dogs who got a flat in Dry Creek Canyon and tried to drive out. Another recent mission came about when motorists crossed the snowmobile berm on Colorado 90 and plowed through a snowdrift, thinking the road would clear up. It did not. The pair made it about another mile and “absolutely buried that truck,” Rackay said.

The posse helped the people in the truck, but despite the many things the organization does, vehicle recovery just isn’t



An example of posse mission setups. The organization uses StarLink for cellular and internet service to keep in contact and to update real-time maps. (Mark Rackay/Special to the MDP)

among them. The volunteers save people, not vehicles, he stressed.

The posse was also there for tragic recoveries, as when a CMU student’s vehicle was located off the road in

the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. The young man was later found deceased and the posse assisted in recovering him for his family.

In yet another act of public service, the posse also pitches in during wildfires and August’s Bucktail Fire on the West End was no exception. The West End posse put in about 400 hours on the fire, also providing primary response to another fire in the area at the same time, freeing up other resources to be applied to the Bucktail Fire.

That’s another benefit the posse provides: its members are there for less-urgent tasks when the manpower-strapped sheriff’s office is tied up. In such instances, the posse can take care of street closures when there is a bad crash or similar emergency — in fact, it has a response team for that purpose. That team also kept the Black Canyon scene secure overnight, by posting some-

one out there to keep watch over the vehicle.

While it all might seem like a lot of work, Rackay said the posse has one general reaction: “We’re happy to do it.” Also, he said, based on last year’s response to the donation plea, residents are receptive to posse needs.

“The people of the community stepped up and really helped us out,” Rackay said.

“They’re our citizens and they’re a wonderful bunch,” Lillard said. “If you feel like donating, that would be a good cause.”

Look for a posse fundraising letter in your mailbox. Although the January letter is the only time the posse actively solicits donations, the organization accepts donations year-round; mcspi.org, or Montrose County Sheriff’s Office Posse, P.O. Box 717, Montrose, CO 81402. Info: info@mcspi.org or 970-765-7033.

Katharhynn Heidelberg is the Montrose Daily Press assistant editor and senior writer.

MLK

FROM PAGE A1

Service opportunities are available with the Montrose Public Library, Habitat for Humanity and Region 10, and Maddox recommended the community look for other local organizations on justserve.org if they’d rather give back in a different way.

Volunteers can find more information about participating organizations on the MLK Day event site, and get involved with tasks like cleaning up the library or painting a Habitat home.

A free luncheon will start at noon at The Temple Events, where awards will be presented to local humanitarians who have served the community including Joey Montoya

Boese, Richard Fike, Amanda Gerhardt, Carol Parker, Garey Martinez and Kevin Williams.

“In the spirit of MLK and his humanitarian efforts in the U.S., the committee decided to honor local humanitarians,” Maddox said. “These are people that have done great things for our community.”

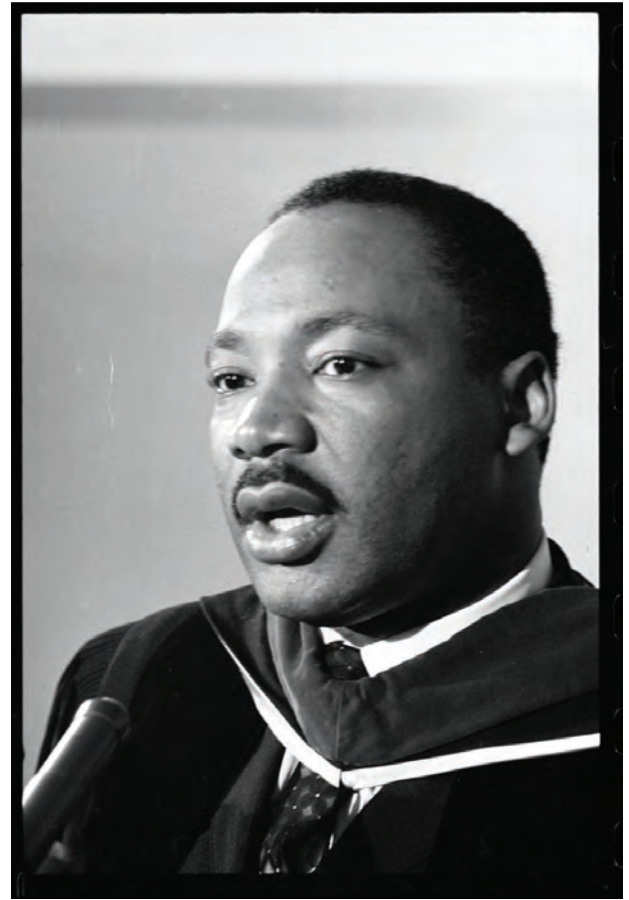
From art contests for students to film screenings and poetry readings, there will be much to do right until the sun goes down.

Maddox hopes this will be the first event of many, and plans to apply for nonprofit status for MLK Day Montrose after the event.

For a full schedule, visit: <https://mlkday-montrose.com/>



Posse members trek through a cold canyon during a search and recovery mission in 2024. (Mark Rackay/Special to the MDP)



Montrose will celebrate civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. Jan. 20 with a day full of events. (Photo/Library of Congress)

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