

SPECIAL HOLIDAY EDITION

There are no Board meetings scheduled until 2018. This is a special issue of the newsletter to wish you and yours a safe and happy holiday, and to give you a final report on the year's accomplishments.

It also gives us a chance to remind you that it's not too late to renew your Growing Friends membership, or to make a special year-end contribution. We can absolutely promise you will receive no wall calendars, address labels, note cards, tote bags, or coffee cups. That's not the Growing Friends way. All the money you give to us goes "into the ground." As an all-volunteer organization, there are no frills. It's simple: we're trying to make the Helena area a more attractive and liveable place.

2017 has been another successful year for Growing Friends. We had plantings on Arbor Day, at Central/Linc and Jefferson Schools, at St. Peter's Hospital and the Old Governor's Mansion, and at the corner of Broadway and Montana Avenue near the Capitol. We also continued our popular Boulevard Tree Program. These projects are just the most recent examples of our commitment to bringing more trees and landscaping to Helena.

There's no big news to report. We planted a few more boulevard trees this Fall. The September rains made for easy digging and provided a good last drink for the trees. After a long hot, smoky Summer, I'm sure the trees appreciated the more hospitable weather.

One activity that we haven't reported on much may turn out to be another victory for Growing Friends. The City of Helena started this year enforcing a 50' setback from street corners when planting trees. While the purported purpose was to maintain good sight lines at corners, the practical effect in older neighborhoods would be to eliminate most planting locations and in some instances, all places to plant trees in a block. We were, with difficulty, able to pry loose from the Montana Department of Transportation the crash data for Helena streets. The data showed few accidents at street corners and none that were attributable to trees.

Due to our pressure, the City, without acknowledging a problem with the setback requirement, has now shown a willingness to consider changing the rule. As Helena's old ash trees reach the end of their expected lives, we hope to work out a planting pattern that preserves the tree-lined aesthetic of residential streets. In new subdivisions, boulevard trees can be planted in a pattern that someday will result in a tree canopy that adds to the quality of life in the neighborhood.

What Growing Friends asked Santa for this year were some new people interested in carrying on the work of the organization. Not only does the organization need younger backs, it needs fresh energy and new ideas. Please consider volunteering.

Bob Throssell, President