November 28, 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Dorcie Dvarishkis
406-926-2522, dorcied@fchwmt.org

Brooks Family Leaves Legacy for Shelter, Nourishment and Health of Region

Missoula, MT – During their lifetimes, Russell, Grace, Danny and Leonard Brooks built community through construction, gardening, cooking, music and care for their neighbors. In their passing, they gifted more than $1.75 million to provide for safe shelter, a food safety net and better health for western Montanans served by Habitat for Humanity of Missoula, Missoula Food Bank and Foundation for Community Health.

Raised in farming and ranching families, Russell and Grace were formed through ambition, work, health challenges, and a tenacity to find opportunity in the roadblocks they faced. With roots in Cleveland and St. Ignatius, Montana, they made their way to Missoula in 1957 with their young sons, Danny and Leonard. Russell established Brooks Construction Co. in 1962. One of the greatest joys in Russell’s life was building homes that satisfied customers and he led the work on more than 70 homes throughout western Montana before his passing in 2011. Leonard, the Brooks’ younger son, was a carpenter at Brooks Construction and drove a bus for the former Mission Mountain Wood Band. He died in 2003. Grace was a dedicated gardener, cook, baker and seamstress. She passed away in 2013. Danny was a Vietnam veteran, and became a jack of many trades and a collector of hundreds of hats. It was his untimely death in February of this year that revealed a new depth of generosity from the Brooks family back to their community.

Habitat for Humanity’s connection to the Brooks goes back to the 1960s, when Russell and Don Livingston, a current Habitat Board member and volunteer, became life-long friends. Livingston worked for Russell building decks, carriage houses, music rooms, and many remodeling jobs from 2003 to 2009. Livingston and the Habitat family continued to be a part of Grace and Danny’s lives after Russell’s death. The extent of the Brook’s bequest came as a surprise to Livingston and Habitat, as it did to the other charitable organizations who received gifts. Habitat will honor the building legacy of the Brooks family in the building of homes for low income families.

(Continued)
The Brooks’ gift has also become a building gift for Missoula Food Bank. The Food Bank is constructing a new facility to provide a larger, more dignified space for nutrition programs that help one out of every six people who live in Missoula County. Missoula Food Bank will honor Grace’s passion for gardening, cooking and baking by naming the commercial kitchen in the new building in honor of her and her family.

It was a trusted advisor who connected the Brooks to the Foundation for Community Health’s predecessor organization in 2001. They asked CPA Dennis Minemyer for help with property use and tax issues, and they were interested in what they could do to care for children in the area. Minemyer worked with the Foundation on a charitable unitrust that helped them to address their tax needs and charitable goals. The Foundation’s relationship with the Brooks throughout the years has resulted in this generous unrestricted estate gift, which the Foundation will use to support its leadership of the Safe Kids Missoula Coalition and other initiatives.

The Brooks also relied on long-time friend, neighbor and banker, Bill Bouchee. Bouchee met Russell on a college summer construction job in 1963, and their relationship grew to that of neighbors for more than 35 years as well as business partners. The Brooks appointed Bouchee to serve as a personal representative for family needs and their estate. Bouchee noted, “The extent of their estate surprised most people, as Russell and Grace were ultra-conservative in their lifestyle and spending. They trusted in these organizations to care for our neighbors as they did.”

About Habitat for Humanity of Missoula
Habitat for Humanity of Missoula is a non-profit, ecumenical, Christian housing ministry dedicated to the elimination of poverty housing in our community and throughout the world. In Missoula, they seek land on which to build, partner with eligible families to build simple, decent, affordable homes, and education the community on poverty and housing.

PO Box 7181
Missoula, MT 59807
www.habitatmsla.org
406-549-8210
Noreen Humes, Executive Director
Noreen@habitatmsla.org

(Continued)
**About Missoula Food Bank**
Missoula Food Bank is a private, non-profit organization that addresses hunger in Missoula County by offering emergency food assistance to all individuals and families who come to them in need. In 2015, the organization served one in six people county wide through its choice-model pantry, rural satellite pantries and special programs serving children and seniors.

219 South Third Street West
Missoula, MT  59801
missoulafoodbank.org
406-549-0543
Aaron Brock, Executive Director
Contact Jessica Allred – jessica@missoulafoodbank.org

**About the Foundation for Community Health**
The mission of Foundation for Community Health is to provide philanthropic support for the advancement of healthy lives in Western Montana. The successor organization of Community Medical Center Foundation, Foundation for Community Health engages donors and volunteers in health and safety education through its leadership of the Safe Kids Missoula Coalition, Be Sun Smart melanoma and skin cancer awareness, healthcare scholarships, a health grants program and patient care and comfort work.

2831 Fort Missoula Rd, Ste 103
Missoula, MT  59804
fchwmt.org
406-926-2522
Dorcie Dvarishkis, Executive Director
dorcied@fchwmt.org