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NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Kay Wilson, Broadcast Media program specialist, (406) 243-4212.

MONTANA PUBLIC RADIO HOLDS ANNUAL FUND-RAISER

MISSOULA-

Montana Public Radio is holding its annual on-air fund-raiser, Public Radio Week, April 17-25. The theme for the event is "Montana Public Radio ... growing ... with a little help from our friends."

The growth referred to is the extension of public radio's broadcast signal to more than 100,000 additional Montanans via a new translator in **Dillon** and new transmitters in **Butte**, **Kalispell** and **Hamilton**. Another new transmitter is scheduled for installation in **Helena** this year. The "friends" mentioned are, of course, the listeners.

This year Public Radio Week begins at 6 p.m. Saturday, April 17, with "A Prairie Home Companion's Talent From Towns Under 2000 Show." It concludes nine days later with "Pet Wars," a popular program in which listeners pledge money in the names of their animal companions (living or dead). Pets' names are read on the air, each pledge garners that species one vote and all votes are tallied. At the end of the evening, either dogs or cats are declared the most popular pet. "Pet Wars" begins at 5 p.m. Sunday, April 25.

Asking for contributions to public radio in western Montana is different from other parts of the country. Here it means collecting premiums – "thank you" gifts for pledging – that can

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include everything from catnip plants, amber beer and tarot readings to llama manure, sailboat rides, cheesecakes and massages. What makes these premiums more unusual is that they come from listeners who love their station and want to be part of this springtime tradition.

At noon on Sunday, April 18, every premium that has been offered will be read on the air. Then on Sunday, April 25, there will be a final reading of all the premiums that have remained unclaimed.

Besides the opportunity to collect unusual gifts for pledging, listeners tune into Public Radio Week because of the asking-for-money part of the event. These broadcasts – full of gentle coaxing, cajoling and wheedling – are informative and punctuated with music, stories, conversations and special programming. Throughout the nine days, program hosts visit each other's shows, swap anecdotes, banter and remind listeners of the benefits of commercial-free broadcasting.

Even though it's commercial free, public radio is an expensive operation. This year's Public Radio Week goal is \$315,000. This amount, the most Montana Public Radio has ever asked for, is a sum that barely balances a budget that now includes expenditures for satellite fees and site leases for new stations.

Station personnel hope that many new listeners will join longtime supporters in showing their appreciation for Montana Public Radio's unique programs, which include jazz, blues, children's shows, in-depth news, folk and world music, literature, comedy, and commentaries.

The numbers to call during Public Radio Week are 243-6400 in the Missoula area and (800) 325-1565 outside the area.

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