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place on the planet.”*



BY JENNIFER VERZUH

“I no longer earn a paycheck, but I still have to earn my place on the planet,” Gretchen Rupp says of her extensive post-retirement volunteer work with local organizations.

Rupp retired a few years ago from her work as an environmental engineer. During her career, she worked at MSU for 27 years as an extension specialist, the Director of the Montana Water Center and a faculty member.

“I really enjoy[ed] working with graduate students,” she said of her time there.

Even before retiring though, Rupp found time to serve the Bozeman community.

In the past 34 years, she’s been a part of over a dozen local, state and national committees, primarily that deal with water resources. She additionally served on the Montana State Trail Advisory Committee

in the 90s, the Bozeman Parks Opens Spaces and Trails Committee from 1998-2000 and the Gallatin City-County Board of Health as chair during the 2010s.

Currently, she’s an Executive Committee member of Osher Lifelong Learn Institute (OLLI) and is the chair of the Montana Native Plants Society’s (MNPS) local Valley of the Flowers Chapter, in addition to serving as a volunteer tax return preparer for the AARP Foundation TaxAide Program.

The latter is a position that offers “instant gratification” given how thankful people are for the services they provide.

OLLI offers courses, seminars and trips geared towards seniors, which Rupp said is important as it helps folks “keep their brains nimble.” In her role with the organization she helps develop and direct policies.

A self-described “avid naturalist,” Rupp acted as the former state president of the Montana Native Plants Society for several years before settling into her current role for the organization, which involves organizing activities.

As a devoted vegetable gardener, it was a natural fit for her to get involved with the group

“Most years I am the ‘tomato lady,’” she said. “Last year I had 15 kinds of tomatoes.”

In addition to being an “expert gardener,” according to Sharon Eversman, who nominated her for this award, she’s a “tireless, selfless organizer and participant in the activities of... MNPS and OLLI.”

*Gretchen Rupp*