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REGIONAL NEWS

Livingston's Mission Field wins Airport of the Year Award

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Jerri Miller has been secretary to Livingston and Park County's joint airport board for 22 years.

In that time, she's seen six chair changes and at least four complete changes of the board, which oversees Mission Field near Livingston.

But she has not seen the board get much recognition for its work.

"I've watched the airport change," she said. "It's an excellent, excellent small airport."

This year, the aeronautics division of the Montana Department of Transportation agreed, awarding Mission Field its Airport of the Year Award.

The award, which is the result of a competitive application process, is given to an airport dedicated to being a safe part of the nation's airport network, according to Debbie Alke, MDT aeronautics division administrator.

Safety is part of all the functions of a community airport, which provides space for personal, agricultural, military and forest service use -- and houses 25 airplanes.

"Small airports (including Mission Field) play a huge role in wildland firefighting," Alke explained.

Mission Field was nominated by Robert Peccia Associates, the engineering firm contracted by the airport board in numerous construction projects over the last 20 years.

Most recently, the runways were rebuilt and the ramp area was expanded last summer to accommodate heavier aircraft and larger chartered jets. The work was made possible by funding from the Federal Aviation Administration and Montana Aeronautics Division.

"In the last five years we've redone all the paved areas," said Kerry LaDuke, airport board chairman.

The award was presented at the Montana Aviation Conference on March 2.

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