



GREAT CONVERSATIONS 2022

WEDNESDAY

NOVEMBER 16, 2022

GREAT NORTHERN CONFERENCE CENTER

CONNECT. SHARE. DELIGHT IN CONVERSATION.

AN EVENING OF INVIGORATING DISCUSSION BROUGHT TO YOU
BY THE HELENA EDUCATION FOUNDATION



PLEASE JOIN US
FOR DINNER AND A

GREAT CONVERSATION!

**WEDNESDAY,
NOVEMBER 16, 2022**

GREAT NORTHERN
CONFERENCE CENTER

5:30 p.m. Reception

6:30 p.m. Dinner

**Brought to you by the
Helena Education Foundation**

Proceeds and donations offset the cost of this event and ensure this program will continue to benefit the Helena community.

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RESERVE YOUR CONVERSATION

1. Review the exciting list of Great Conversations on this invitation, or at hefmt.org, and **select four different conversations** as your top choices.
2. Complete the form on page 10, including names, **four different topic choices**, and email addresses for each attendee. You are guaranteed placement at one of your four choices.
3. Mail your reservation, or register online at hefmt.org. **We must receive your registration and payment by Thursday, November 10, 2022.**
4. Reservations and topics are first-come, first-served and are not processed until payment is received. Book early to save your spot! **Call us for student discount information: (406) 443-2545.**

We kindly request your email address so that we can confirm your reservation AND keep you informed about future Helena Education Foundation events.

SHARED HISTORY

1. Communists? of Northeastern Montana? The Northeastern section of Montana was once called “The Red Corner”. And Plentywood was “Little Moscow”. Who knew? Who were the promoters of communism in Northeastern Montana? What is communism, really, and why was Northeastern Montana seemingly open to it? Explore this history with [Bonnie Bowler](#), a retired Helena Public Schools Latin teacher and history enthusiast whose grandfather was a newspaper editor in Northeastern Montana in the ‘20s and ‘30s. Bonnie deeply regrets that she never asked him about his part in this controversial and largely hidden history.

2. Deep Roots Dig into Montana’s ancient Native American history with [Carl Davis](#) who worked as a Forest Service archaeologist for 35 years, retiring as the Regional Archaeologist, Northern Region. The author of *Six Hundred Generations: An Archaeological History of Montana*, Carl will relay the state’s deep Indigenous history that, until recently, was not widely available to the public. What does archaeology tell us about Montana’s Indigenous peoples, and why is this history important to educational curricula and public discourse? What is the relationship of archaeology to Montana’s Indigenous peoples and tribal nations?

3. From Rocky Shores to Rocky Mountains Rich agricultural lands, good wages for hard work, and plenty of space made Montana a haven for the Irish. The Irish came to Montana, worked hard, and left a lasting impact on the state. [Ellen Crain](#) recently retired after 32 years as the Director of the Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives. She oversaw the construction of the new Archives faculty and its programming. Join her to discuss the Irish immigrants’ daunting journey to the West and their influence on the culture of Montana.

4. The Legislature and the Constitution Montanans recently celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the Montana Constitutional Convention. Wonder what we have learned in those 50 years? [Susan Fox](#) recently retired after working with Montana’s Legislature since 1989, beginning as a member of session staff and ending as Executive Director of Legislative Services. With both breadth and depth of knowledge about our Legislature and the Montana Constitution, Susan is the perfect guide to discuss the relationship between the two, our current situation, and where we may go from here.

5. Telling a Shared Story How do you tell a story that is not your own? From covering health and human services in the Montana Free Press newsroom and producing the collaborative Shared State podcast with Montana Public Radio and Yellowstone Public Radio, [Mara Silvers](#) is one journalist trying to tell Montana’s stories. Join her to learn how she balances the differing memories, needs, and perspectives of her subjects to build stories of our shared history and state. Mara is a Helena High alum who has also worked as a producer at Slate and the WNYC newsroom.

CURIOSITY, INNOVATION AND THE HUMAN BRAIN

6. Cultivating Curiosity and Creativity Are curiosity and creativity something even adults can learn? Are some people just more curious than others? What holds us back from reaching our creative potential? [Cindy Greiman](#) is a self-taught artist, nature journalist, nature photographer, bird watcher, researcher, blogger, and occasional mandolin and piano player. She claims she's not particularly great at any of these, but that wondering if she can do something, and then trying it, or searching for the answer to something she's curious about has brought a lot of joy—especially as she gets older!

7. Saving Seeds The Svalbard Global Seed Vault in Norway safeguards 1,145,693 seed varieties from almost every country in the world. But this so-called “Doomsday Vault” is intended as “back-up” for the 1,000 plus other gene banks collecting seeds for the future. [Andrea Lawrence](#) is a retired database manager for the National Laboratory for Genetic Resources Preservation in Fort Collins, Colorado. Learn from her about current seed storage and plant grow out sites, facilities, and research within the United States and around the globe.

8. New Discoveries from the Webb Enjoy an out-of-this-world evening with [Kelly Cline](#) who earned his Ph.D. in astrophysics at the University of Colorado Boulder and teaches math, physics, and astronomy at Carroll College. Discuss the Webb Telescope's remarkable images and hear Kelly's take on the innovation: Why is the Webb Space Telescope an improvement over the Hubble? How does it work exactly? And what has it told us about the universe and how it began?

9. Playful Learning If you watch a child bouncing a ball alone, or playing in a sandbox with others, or having a conversation with an imaginary friend, do you realize that you're seeing creativity spark, the ability to work in a group germinate, and so much more? Play develops skills that allow children to thrive, now and into their future. [Kristina Dukart](#) is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Registered Play Therapist. She knows that play IS learning. Join her to learn more and perhaps have some fun as you do.

10. Identity Puzzles We all have a sense of self. We use phrases like “I” and “myself”. What is it that gives us a stable sense of identity over time? Is it our memories, our bodies, our souls, our moral commitments, or something else? Is it possible that the self is an illusion: a useful fiction, but a fiction all the same? In conversation with [Ed Glowienka](#), Central School father and Associate Professor of Philosophy at Carroll College, you'll explore human intuitions about selfhood and various philosophical approaches to the issue.

11. Games for Brains Love brain games like Wordle, crosswords, chess, or Wait Wait, Don't Tell me? This is your table! [Alan Zackheim](#), a certified geek according to reality television, will talk math puzzles, logic puzzles, word puzzles, all sorts of nerd puzzles! A product of the Helena Public Schools, Harvard College, and the University of Montana Law School, and proud father of two Helena school kids, Alan says he's “an enthusiast not an expert and enthusiasm is valued higher than skill at this table.”

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH ANIMALS

12. First Friends We all know who man's (and woman's) best friend is. Dog lovers abound. We meet on trails, at the dog park, and at breweries as well. Would you like to better understand this human and canine bond? Is your interest piqued by AKC breeds, the 1000 breeds and landraces worldwide, or would you like to dabble in the dog/dingo debate? **Molly Sumridge**, an assistant professor of Anthrozoology at Carroll College, will guide conversation about dogs with an identity crisis and why this matters to the history of human-canine relationships.

13. Beyond the Veil: Animal Encounters Human encounters with animals can create meaning in the face of uncertainty. **Annie Connole's** 2021 book, *The Spring: a Mythic Memoir*, tells a story of death and rebirth through the lens of mystical animal encounters. Conversation with Annie will range from the way myths attach meaning to animals, to how animal encounters manifest both in the wild and in dreams, to why many experience visitations from the dead in the form of animals, to how these encounters provide a sense of comfort and belonging.

14. What's Killing the Bees? Honey bees' work is valued at approximately \$17 billion annually! Unfortunately, for the past 10 years, honey bee colony losses have approached 38 percent per year. Associate Professor in the Plant Sciences Department at Montana State University **Michelle Flenniken** is investigating honey bee host-pathogen interactions. Join this MSU microbiologist and co-director of MSU's Pollinator Health Center for an exciting conversation on what's affecting honey bee colony health and the importance of basic and applied science to address this important global challenge.

15. African Gorillas, Rhinos and Wildebeests Join Helena travelers **Ann and Ron Waterman** for a photo tour and stories of their recent adventure, starting with the mountain gorillas in the Impenetrable rainforest in Uganda, then moving to the plains of Kenya to view black and white rhinos and the melee of African animals, and ending in "the Mara" and the Serengeti for the start of the Great Migration, a million and a half wildebeests, zebras, and predators making the world's largest migration in pursuit of water and grass.

16. "Raven" about Corvids From 'spark bird' experiences to the importance of eBird, and everything about Corvids, **Will Sebern** is hooked on birds and eager to share. Also an excellent photographer, Will can share some of his work, as well as tips for you (IG @sandwillcrane). He enjoys traveling the country to observe new birds as much as he revels in counting the birds hanging out within 30 feet of his front porch. Originally from Wisconsin, Will now lives in Missoula with his wife, Katie, and their dog, Towhee (yeah, named after the bird).

HUMAN INSTITUTIONS, NETWORKS, AND COMMUNICATION

17. Journalism as a Public Necessity Our founders secured the free exercise of the press in the very first amendment to our Constitution. **Darrell Ehrlick**, editor-in-chief of the Daily Montanan, is here to discuss why journalism is a public necessity! That's a weighty term, but he's right. Journalists tell us what is going on in the world, in our state, in our communities, in our schools. Their editorials can tell us how some think about what's going on—leaving us the responsibility to absorb both facts and opinions and make our own decisions.

18. Voting in Community Join **Ella Smith**, Program Director of Montana Women Vote, for a discussion about voting: Is voting a privilege? A right? A responsibility? All of the above? What motivates us to show up? What are the urgent barriers and pressures in our community? How is civic life connected to the barriers and pressures we experience? How can we actually change things in our communities? Ella was born in Helena and has worked on numerous progressive political and issue campaigns before joining Montana Women Vote in 2018.

19. Talking With Your Idols Ever met a favorite author and found yourself tongue-tied? **Lauren Korn** is the former Director of the Montana Book Festival and current Arts and Culture Producer at Montana Public Radio where she hosts the literature-based radio program and podcast, "The Write Question". She has interviewed everyone from James Lee Burke to Barry Lopez to Stephanie Land. Learn her secrets about how she prepares for interviews and how she records and produces the final interview episodes. Book and public radio lovers alike will be rewarded!

20. Hometown News Matters The *Acantha* was established in 1894 in Dupuyer; it later became the *Choteau Acantha* and has been published continuously for 119 years, thanks to **Melody Martinsen** and her husband Jeff who purchased the paper in 1990. Join Melody for a conversation about the history, the present, and the future of the local paper. Melody also teaches a class on writing obituaries—"How to Have the Last Word"—ask for tips on that too!

21. And Gladly Teach? Teacher burnout is a big topic. Not just due to Covid but because the demands on our teachers are ever-evolving. After a 38-year career in education, **Mary Sheehy Moe** "retired" and ran successfully for school board, the Montana Senate, and the Great Falls City Commission. In every position, she has been a staunch advocate for free, quality public education. In 2019, she began interviewing teachers about the demands of the profession. Discover what she has learned and how we can support educators, the mainstay of our community.

22. The Internet Never Forgets Intentionally or not, we post a lot of private information on social media or through texts and other messaging apps. Are you well-versed in privacy settings, oblivious to them, or somewhere in between? [Katie Sullivan](#) serves in the Montana Legislature representing House District 89 of Missoula. She is also an attorney who specializes in intellectual property law (patents, trademarks, and copyrights). Join her to better understand some privacy risks (for kids and adults), how others collect and use your information, and how you can protect yourself.

23. What Just Happened? By the time we dine together on November 16th, it will be a week past Election Day. What might we know then about our legislature; who will be our Representatives in Congress and what does all of this portend for the immediate future and the next few years? [Lee Banville](#) will lead you through the maze. He describes himself as “a poor fly fisherman and mediocre curler”, but he also is the Director of UM’s School of Journalism where he has taught since 2009.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE COMMON GOOD

24. Are We There Yet? It’s time for a checkup on the goal of equality for women. How does where women stand in 2022 compare with the Institution for Women’s Policy Research’s Status of Women in the States: 2004 report? Senator [Diane Sands](#) is in her 16th year in the Montana Legislature as senator for Missoula. A retired MT historian and member of Governor Bullock’s Pay Equity Task Force, Diane is well positioned to discuss the progress and set-backs in the fight for gender equity.

25. The Right to Unionize Union organizing campaigns at corporations like Starbucks and Amazon have highlighted employers’ union-busting activities. But the Starbucks and Amazon stories are just the tip of the iceberg. An estimated 90%+ of union-busting in the United States goes unreported. [Bob Funk](#) is the Executive Director of LaborLab, a nonprofit watchdog organization that tracks and reports on the union-busting industry. Engage him in a discussion about the right to form a union and ways to hold employers accountable for union-busting.

26. Tending to Ukraine Most Helenans read about the war in Ukraine online, but [Valerie Hellerman](#), a retired Helena RN, delivered medical care to internally displaced people in western Ukraine. Come hear what she experienced: war stories she heard, the anxiety of sitting in bomb shelters, specifics about the medication shortages, and other details that illuminate the toll of war. As the Executive Director of Hands on Global and a project manager for Helena Afghan Refugee Resettlement Team, Valerie has broad experience serving people around the globe that will inform and inspire.

27. How Do You Change Hearts and Minds? It's easier now than ever to share our opinions, but that hasn't made us better at doing so. Why are our country's debates so polarizing? **Garrett Bucks** is the founder of the Barnraisers Project which trains folks living in majority-White communities to organize their neighbors to fight racism and come together for the common good. Join him to learn concrete methods for engaging in conversations about a better way forward. Hailing from Clancy, MT, Garrett writes the popular *White Pages* newsletter and has a book forthcoming.

28. The Hacker Next Door Podcast host and journalist **Jeremy N. Smith** expected a normal pickup at his daughter's preschool. Then he asked a fellow parent what she did for a living. "Well....," she said. "Tomorrow morning, I have to break into a bank." Intrigued, Smith spent three years researching and reporting on the hidden world of "white hat" hackers hired to test security—or track bad guys who'd already broken in. Join Jeremy to discuss real-world hackers for "good": ransomware negotiators, professional lock pickers, hactivists, hacker couples raising hacker kids, and more.

MUSIC AND DRINK

29. Amaro Like There's No Tomorrow Ever eat too much and wish for something to settle the stomach? Try Amaro! Bitter flavors activate your digestive system and can have a restorative effect. Amaro is the Italian word for "bitter," and Amari are herbal liquors traditionally served as a digestive. Gulch Distillers' Burrone Fernet—an Amaro—was one of the first modern Fernet's made in America. **Steffen Rasile** self-describes as a bitter person, but as co-owner of Gulch Distillers, he's put his temperament to good use. Join him to sample a little and learn a lot!

30. The Un-Common Sense of John Prine John Prine's music is...well, legendary—with wit, whimsy and devastatingly relatable, everyday, working class characters. **Tim Joyce** brings decades of Midwestern living to this John Prine conversation as well as a healthy steeping in the waters of Chicago's music and comedy scenes, having made Chicago's Old Town School of Folk Music his home away from home (aka workplace) for the last 22 years. And for Better or Worse, he can't wait to explore the work and life of John Prine with his new neighbors in Helena.

31. Lager, Ale, Pilsner, Stout Jack Nicholson claims, "Beer, it's the best damn drink in the world!" As breweries abound in our community, it seems many agree. **Kyle Klock**, who is in charge of sales and production for three Montana breweries, developed an early interest in the beer business as his parents owned a tavern. A Harlowton native and spouse of the Bryant School principal, Kyle has a wealth of details about beer—history, ingredients, brewing process, different styles. What more could you ask? "Samples!" you say? We'll have those too!



Reserve your Conversation

• Choose your four *different* topics.

• Register online at hefmt.org

or mail the form below with your payment to:

Helena Education Foundation ★ PO Box 792 ★ Helena, MT 59624

RESERVATION FORM

Name: _____

Email: _____

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Table choices (Select 4): A. _____ B. _____ C. _____ D. _____

Name: _____

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Phone: _____

Table choices (Select 4): A. _____ B. _____ C. _____ D. _____

☐ Please check here if you would like to be seated at the same table.

Enclose \$75 for each reservation. HEF is a nonprofit charitable organization and depends on donations to provide services and programs.

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☐ I can't participate, but want to support the HEF with a tax-deductible donation of \$ _____

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**THE TIES THAT BIND US:
WHAT CONNECTS US AS HUMANS?**

JOIN US IN PURSUIT OF THE ANSWER
AT GREAT CONVERSATIONS 2022



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