



GREAT Conversations

Wednesday, November 20, 2024

GREAT NORTHERN CONFERENCE CENTER

Connecting builds community

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

PLEASE JOIN US
FOR DINNER AND A

GREAT CONVERSATION!

WEDNESDAY,
NOVEMBER 20, 2024

GREAT NORTHERN CONFERENCE CENTER

5:30 p.m. Reception



6:30 p.m. Dinner

Brought to you by the
Helena Education Foundation

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continue to benefit the Helena community.

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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 14, 2024.**
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We kindly request your email address so that we can confirm your reservation AND keep you informed about future Helena Education Foundation events.

Connecting with the Past

1. Teaching Dolphins Arapaho UM Professor [Neyooxet Greymorning](#) has developed a method of teaching language that he believes in so strongly, he's willing to bet that dolphins can prove its efficacy. His method, Accelerated Second Language Acquisition, arose from his work to rejuvenate Indigenous languages and led him to the Bahamas to find dolphin pupils. Over the course of dinner with him, you'll hear about his concern for endangered indigenous languages, his trials with dolphins, and you may come away with a few words in Arapaho too!

2. Echoes in Temple Emanu-El The Montana Jewish Project reacquired historic (1891) Temple Emanu-El in Helena—the oldest synagogue in much of the intermountain west— in 2022, returning it to Jewish community ownership for the first time since 1935. This building anchors us to a part of American, Montana, and Jewish histories too often forgotten—the roles Jews played in creating and contributing to Helena and Montana. [Rebecca Stanfel](#), co-founder of the Montana Jewish Project, serves as MJP's Executive Director. This former journalist has stories to share of the long and vibrant history of Jewish life in Helena.

3. The Politics of Remembrance How is the Vietnam war remembered by the Vietnamese and the Vietnamese diaspora? [Quan Manh Ha](#), Professor of American literature at UM, translates fiction by Vietnamese authors into English to help Anglophone readers understand the Vietnam War from the Vietnamese perspective. Fiction writer [Cab Tran](#) was born in Vietnam and emigrated to the United States with his parents during the diaspora. Join them to discuss the censorship on remembrance and forgetting and whether reconciliation can be achieved.

4. What's New about Montana History? Our Museum! The new Montana Heritage Center will open in 2025. What are you hoping to see? How will the exhibits include diverse voices and perspectives? This long anticipated celebration of Montana and Montanans will offer immersive and interactive experiences to take you back decades, centuries and more. [Martha Kohl](#) is the Outreach and Education Program manager and the author of *Montana: A History of Our Home* and *I Do: A Cultural History of Montana Weddings*. Martha's conversation offers a sneak peek to what is coming soon in a museum near you!

5. Mud and Water Archaeologist [Steven Aaberg](#) has been busy extracting fact from lore. Come hear about his research into two post-civil war Montana characters: Alonzo S. Reed and Johnson J. Bowles who at once were cast as villains and heroes, murderers and saviors, and drunks and lionhearts. Archaeological excavations of Reed and Bowles' post (1874-1880) led to inquiries into their lives and events at their lair on Big Spring Creek near Lewistown. Excavating the soil of the archaeological site turned out to be far easier than removing the dust of fable that covered the real story of Reed and Bowles.

Connecting with Our Environment

6. Stewardship: A Multi-Generational Legacy Ranch and a Changing Climate Legacy family ranches face myriad challenges: growing family, changing labor force, commodity markets, changing climate. [Cooper Hibbard](#), president of Sieben Live Stock Company, will discuss some of the approaches they're taking on their generational Montana family ranch to build resilience in the soil, animals, people, and the business. Cooper studied Agricultural Business, Rangeland Resources, and Spanish at Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo, and spent 4 years traveling the world working on ranches. He is the 5th generation to manage the family ranch outside Cascade, MT, where he lives with his wife and two children.

7. Volunteer Firefighters, Psychologists, Pro-athletes and Performers? When you call 911 outside city limits in Montana, the people who respond as firefighters and Emergency Medical Technicians are usually volunteers. Providing the public with competent performance on-scene while dealing with limited training time and funding is a challenge for emergency services around the world. What lessons can we use from Psychology research in pro sports and the performing arts to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of our critical volunteer responders? [Lyn Stimpson](#) is the Regional Fire Training Manager for Southwestern Montana for the MSU Fire Services Training School and the Fire Chief of the Montana City Volunteer Fire Department.

8. Continental Divide Trail What's the Continental Divide Trail (CDT)? Who hikes it? What's the experience like? What compels people to do these kinds of massive treks? [Cate Stumberg](#) grew up in Helena and four years ago bought the historic general store in Elliston, MT. A big part of her business in the summer is working with CDT hikers who use the store as a spot to camp and refuel. She hiked the Camino De Santiago in Spain years ago and has a soft spot for thru hikers. They are some of her favorite customers.

9. Are PFAS Really Forever? What are Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), and why are they so often in the news? Follow the story from PFAS development to their widespread use and eventual regulation. Learn about PFAS in Montana and about the wider discussion of synthetic chemistry and what consumers can do to inform themselves on the myriad chemicals found in food and every day products. [Terri Dorrington](#) has a BS in Chemistry, a PhD in Neuroscience and currently oversees the Tanks, Brownfields and Federal Facilities Bureau and is the co-chair of Montana's PFAS Working Group.

10. What on Earth Is Silage? Fermented livestock feed is just one part of Montana's rural life that people raised in urban areas know nothing about. Other topics of general ignorance include why wheat can be soft or hard; where Montana's energy comes from; the difference between rodeos and *O-Mok-See* events, and why it's better to be a bull than a steer. Join suburbs-raised [Tom Dickson](#), longtime editor of the award-winning *Montana Outdoors*, in a discussion about why it might be important for all of us—ranch kids and city slickers alike—to learn about Montana's often-ignored working landscapes and the people who live in them.

Connecting with Each Other

11. Portraying your Pals Interested in the ethics of telling personal stories? Talk with Blackfeet Nation citizen and Bitterroot Salish descendent, [Brooke Swaney](#), a professional filmmaker who tells contemporary Indigenous stories. Some of her work has focused on her friends. Her first feature documentary, *Daughter of a Lost Bird*, followed adoptee Kendra Mylnechuk's journey to reconnect with her tribal roots. Recently, Brooke completed a short documentary profiling her friend and Best Actress Oscar nominee, *Lily Gladstone: Far Out There*, and notably she and her co-writer made the Blacklist's Inaugural Indigenous List with a half-hour comedy pilot *Tinder on the Rez*.

12. The Primary Problem Noting record high polarization and record low trust in government, a politically diverse group of Montanans proposed structural reforms to get our political system back on track: CI-126 and 127. Join two of those reform advocates to discuss the hurdles they faced and the need to strengthen our bipartisan social ties. [Frank Garner](#) is a retired Police Chief from Kalispell who served 4 terms in the Montana House of Representatives. [Allison Dale-Riddle](#) has worked in politics for 20 years; she has a PhD in Political Science and specializes in political psychology, program evaluation, and data analysis.

13. What's LOVE Got to Do with It? Join [Tim Nichols](#) for a lively discussion all about love, one of the most powerful forces in human life. We'll consider research, history, philosophy, literature and creative works, share personal experiences, and discuss ways in which we might respond to bell hooks' call to live a love ethic and to build a culture of love. Tim is Dean of the Davidson Honors College at the University of Montana where, among other things, he teaches a popular interdisciplinary honors course on Love.

14. Family Roles and Dinner Rolls: Family Dynamics and the Holidays Going home for the holidays can conjure images of fireside singalongs and poring over scrapbooks, laughing at childhood foibles, or of Uncle Chad tossing his napkin at your mother and storming out of the room. [Dr. Heather Zaluski](#), a local child psychiatrist, will lead a conversation about family roles, focusing on family gatherings at the holidays. The "trauma triangle" can manifest in different ways within a family so pick up some strategies for navigating these complex dynamics as peacefully as possible; we all want to make it through to dessert!

15. Housing for Everyone, Everywhere, All at Once Ensuring access to safe, affordable housing for all is a central focus of conversations around land use and zoning, from the local to the state and federal levels of government. Talk with Senior Planner for the City of Helena [Ellie Ray](#) about the City of Helena's programs, policies, and codes that seek to preserve and expand housing stock for residents of all ages, abilities, and income levels. Ellie has 12 years of experience in the realm of land use planning. She previously worked as a regional planner in Vermont.

16. Creek or Crick? Language is closely connected with identity. The way we speak can reveal a lot (our age, ethnicity, where we grew up). Because Montana is uniquely situated at the edge of geographic, sociopolitical and linguistic borders, exploring the dialects of English spoken here is exciting. **Leora Bar-el** is a professor of Linguistics at the University of Montana. In addition to research interests in Indigenous languages of North America, Bantu languages of Tanzania and Montana English, she is passionate about dispelling myths about language and promoting an appreciation of linguistic diversity.

Connecting with Yourself

17. Beyond Shirley Temples, NA Cocktails Have Grown Up... NA cocktails are rising in popularity thanks to the sober-curious. Why is **Steffen Rasile**, owner of Gulch Distillers, interested in NA cocktails? Because they can be just as delicious as a spirituous drink! A Great Conversations fan favorite, Steffen is back for another “Great Demonstration!” This time you’ll want to join his table to sip Phony Negronis and other NA concoctions. Steffen is best known for marrying Julia Gustafson. He is a beverage enthusiast and fact spewer.

18. When the World Is Going to Hell, It’s Important to Do Your Hair **Tony Wilson**, a cosmetology instructor at Helena College, is here to encourage you to show up for life, even in the face of external turmoil. Join Tony to celebrate the empowering benefits of grooming including that it boosts confidence, reduces stress and anxiety, provides time to focus on you, signals professionalism and resilience in the midst of chaos, and offers others a symbol of hope and optimism. Tony has been in the field almost 20 years and owned his own salon for 13 years.

19. There Is an ‘T’ in Team, but Not Like You Think! **Jesse Zentz** is a “runner whisperer.” A record number of students are on the HHS Cross country team this fall. Why? Jesse’s “Just for Her” initiative emphasizes that individuals’ contributions to a team can have as much or more impact than the team’s impact on the individuals. “Team” sports like cross country and track and field present participants with unique opportunities to develop life skills. A Billings native, Jesse ran cross country and track and field in high school and college and is in his fifth year as head girls cross country and track and field coach.

20. Awakening Your Life Sigmund Freud called dreams “the royal road to the unconscious.” Join **Jay Dufrechou** for a discussion on working with your dreams employing Jeremy Taylor’s “If it were my dream?” method. Jay has a Ph.D. in transpersonal psychology and has taught courses in what could be called the spiritual branch of psychology. He now works primarily as Director of Grof Legacy Training USA, assisting psychiatrist Stanislav Grof in the national and international development of transpersonal training programs. Bring one of your dreams to the table!

Connecting with the Culture

21. Organic, Biodynamic, and Natural: Let's Talk about...Wine! Join **Jill Roberts**, co-owner of The Hawthorn Bottle Shop and Tasting Room, to talk about the definitions and practices of Organic, Biodynamic, & Natural wine (along with ORANGE wine & Pet-Nat and other current and questionable categories) and discuss the winemaking impact on our bodies and the earth. Oh—And we will also taste examples of each! Jill is a certified Sommelier who worked in the wine industry in New York City for over 15 years.

22. Making Movies in the West These days, a Western begins when the production team rides into town (not usually on a trusty steed). After earning his BA in Film Production and his MFA in Media arts, **Dan Molloy** gained industry experience in L.A., then moved back to Montana where he has worked on *Yellowstone*, *1883*, *Mickey And the Bear* and many independent films, primarily as an Assistant Director or Location Manager. He'll discuss the "myths" about film productions and the effects on communities state-wide. Ask for tips on how to get involved, or for best pics filmed in the American West.

23. Leather, Wool, Silk and Feathers "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants," Michael Pollen writes in *In Defense of Food*. But what about the other things we consume: water, clothing, energy, and even information? How do we become more aware of the sources and costs of what we buy, and what can we do to cause less harm? **Melissa Kwasny** is a former Montana Poet Laureate and the author of seven books of poetry. Her nonfiction book *Putting on the Dog: The Animal Origins of What We Wear*, explores the cultural, labor, and environmental histories of clothing materials provided by animals.

24. Baked Goods, Books and... Boobs! Discussing Dolly Come talk about the multifaceted and talented Dolly Parton! From her legendary music, Dollywood theme park and resorts, Imagination Library, collaborations with Duncan Hines, wines, and beauty products, her contagious energy is both inspiring and invigorating. **Jason Burnett** currently works at The Archie Bray Foundation as the Events and Exhibitions Manager. A previous Gold Season Pass member to Dollywood, Jason and his husband Michael lived in Dolly's hometown of Sevier County, TN. Have you listened to *Dolly Parton's America* podcast? He'll be sure to tell you all about it!

25. Bird Lore From the hummingbird to the emu, birds have carried symbolic and reflective meaning since the beginning of our story-telling days. Novelist Graeme Gibson's new "bird book" expounds—"Birds had been around for more than 150 million years by the time humans appeared on the scene. We came to self-awareness surrounded by them..." **Virginia Reeves** teaches at Helena College, where she founded the oral storytelling project, Necessary Narratives, and is the author of *Work Like Any Other*, longlisted for the 2016 Man Booker Prize, and *The Behavior of Love*. Birds show up regularly in her fiction.

26. Trailblazer on the Basketball Court [Megan Harrington](#) is a Senior Producer at Family Theater Productions and was born and raised in Missoula, MT. Claim a seat at her table to learn how the story of *Native Ball* came to life, what historical impact the film has had, and more about the making of this documentary following former Lady Griz, Blackfeet Nation's Malia Kipp and her journey blazing trails for later Indigenous, female athletes. *Native Ball* received the MINT award for "Best Made in Montana Film," and the "Programmers' Choice Award for Best Short" at the Cleveland International Film Festival.

Connecting with the Kids

27. Are Our Kids Really Alright? It seems like news sources weekly, if not daily, present a cascade of stories about adolescent mental health. Social media, social isolation and the range of circumstances and events outside of their control, contribute to a sharp decline in kids' sense of wellbeing and capacity to cope. [Kevin Flatow](#), a Middle School Counselor at HMS, a Football Coach (HHS), and HS & Collegiate Basketball Official, spends most of his time helping Helena kids navigate the choppy waters of adolescence. Join him to explore strategies and avenues for better supporting our most precious resource.

28. Let the Kids Read! Youth Book Bans vs The Right to Read The conversation around banning books from schools and public libraries has been heated, and nowhere more so than in the teen section. This discussion will take a look at some of the banned books we love, the books that opened our eyes and our hearts, and why the right to read is at the center of what libraries do. On the way to becoming the Teen Services Librarian at Lewis and Clark Library, [Emmon Rogers](#) presented at libraries from New Zealand to Uzbekistan. She was born on skis, and raised in conservation, libraries, and sports.

29. Public Money for Private Schools? Recent efforts attempting to redirect public funds from our public K12 system toward funding a separate private system are the beginnings of school privatization in MT. This same story has played out in many other states. Join [Rob Watson](#), Executive Director of the School Administrators of Montana, to discuss what we can learn from the school voucher game that has happened elsewhere and how we can avoid it in Montana. Rob has served in public education for more than 30 years—most recently as the Superintendent in Missoula and Bozeman.

30. Being Smart about SmartPhones These siblings, both educators, teach in two different Montana districts. One district has a cell phone ban, the other does not. Sit down with them to consider the impact of cell phones on student engagement, cell phones as educational resources, addressing challenges and developing policies, and ethical considerations and digital citizenship. [Joey Buyske](#) teaches digital literacy, computer science, and engineering to middle school students in Billings. [Meghan Schulte](#) is a former English teacher and now Intervention Instructional Coach at Helena High.

Connecting Beyond the Stateline

31. Israel, Hamas and the Future of the Middle East We all have so many questions! What motivated Hamas to attack Israel? What are the objectives of the Israeli government? How will this war end? What are the prospects for an expanded Middle East war? Table leader **Owen Sirrs** teaches international security affairs for the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Center at the University of Montana. Previously, he was a senior analyst on the Middle East for the Defense Intelligence Agency. He has authored several books, including *Iran's Qods Force: Proxy Wars, Terrorism, and the War on America*.

32. A Trip to Antarctica (On a Small Sailboat) In January, 2024, **Ron and Ann Waterman** took the adventure of a lifetime, flying to the tip of Chile then across the Drake Passage to King George Island, sailing to the Antarctic Peninsula and then working their way down the peninsula. They saw more than 120 whales, numerous seals, and more than a half million penguins hatching chicks. Learn more about the penguin chicks' journey, as well as Ron and Ann's journey, while dining with these seasoned travelers.

33. The Changing Landscape of Political Coverage How well did the media cover the 2024 campaign? How is journalism changing? Where can we find news we can trust? Join **Ann Compton**, whose 41 years as a journalist spanned seven presidential administrations and ten presidential campaigns. She was the first woman assigned to cover the White House on a full-time basis by a network television news organization, and she was one of the youngest to receive the assignment. The breadth of her experience will offer a riveting perspective in the aftermath of the 2024 election.

34. The Constitution Didn't Plan for Clicks Internet platforms, including YouTube, Instagram, X, Roblox, and Discord rely on strong protections provided by the First Amendment and federal law that largely prevent them from being responsible for the content on their products. We'll talk about the ways that governments have tried, and largely failed, to create requirements for platforms. We'll also look at some edge-cases to tease out where the limits of free speech bump up against the harms online content can cause. **Anderson Heiman** is a former senior staffer for the US Senate and a tech policy consultant.

35. Central Banks and the Fed: Are They Really that Important? The Federal Reserve and interest rates—a topic that's been hard to avoid in the media lately, and even harder to not have an opinion about. But how important is the Fed, really? Who came up with the idea in the first place? Is the Fed just another central bank? And was Jerome Powell really born at the bottom of Lake Powell? All questions worth considering! **Antonio Skarica** is a development specialist for a large global institution, and a self-proclaimed macroeconomics nerd.



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