

STATE OF THE ARTS

MONTANA ARTS COUNCIL



BE THE LIGHT

By Eric Heidle

Be the Light arrives at the darkest hinge of the year, when winter settles deep and many of us feel the weight of it in our bones. In this intimate gathering of voices from across Montana, artists and neighbors answer a simple question with hard-earned honesty. Where has art shown up when life felt heaviest?

The stories are small and powerful. Laughter in a Helena theater after loss. Jazz drifting from a Butte living room. A mural painted for a town that needed color. Songs sung through grief.

Quilts stitched, gardens tended, photographs taken, simply to keep going.

Editor Eric Heidle threads these moments together with care, reminding us that art does not fix everything. It does something quieter and more lasting. It steadies us. It opens a door. It makes space for breath and connection when words fall short.

In the long Montana winter, these pages glow...

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INSIDE



Blackfeet winter storytelling carries knowledge, values, and survival wisdom through long nights of shared tradition.

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Montana Poet Laureate reflects on winter, light, and art as survival through Montana's darkest months.

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Illustration by MacKenna Daugherty

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Submissions Welcome!


State of the Arts welcomes submissions of photographs, press releases, and newsworthy information from individual artists and arts organizations.


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**WE'D LIKE
TO HEAR
FROM YOU**



The aurora borealis, the stars of the Great Bear, and a stray meteor pierce the dark of winter with their brilliant, lively light.

Photo: Eric Heidle



Krys Holmes
Executive Director
krys.holmes@mt.gov

*“In the silence of the night,
the soul speaks the loudest.”*
— Inuit proverb

By Krys Holmes

To the Inuit people of the circumpolar regions, darkness is not a nightly event but a seasonal one. Above the Arctic Circle, winter’s night may last sixty days or even longer, making the Inuit people wiser about and more experienced with the dark season than any of us in Montana. Many Inuit people call the spirit of winter’s night Natsiq, the guardian of the people in dark times, the holder of cultural wisdom and strength.

Winter stars entice us into thinking about our place in the universe. The cold draws us indoors to share stories and music. For the Blackfeet, it’s the season to paint a Winter Count, and tell the Napi stories that can be told when there is snow on the ground. For the Salish, it’s time to hold a Winter Dance. For the Apsáalooke Crow, this is the season to tell Old Man Coyote stories. Throughout human history the long dark night has widely been a time to share wisdom and to make the tools and clothing we’ll need when spring returns. For those left out—who have no place, who have no warm circle around a fire, whose wisdom has fallen away—winter’s night is a time of danger and suffering.

But here, around the firelight of community, the way we endure and grow through the dark time (personal, sociopolitical, seasonal) is through art: storytelling, dance, painting, music. Art is our light in the darkness. When we wonder about our place in the universe, it is this: We are the creative ones, the ones who sing and dance and paint, who notice and laugh and praise.

My friend Brad Matsen, author of numerous books on the sea and the Pacific Northwest ecosystems, once interviewed a forester in the rainforest of Southeast Alaska. And that forester speculated—in a statement I have quoted my whole life long—that the one biological niche humans fill in the universe is to produce joyfulness particles.

I’ve taken this idea, pulled it apart, challenged it, dismissed it, and it keeps rising to the surface as regularly and as clearly as Orion rises in the winter sky.

Humans create; it’s what we do. Art is our first and only language.

Music, algorithms, architecture, treaties, speeches, logos, symbols, prayers—it’s all rooted in art. We are made in the image of the Creator.

There is now prodigious research, from many countries, demonstrating that exposure to art calms the nervous system and boosts immunity. Singing for 30 minutes a day can regulate cardiovascular systems after heart surgery.

Music can lower cortisol, heal brains, organize nervous systems, and counteract the debilitating forces of Parkinson’s and other neurological diseases. A creative hobby delays aging in the brain. Prolonged loneliness without creative connection is more dangerous than smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

Most of us reading this can no more imagine a life without art than a life without fire.

How would we live without images, scripture, music, narrative? People need access to those things, and education to help use them, as much as for internet, phone lines, and bridges. When we cut arts education, we impoverish a generation of children and sentence them to a life of anxiety, depression, and disconnectedness.

The theme of this Winter 2026 issue is “Light in the darkness.” We look at Blackfeet winter traditions that illumine and enlighten people in midwinter. Melissa Kwasny examines witness poetry that sheds light on the suffering of the world. And throughout, we see the multitude of ways art brings light into our lives, especially as the darkness settles in. And—as always—we look at the ways that you, the artists and arts leaders of Montana, bring light and energy and healing and joy to the lives of so many throughout the year.

We hold the light inside us. The light is art. The light is the capacity—as we can see in Beethoven, in Van Gogh, in Wylie Gustafson’s “Stranded on a Gravel Road”—to transform suffering into joy, hardship into humor, the mundane into the sacred, fear into praise. That is the work of the human being in the world.

BE THE LIGHT. BE THE STRUCK MATCH.

from the director





I go to the

RUINED PLACE

Poetry as witness in the darkest places

Story by Melissa Kwasny

In 2008, M.L. Smoker and I were asked to edit an anthology of contemporary poems in defense of global human rights. The recent disclosures of U.S. torture of prisoners at Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo were foremost in our minds, but we also wanted to know how poets were responding to a range of human rights violations. Following in the footsteps of Carolyn Forché's ground-breaking anthology *Against Forgetting: Twentieth Century Poetry of Witness*, we searched for work that attempted to answer this essential question: how can poetry bear witness to the suffering of others?

To witness is "to see." It is to shed light on, to reveal. In legal terms, it is to provide eye-witness evidence of a crime. To *bear witness*, on the other hand, is to shoulder the burden of having seen, to take responsibility for seeing.

Today, we are inundated with news of suffering: over 70,000 Palestinians killed, the majority women and children, in retaliation for the horrific Hamas attack on Israelis on October 7, 2023; immigrants brutally abducted on our city streets and deported without due process, the war in Ukraine and rapes in Sudan. It feels, indeed, too much to bear. I hear more and more from friends who say they are taking breaks from the news. I do it myself. And yet, to refuse to bear witness is to become morally indifferent. It is, as we say, to turn a blind eye.

I am always interested in the means in which poetry can re-awaken, instead of numb us, how it can help us to open our eyes, our minds, and our hearts. There are many poets around the world who are doing this crucial work. For purposes of this essay, however, I am going to talk about a few who are doing so here in Montana.



"We apprehend the human condition with pity and terror not in the abstract but always in relation to a given place and time, in one particular province, one particular country," writes Nobel Prize winning poet Czeslaw Milosz in his book *The Witness of Poetry*. The tools of literature, especially the concrete image, humanize suffering, instead of reducing it to a number or statistic. Montana poet Gabe Furshong shows us the difference in a poem from his forthcoming chapbook *Around the Country A Chasm*:

Ilom
Amajchel
Acul
 in the past village names
 today a list of massacres

Furshong's poems are set in the aftermath of the brutal 36-year civil war in Guatemala, when at least 150,000 people, over 80% of them Mayan, were killed by government forces. The poems issue from time he spent in the country, between 2000 and 2005, volunteering for human rights organizations and traveling with his older brother who worked as a journalist. Furshong approaches his task with restraint as well as exactitude, which results in poems that are both quiet and devastating. He witnesses the reburial of a child pulled from a mass grave, "a scrap of rotten cloth [matched] to a bright bolt in the cupboard" and the marks of barbed wire "twisted turn by turn" beneath a man's sleeve. Because Furshong is witness not to the war but the effect it has had on those who survived it, he, rightly, stands in the margins: "Light bleeds over a garden wall / seeps into soil / / She looks around / *they came into this house.* / / Clothesline staves steeped / bedsheets blotted with light." We sense the violence—in the past but still resonant—in the visceral verbs the poet uses to describe light: bleeds, seeps, steeped, blotted. The shuttered voice of the speaker, reduced to pointing, to a few words, and most powerfully, to what is left unsaid, convey the woman's grief.



"It is difficult to get the news from poems," William Carlos Williams famously wrote, "yet men die miserably every day for lack of what is found there." We get the news from journalists, who are (supposedly) objective, as opposed to poets who practice what a friend of mine calls "an exalted subjectivity." What is lacking in the news, Williams is saying, is the personal, more specifically the complex of feelings, memories, and perceptions that make up our interior lives. Here is an example from a poem called "Not All Ghosts Are Dead" by Lois Red Elk:

The women are too old now to be beaten, but they wonder when the haunting will stop. They wait somewhere below god, below ancient burial scaffolds, below crosses, asking the ghosts of nuns to release the souls of the pitiful little school girls, those who have suffered the torture long enough.

An enrolled member of the Fort Peck Sioux, Red Elk's poem is speaking about the trauma suffered by Indigenous children who were sent to boarding schools. A journalist might mention that 18 of the 408 federal boarding schools were located in Montana or that by 1926, 83% of Indigenous children were sent there, where many were beaten and abused. Red Elk's poem refers briefly to the beatings, but quickly pivots to the internal costs of what happened, the soul-suffering. The women are no longer beaten, but the violence persists. They cannot forget it.

Northern Cheyenne poet m.s. RedCherries, in her book-length poem *Mother*, speaks of the immense pain the boarding schools caused by forcibly separating children from their families:

“When they came and got me, they didn’t tell my mother I was going away. A bus pulled up in front of the school and they loaded us in. By the time it pulled out, I turned around to look and saw no one looking back.” RedCherries writes in the voice of her own mother. In the last powerful sentence, we feel the fear, confusion, and loneliness the child must have felt.



Some poets, like Red Elk and RedCherries, bear witness by telling personal stories they have been gifted by family and community members. Some, like Sean Hill, also bear witness by telling stories gleaned through research in historical archives and through listening to stories rooted in a specific place and passed on by locals across generations. Hill, professor of creative writing in University of Montana’s MFA program, was born and raised in Milledgeville, a small town in central Georgia. In his forthcoming hybrid collection of poetry and prose, *The Negroes Send Their Love*, he writes of Mary Turner, a pregnant Black woman who was lynched and mutilated on May 19th, 1918 near Valdosta. The first section of the poem “Mary Turner’s Child’s Peace Unborn” is written as a paragraph, in third person point of view. It begins, “It was to be Mary Turner’s third child.” The next sentence is stranger: “It was made something else. It would never be a girl or boy much less a woman or man.” Use of the pronoun “it” dehumanizes the unborn child, much as, perhaps, a newspaper of the time might.

In the next section of the poem, Hill changes perspective and form:

This is too much but is
our story. They doused
my mama with gasoline
and burned the clothes
from her body. They then
cut me from my mama—
.....
with a pig-splitting knife.
It’s said I did take a couple
of breaths to cry before they
took a boot heel to my head
to expedite my death. I was
always meant to be the meat
of white supremacy.

Here, the child is given personhood and voice by use of first person narration. Hill’s language is harsh as the act he is witnessing: sharp, horrifying, effective.

In the last section, Hill changes the perspective again: “They’ve worked hard to make me /one of so many of us folks taken /on boats, born into chattel slavery /in service of an economy, born in /service of an identity in the post-/Reconstruction reign of terror.” The change is disorienting. Who is inhabiting the “I” now? Surely not the child ripped from their mother’s womb. I return to the child’s lines: “This is too much but is / our story.” This speaker identifies as one of “us folks.” The burden of the story, the poet might be saying, is one that is borne by a *plurality*, and continues beyond the time frame of his or any individual life.



In 2025, Indigenous people accounted for 24% of missing cases in Montana while making up only 6.5% of the population. How to bear witness to the epidemic of violence directed at (mostly) Indigenous women when the only witnesses are the victim and perpetrator themselves? M.L. Smoker, former Montana poet laureate and member of the Assiniboine and Sioux tribes of Fort Peck, takes a different approach in her haunting poem “The Book of the Missing, Murdered and Indigenous, Chapter One.” It begins with a description of the crime scene:

The winding cord of highways, unkempt
gravel roads and the trails of animals—
a record of who and what has passed over,
an agony of secrets.

In the end, they have all borne witness.

The point of view is omniscient, all-seeing, yet the only witnesses are inanimate—the roads, the trails. Something mysteriously is recording the violence. The poem avoids speculating on what happened. The fact is, in most cases, we don’t know. After bringing us to this sinister place—“A cold, empty breeze rising from the debris. / The first and last moment of her”—Smoker uses her power as a poet to completely transform the outcome. Another energy enters the poem: “It is rage that pulls her up from this place.” The poem, referencing the Biblical book of Revelation, begins apocalyptically and ends prophetically. In the midst of such darkness, Smoker envisions a future:

She stitches together the collective story of origin,
her body a map: descended from the stars,
on the backs of animal sisters,
carried to safety in a bird’s beak.

Smoker rewrites the story of victimhood; the woman’s spirit is safe, beloved of the earth, the creatures, and her ancestors. He has not vanquished her. As Smoker writes in another remarkable poem “Shunga Sha” about the red fox: *You are of this land and all living things connected here.*



In the introduction to Forche’s anthology, she writes, “The resistance to terror is what makes the world inhabitable.” When we were pondering a title for our own anthology, Smoker and I were drawn to a line from one of the poems we selected: “I go to the ruined place.” The poem, entitled “The Blue Vein,” is by Montana’s first poet laureate, Sandra Alcosser. Toward its end, she tells the story of Vedran Smailović, a Bosnian cellist who played Albinoni’s *Adagio in G minor* outdoors for 22 days during the siege of Sarajevo. Asked if he were afraid, playing in a war zone, he said he “doesn’t think about the bombs, about snipers.” The music helped him to bear the suffering around him; his act gave courage to people worldwide. In between Smailović’s words, Alcosser inserts this line of her own:

“We have to remind ourselves we / Are human.”

.....

Photo: Vedran Smailović, the “Cellist of Sarajevo,” plays in the rubble of his war-torn city.

Photo by Mikhail Evstafiev, with permission



*Written by Lea (Maistakii) Whitford
with contributions from Kevin Kicking Woman*

During the long winter season when the days are getting shorter, the temperatures drop and animals are hibernating, it was time for the Blackfeet People to share stories to pass down history and cultural values. Evening was a time for family members; children and guests to gather around the fire and listen respectfully to the teachings of knowledge keepers of the camp, lodge owners or revered elders of the Tribe, who shared valuable lessons about life in a sacred manner.

Lodge owners would invite guests to join his family during the winter evenings. First a meal would be served, and then would come storytelling sessions of either ancient stories or recounting adventures of warriors throughout the years. The ancient stories ensured that Tribal knowledge was passed from one generation to another.

Some guests recorded important events of the Tribe on tanned hides called winter counts. A specific individual, usually a man, was chosen to be the winter count keeper. The winter count keeper painted images of important events, such as warfare, leadership and significant Tribal activities, on tanned animal hides using natural dyes. The Tribal community would assist by discussing what needed to be included in the winter count.

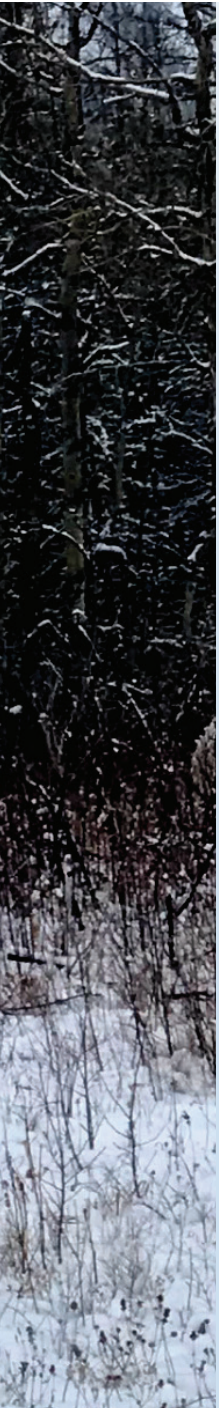
According to Kevin Kicking Woman, 2024 Montana teacher of the year and a Blackfeet Tribal member, "Storytelling was part of winter gatherings, helping families connect

and reflect during the long nights. Elders would tell Creation stories teaching how the world, people, and animals came to be. Some stories were told only when the snow covered the ground."

Elders used the dark, intimate wintertime to retell significant stories to teach the people how to survive or how to live a balanced life. Many of their stories had lessons about



Photos by Terry Tatsey



BLACKFEET WINTER TRADITIONS

Among Montana's many traditions of celebrating light in the time of darkness, one of the oldest is the Blackfeet custom of telling winter stories.

We invited Lea Maistakii Whitford, with the help of Kevin Kicking Woman, to reflect for us on how the Blackfeet people have traditionally used storytelling, art, and music to pass down important knowledge, guidance, and cultural practices from generation to generation.

proper behavior, respect, bravery, honesty, and humility woven through them. Other legend stories about characters such as Napi, a trickster, or heroes like Kutoyis (Blood Clot) would be told. Napi is a central figure in many winter stories—part **trickster**, part **teacher**, and part **creator**. He's often foolish, greedy, or lazy, but his mistakes teach people how not to behave. Through humor, Napi reminds people of the importance of balance and humility.

Cultural teachings about the natural world, such as reading the night sky; the different moons and the movement of stars used to tell time and directions taught children environmental survival skills. The long evenings provided family members the opportunity to share how to read the land and look for animal tracks and warning signs that could help them hunt or gather much-needed food sources. The people also created items needed for winter survival, building fire carriers, making weapons and traps for hunting, making clothing and household items. Sharing these skills was essential to the community's survival.

Winter was also time for families to come together to enjoy an evening of fun. Playing games such as Hand Game is a form of socializing; it is played by two teams, where one team hides a small object (like a bone) in one member's hand, and the other team tries to guess which hand it's in. Each team tries to win sticks from the opposing team. The game continues until one team wins all the sticks. Music, drumming, and singing are used to confuse the opposing team. It is a way for people to come together and have fun.

Winter traditions and stories remind the Blackfeet people of who they are and where they come from. They connect us to the land, the animals, and the spiritual world, while ensuring that younger generations grow up with respect for life, community, and tradition.

“ Storytelling was part of winter gatherings, helping families connect and reflect during the long nights ”



HELP US WELCOME YOUR NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS



TODD CONNOR

Fort Benton artist Todd Connor has lived and painted in Montana for most of his professional career. His love of the outdoors grew from a childhood spent camping, hunting and fishing, and at age twelve he started painting in pastels and oils. His subject matter ranged from landscapes to fish, wildlife and western themes.

After high school, Todd joined the Navy where he served as a Navy SEAL in California and overseas. After the Navy he traveled the country visiting historical sites and national parks where his love of history and the outdoors inspired his desire to pick up the paintbrush again.

Todd holds a BFA in Illustration from the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena. In 1999, Todd made the move to Montana to paint full-time.



CHRISTOPHER "SEAN" DUDLEY

Sean specializes in the investigation of art and cultural property-related crime, to include theft of major art and items of cultural heritage, fraud in the art market, and trafficking in looted antiquities, archeological resources and Native American patrimony/funerary items.

Born in Tucson, Arizona, Sean developed a love for Western American art and culture at an early age, and grew up in a family deeply rooted in the arts and humanities, the entertainment and news/sports journalism industry, and the ministry. Some of his most formative memories were made while sitting quietly with his grandfather—a retired Army Colonel, PhD, and WWII Veteran/POW—watching him paint landscapes and write; the consummate soldier scholar and warrior poet. Sean is a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point where he studied International and Strategic history. He served on active duty in the United States Army and later transferred to the United States Navy where he served as a Naval Special Warfare officer leading combat operations during multiple tours in both Iraq and Afghanistan. He is a passable outdoorsman, amateur naturalist, and pastime painter who values the unifying influence of the arts in our society and believes in the resilience-building and healing power of art for both practitioners and patrons alike.



CHARLES “CHUCK” FULCHER

Charles was born and raised in Great Falls and graduated from Great Falls High School. After earning his BA in design from Montana State University, he became a Freelance Designer and Illustrator in Los Angeles, designing swimming pools.

He returned to Montana to work with Wendt Advertising and Lodestone Advertising. Chuck has owned Lodestone since 1996. He is currently the Creative Director and CEO. In 2016, Chuck was awarded the “Silver Medal Award from the American Advertising Federation for his contributions to the advancement of advertising and marketing”.

He is also the president and owner of The Great Western Show in Great Falls. This Art Show takes place during and in conjunction with the C.M. Russell Art Auction, the third week in March for the last 14 years. This show has grown to 250 booths in 51,000 square feet. This has launched many artists and artisans’ careers throughout the years.

Chuck is also an accomplished fine art painter. In 2006 he was awarded the Ralph “Tuffy” Berg Memorial Art Award for being a newly accepted artist in the C. M. Russell Art Auction. He has participated in The C.M. Russell Art Auction ever since.

Music is a huge part of Chuck’s life as well. He is multi-instrumentalist and singer with his western vocal group, Pollo Loco. Founded in 1990, Pollo Loco has traveled and performed across the country, including a cultural exchange between Montana and Taiwan.

Chuck has been volunteering on the board of directors of Russell Country Federal Credit for 8 years, he feels privileged to represent the members interests and protect their assets. He sits on five committees and is currently the chairman of the Supervisory Committee.

In his leisure time, Chuck enjoys fine art painting, playing music and restoring classic cars. Chuck and his wife Janice spend time at their cabin in Lincoln as much as possible.

MONTANA ARTS COUNCIL

OUTGOING MEMBERS



Greg Murphy of Billings began serving in the fall of 2022, and was appointed chair by Governor Gianforte in that year. An attorney, Greg has received numerous professional accolades in his career while still finding time to play French horn in the Billings Symphony for more than two decades. Under Greg’s leadership the Council navigated the search for a new executive director in 2023, as well revising many of its administrative rules and practices.



Angela Russell of Lodge Grass has served on the Council since 2020 and brought thoughtful insight to our discussions and grant panel decision-making. Her long experience as an attorney and state legislator made her insight invaluable during the change and growth during the challenges of the last few years.



Linda Netschert has made substantial contributions to the Council’s work since her appointment in 2021. As owner of Helena’s Farcountry Press, the state’s largest independent publisher, Linda’s deep knowledge of Big Sky Country’s people and places helped guide our mission to serve every corner of Montana, large and small.

Please join us in thanking all of our new, current, and past Montana Arts Council members. Their efforts have made our work possible for nearly 60 years.

ARTISTS THRIVE— TOGETHER

By Krys Holmes

Montana artists and arts leaders say one thing they need most right now is opportunities to gather, to forge relationships, to energize their practice and link arms through the challenges.

Get ready for the 2026 Artists Thrive Summit, providing all that and more across three days, March 24-26, 2026.

The summit will happen simultaneously in Billings and in five other cities across the country: Las Vegas, NV; San Antonio, TX; Kansas City, MO; Nashville, TN; and Lowell, MA. Each location has

its own theme, but the cool thing is: there will be national sessions where everyone is gathered, online, at the same time no matter what location you're in.

ARTISTS
THRIVE

Registration is just \$200 for the full three-day event, and includes six meals. Scholarships will be available. Register online at: <https://www.artiststhive.org/summit>.

This unique event is designed for everyone, from first-timers to seasoned professionals, offering a chance to collaborate, gain inspiration, and make a real difference for everyone who works in the arts. It's supported by the Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation, dedicated to the environment, education, and the arts—particularly to supporting artists in developing their careers.

The theme of the Billings Artists Thrive Summit is "Rooted in Place: Arts and Community in Conversation." Sessions and discussions will focus on artists working in small, rural communities; building relationships across distances; and how arts work is evolving in Montana—as well as other topics. The Billings schedule will be finalized before the end of January. (Registration will stay open until all spots are filled.)

The national virtual sessions will focus on managing strategic change; building creative collaborations; financial skills; advocacy in times of great change; and other topics. Summit participants will also have access to a plethora of webinars and virtual sessions after the Summit closes. Together the in-person, virtual, and post-Summit events are designed to boost careers, provide professional development, build new connections, and strengthen relationships throughout the arts field.

This year, as MAC revamps its Artrepreneur program into a new professional development series called **Art Works**, we'll invite members of the new Art Works cohort to attend the Artists Thrive Summit as part of their professional development activities.

MAC is helping organize the Billings Artists Thrive Summit, along with MSU Billings, and the Summit will be held on the MSUB campus.

In addition to the Summit, Artists Thrive provides some power tools for building careers as an artist or leader in the arts. On their website (Artiststhive.org), you can take a self-assessment quiz, then use your responses to identify key areas for growth, connect with others in a similar phase of development, uncover helpful resources, and achieve your goals.

Whether you pre-game on the website or not, all of us at MAC hope to see you at the Artists Thrive Summit in March. Sometimes the light we seek is already burning in someone else.





Artists Thrive is open to musicians, poets, painters, and artists of all genres—plus arts leaders in a multitude of jobs. The summit also spotlights local artists and performers to give participants a sense of the local culture.

The 2025 Artists Thrive Summit, in Kansas City, included several inventive ways for participants to get to know each other.



The Artists Thrive Summit: A gathering of artists, arts leaders, and people who work in the arts to explore current topics, learn together, and forge new friendships.

images by: Amanda
Julia Steinback

MONTANA
POETRY
OUT LOUD

POETRY
ELEVATED

Teen Voices Out Loud and Elevated



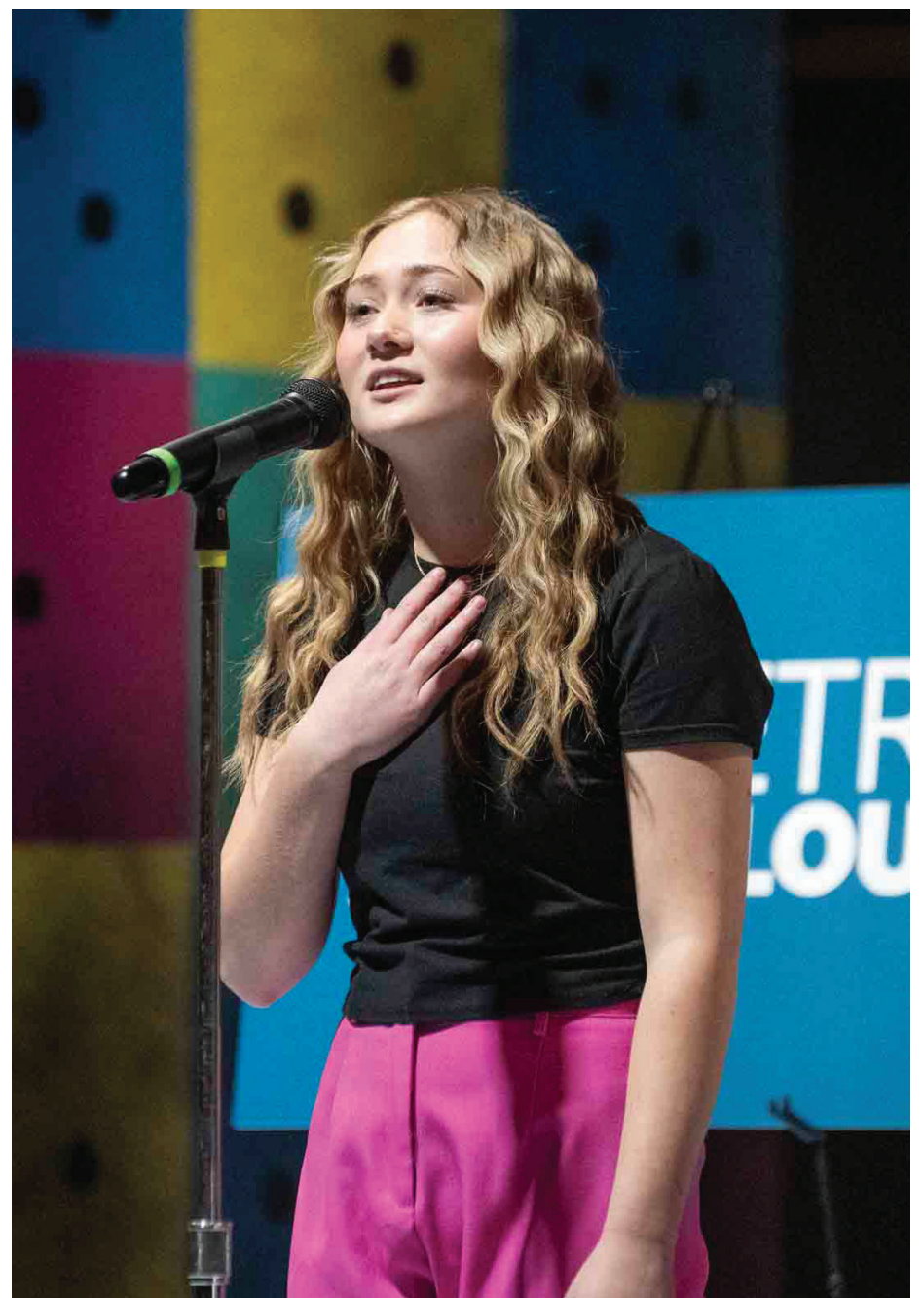
By Kaisa Edy, Poetry Out Loud Outreach Coordinator

In classrooms across Montana—from small-town schools to wide, wind-shouldered rural districts—students are stepping forward with poems in their hands and steadiness in their voices.

Poetry Out Loud does not begin as performance. It begins as attention: to language, to breath, to the discipline of speaking clearly.

The program brings classic and contemporary poetry into direct contact with students' lives. Participants select poems from a national anthology and learn, with the guidance of educators, how to work with voice, pacing, gesture, and interpretation. What emerges is not simply recitation, but ownership—the moment a student realizes a poem can be inhabited, not just assigned.

Schools hold classroom and school-wide recitations, advancing students to regional competitions and the Montana State Finals. Eventually, one student represents the state at the National Finals in Washington, D.C. Yet the most lasting transformations are quieter: students learning to stand in front of their peers, to make meaning audible and to trust their own presence.



Competitors recite poems in each of two preliminary rounds, and finalists go on to a third round to determine the year's state champion.



The Montana Poetry Out Loud state finals competition gathers competitors from around Montana to perform under the proscenium arch in Helena's historic Grandstreet Theatre.



Kaisa Edy

Allen Jones

AARON

Poetry Elevated leaders Kaisa Edy, Allen Morris Jones, and Aaron Parrett discuss the value and passion of writing poetry for online workshop participants.

Important 2026 Dates for Poetry Out Loud & Poetry Elevated

January 22 2026	Deadline for student registrations
February 5 2026	Poetry Elevated submission deadline
February 5-12 2026	Regional events in Billings, Bozeman, Great Falls, Kalispell & Missoula
March 7 2026	Montana State Finals, Grandstreet Theatre, Helena
April 27-29 2026	Poetry Out Loud National Finals, Washington, D.C

Poetry Elevated has grown alongside this work as a natural extension of the same belief—that students are not only interpreters of literature, but makers of it. The program creates a statewide space for original writing, inviting high school students to submit one poem and enter a guided process of drafting, listening, and revision.

Through virtual workshops, young writers from remote towns and larger communities meet practicing poets and teaching artists.

Geography loosens. Distance collapses. What matters is the line on the page, the risk in the sentence, the willingness to say something that has not yet had language.

Participation is open to all students, whether or not they are part of Poetry Out Loud. Participation in the writing program is required. No previous experience is expected. Only attention, curiosity, and the courage to try.

Together, Poetry Out Loud and Poetry Elevated have become quiet infrastructures for the emerging voices of Montana youth—places where students are not asked to perform confidence, but to build it. Not to compete for volume, but to learn clarity. Not to impress, but to speak truthfully. In a state defined by distance, this work draws something lasting: **connection.**

To learn more, go to art.mt.gov/pol or send an email to poetryoutloud@mt.gov

Then the lights dimmed, the show began. It was magical. The tour actors guided the cast deftly and the children embraced their roles.

After the show a father said, "We needed this. This community has had it rough, we needed this ray of light, this joy." His face lit up catching sight of his daughters, and he moved away for them to leap into his arms.

Mike Morelli, Executive Director - Missoula Children's Theatre



My art is giving unto others. I garden and I quilt, a different form of the traditional art I suppose. Gardening gives me a light of happiness; seeding, nurturing, harvesting and sharing.

Quilting gives me light however, also a (darkness) of deep thinking, planning, and let's not forget the math! I give my quilts as gifts of hopeful happiness and warmth.

One art is a gift of summer while the other is a gift of winter.

My heart is fulfilled.

Cheryl Bosslet



While I've been busy with a lot of endeavors since college (BFA Painting U of Iowa 1988) I had a stroke in 2016, and a subsequent heart attack shortly after.

It's been a long road with permanent vertigo since—but after releasing new music in 2017–2018 (I am a singer-songwriter) I fell into some cartooning in 2020 and have developed an Instagram presence over the last 5 years.

I've been regular on my Instagram account, @wordoday, and have enjoyed publishing a cartoon a day for the duration. Some editorial and mostly stream of consciousness it's been a GREAT creative outlet with many followers and some comments.

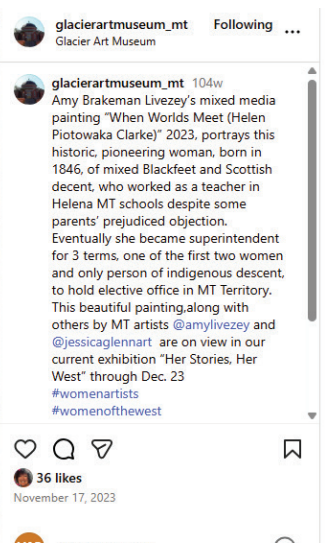
Chris R. Lane

Years ago a woman moved to Montana from Wyoming and contacted me about guitar lessons. After the second lesson she bought some of my CDs and when she returned the next time she told me a story. She had gone through a nasty divorce and while she was going through it, she and a girlfriend would blow off steam by backing a pickup down to a lake late at night, playing music very loud and singing at the top of their lungs. Their favorite song? It was the first cut on one of my CDs—one that I'd recorded and not thought about again, but it was a big help getting someone else through a very rough patch in their life. It was then that I realized the power of art.

John Lowell



Art by Amy Brakeman Livezey



Art by Jakub Jake Kolek



Art by Chris R. Lane



As part of that vision we asked you, our readers, to share the ways art in all its forms has been a candle in darkness, a beacon in the gloom. And you responded—speaking about how art is a comfort, heals wounds, staves off the blues, builds community. For one participant it literally took a village, in

the form of miniature Christmas buildings spreading glow and cheer in her home despite her years-long refusal to indulge in such simple joy. For others art eased the loss of loved ones, and for some it brought those we still have closer together. In every case, art has created light where there was

none, and hope we're all free to share. It's a sentiment perhaps best expressed by the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and one we as Montanans are reminded of at this time each year: "Only in the darkness can you see the stars."

I resisted a Christmas collection for decades, and then one dark November day, I caved. Exactly as I feared, my Christmas village grew rapidly as I hunted for bargains online and received other people's collections. I made backdrops with my favorite mountains—Ear Mountain, Grinnell Point, the Matterhorn, Mount Sentinel, and many more—and buildings customized or collected to honor my favorite people, like Roy's Diner for my dad and a Tiffany & Co. shop for my bestie. Other tableaux honor favorite memories like elephants in my Africa section. The village glows through winter's long nights and inspires my creativity.

Kristen Inbody



Art meets me where I am at. It quite literally calms my nervous system, and at other times keeps me dreaming in color.... It is both a powerful catalyst and a treasure refuge.

Lauren D.



Whether it be music, photography, or textile work, art has never failed to bring me out of the dark. Art allows me to express myself and really connect with my mind to process what I'm feeling so that I can get it out and better myself. It has allowed me to really think out of the box and see the beauty and potential the world has to offer. Thank you art ♥

MacKenna Daugherty



Art is a light in the darkness because it guides us and moves our souls. Whether it's music or a painting it removes us from reality into a new space of escape where it lights our minds and body and soul.

Anonymous



Has hearing the right song at the right time ever saved your life? YES! Beethoven!

What's the most meaningful experience you've had viewing a work of art? As it is being created before my eyes!

What book, film, music or experience makes you feel most alive? Improvising with others.

ART SAVES LIVES.

Julia Becker



A MODEST THEORY

Time is relative, Einstein offered. We carry each our own clocks. To travel on a fast train is to age half a beat slower than the lover you left behind.

The first look from a woman who might be your wife, the gravid teetering above an abyss, the long walk to the podium, applause from a crowd, the thud of a gavel, the casual cruelty of children. Time is taffy, it seems, pulled, twisted, turned into knots. South of Livingston, a young woman opens a barn door with a wrench and a squeal. Her mother lies dead but the cows need her now. Grief is a place you visit.

The young woman pulls back her hair into a knot and bends to strip milk into a metal bucket. To this new metronomic, hollow beat, she hums a tune the world has never heard before. The cattle pause to listen.

Friends, we make art to push back against the passage of time.

EXILES

“The cosmos is within us. We are made of star-stuff. We are a way for the universe to know itself.” —Carl Sagan

Hydrogen, helium, lithium, the lighter elements, these came first. Then oxygen, carbon, nitrogen all the heavier elements were churned out by stars, by the furnace of stars, to be reconstituted as brain, bowel, bunion. That ache you feel now, the sorrow and loss, your broken heart all in pieces, these are things that a sun feels. Friends, we are stars in exile, cast out from our own. Drinking coffee on a slow Sunday morning, staring out at a new snow, uncertain, anxious about what might come next—I’ve been wondering: How much should a star be expected to bear? This much, at least. This much, plus a little more.

Winter in Montana. The planet tilts, the days shorten, snow piles up and fossilizes into drifts. The wind whistles off key and the to-do list doesn’t seem to be getting any shorter. Last year’s half-full whiskey bottle and the newest smart phone model both keep drawing the eye. Ranchers consider their stacks of round bales, wondering if it’s going to be enough. The rest of us change out our tires and brace for pitch dark at 6:00.

To make it through, and if you’ve been here a while, you find ways to navigate the long nights, to come out ahead or at least break even. Some of us hit the ski hills or the gym. Some go ice fishing or ice climbing. Some try to find the art form in shake-a-day. All that sort of thing. As you age, your options narrow. Me? I’m fifty-five. An age when the warranties start to run out. Bad knees and sore shoulders are the new default. I quit drinking years ago and Bridger Bowl isn’t nearly the temptation it used to be. And honestly, I’d rather punch myself in the nose than go stand out on Georgetown at ten below, staring down at a bobber. And so, what does an aging poet do, spinning into the cave of another dark Montana winter?

You look for light, in metaphor and actuality. A thousand years ago, the first peoples had their cottonwood campfires. If you wanted a cupful of light after sunset, you broke some branches over your knee, positioned them just so, and blew up a flame from last night’s coals. More recently, the homesteaders fashioned tallow candles, the kind that spit and popped hot grease and bled an oily smoke. Cleaner kerosene came next, then copper wiring courtesy of Butte. A flick of the switch and let there be light. Amen and hallelujah. If you’re camping in the backcountry, each headlamp is a tiny little miracle.



Allen Morris Jones
Montana Poet Laureate

Funny how we take it for granted until the batteries die, the transformers blow.

Light is something you carry with you, in metaphor and actuality. If you’re an artist, you look to your predecessors and peers, you look at what’s been accomplished before and consider how it might guide you toward the next thing. When I was notified that I had been chosen to be Montana’s next poet laureate, the first thing I did was go back to the works of my predecessors. The recent collection, *This Place the Gods Touched the Earth*, makes for a handy place to start. Many of these poets are friends, and all of them are so admirable in their devotion to the craft, in their advocacy for Montana and the arts.

Revisiting the collection now, I’m struck by how often winter makes an appearance, how often light is used to make a point. Henry Real Bird starts his poem “Earth Day” by writing, “Ice-backed, powder-snow-dusted longhorn cattle / Moving slowly in the cold, dust-snowy morning / As I ride alone in your feeling.” And in “Invisible,” Lowell Jaeger writes, “...Beneath winter’s crust / an army of voles tunnels and toils / to construct a maze of hidden causeways. Among beasts, we are bold and obvious and blind.” M.L. Smoker, in “Heart Butte, Montana,” writes, “I dreamed of becoming snow melt, / gliding down the slope of history and into the valley. With the promise, / an assurance, that there is always a way to become bird, tree, water again.”

Heading into another Montana winter, come January and February, these will be my candles, my kerosene lamps, the smoldering sticks I’ll use to write letters in the air. To the state of Montana, thank you for the gift of this appointment. And to my fellow poet laureates, thank you for offering us these sparks, a few gleaming coals to show us the way.

Hidden Treasure in Montana

Photos and Text by Jeffrey Conger

Illume Gallery West

A brilliant light in the darkness of winter, the Illume Gallery West is a spectacular gallery that showcases a rich selection of Western, still-life, figurative, and landscape works. Tucked into the historic 1920s charm of downtown Philipsburg, MT, the unexpected gem lies between colorful storefronts and set against the backdrop of the beautiful Flint Creek Range. Teeming with nostalgia, restored buildings that include artisan shops, cozy cafés, and boutiques.

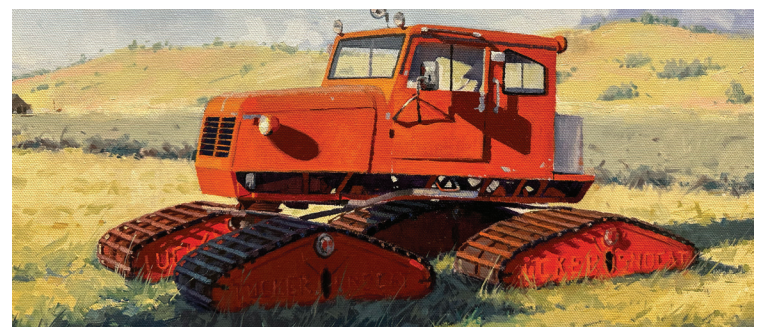
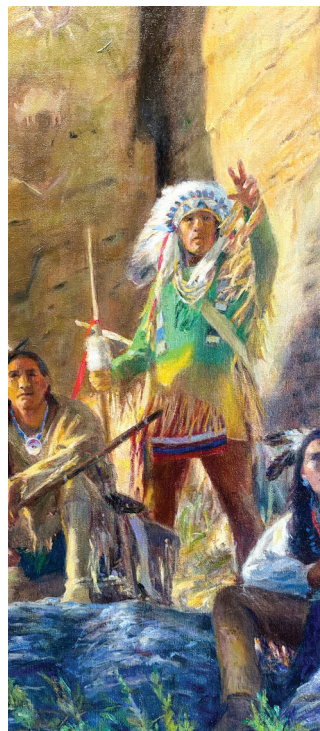
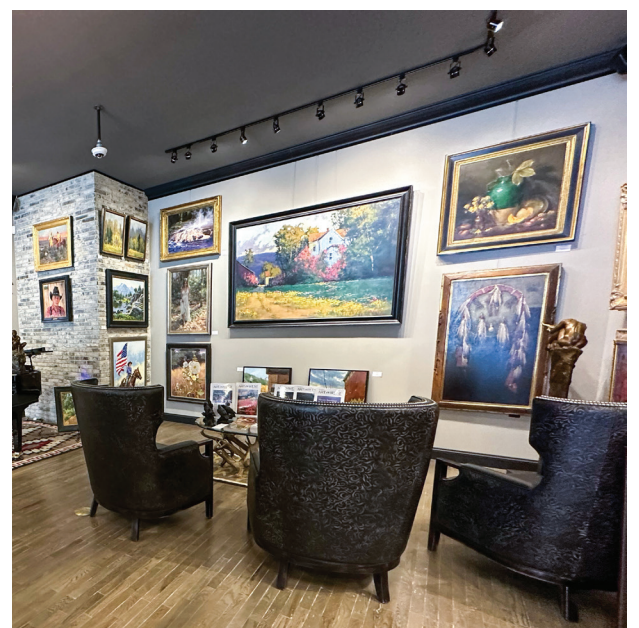
Opening its doors on July 16, 2022, the Illume Gallery West is the vision of Jane and Mark Lundgren. Working diligently together, they completed a renovation of the 100-year-old building in only 4 months. Walking into the magnificent space, it is easy to see Jane's expertise as an interior designer and former gallery owner, combined with Mark's candid contractor approach and quality craftsmanship. He successfully reimagined the high vaulted space by refurbishing its floors, recreating the traditional molding, and installing track lighting. Finishing touches like gallery gray paint, antique brick, and antler chandeliers complete the space's distinctive look.

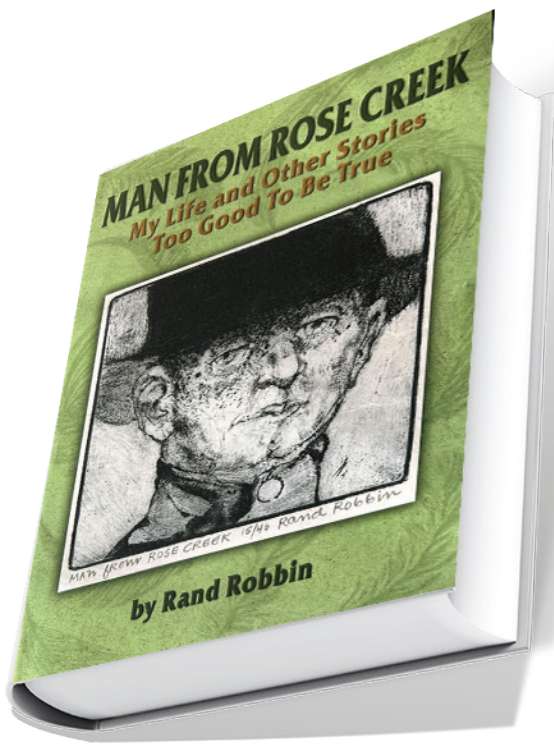
The Lundgrens uphold a strong philosophy of treating everyone like family, including all their featured artists. Representing over 100+ creatives, the impressive list includes Kathy Anderson, Bill Anton, Cindy Baron, Greg Beecham, Daniel Keys, Shanna Kunz, and Elizabeth Robbins.

In addition to its regular exhibits, the gallery is known for its annual "Magnificent Miniatures" show that celebrates the creativity and skill of artists working on a smaller scale. In addition, the gallery hosts high-profile celebrations, including the "The Wild Women Paint the West" show and the "Western Regional Exhibition" in partnership with the Oil Painters of America. Also, be sure to watch for an upcoming special Western artist rendezvous planned for this summer, July 21 – 25, 2026, featuring a quick draw and a gala artist reception.

So, take time to visit the Illume Gallery West at 130 East Broadway Street, located in Philipsburg across from the iconic Sweet Palace. The gallery is open during the winter on Mondays through Saturdays, 11:00 am to 5:00 pm, or schedule an appointment by calling Jane at (435) 313-5008. To learn more about upcoming events, please visit illumegallerywest.com or follow them on Facebook and Instagram.

The Illume Gallery West in Philipsburg is a wonderful gem, located along the Pintler Scenic Byway, an 80-mile route between Drummond and Anaconda.





The Man from Rose Creek
by Rand K. Robbin

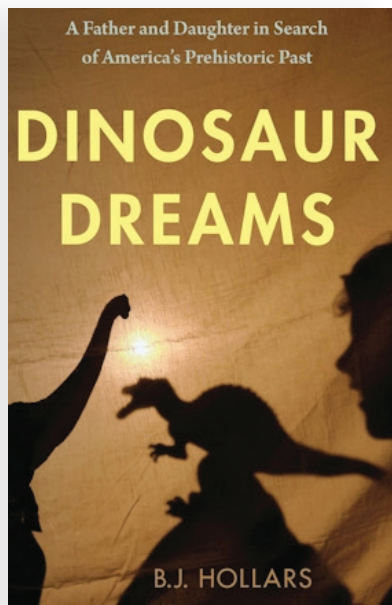
Some writers spend a lifetime hiding the very stories that define them. Rand K. Robbin was one of those quiet keepers. If you asked what he had been up to, he might talk about riding his Arab stallion through the Jewel Basin, tending crops, or carving a walking stick that carried the memory of a trail. Only now and then would he admit he had been writing, and even then the answer slipped out sideways, almost shy.

His family knew better. His wife would nudge him to share a new piece with the girls. When he finally did, the room shifted. The stories were full of mischief and sharp detail. You could never quite tell where fact ended and invention began. If you pressed him, asking whether something truly happened, he would only laugh, his eyes bright with the pleasure of keeping you guessing.

Part of that spirit came from his Norwegian roots, where humor carries both humility and a wink. The Robbin family loved to tease themselves with old stories about ancestors born with tails, a joke pulled from the wild folklore of trolls and huldra. Rand folded that same self-aware playfulness into his writing. He took real experiences and layered them with just enough embellishment to make them unbelievable in the best possible way.

He never published a book while he was alive. He always said he did not have enough material. But his wife and daughters knew otherwise. After his passing, they gathered his writings, shaped them with care, and honored the title he had tucked away in his notes: *Man From Rose Creek: My Life and Other Stories Too Good To Be True*.

The collection is a gift he never would have claimed for himself. It carries the humor, the land, the wonder, and the quiet truth-telling that shaped his life. It also carries the warmth of a family determined to share his voice with the world.



Dinosaur Dreams: A Father and Daughter in Search of America's Prehistoric Past
by B. J. Hollars
Published by Bison Books

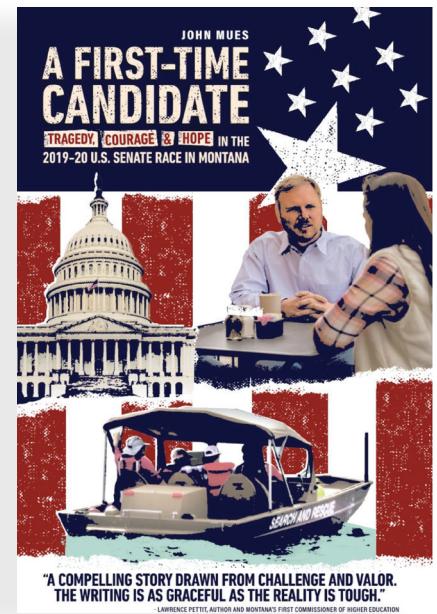
Some journeys begin with a map. Others begin with a question. In *Dinosaur Dreams*, B. J. Hollars sets out with his nine-year-old daughter, Ellie, to follow the Montana Dinosaur Trail. What starts as a two-thousand-mile road trip soon becomes something deeper. The pair travels across a summer defined by heat and haze, looking for traces of animals that ruled this land long before humans arrived. At each stop, they sift through fossil beds, wander small museums, and listen to paleontologists who know how to read the bones that rise out of ancient stone.

For Ellie, every discovery is a spark. For her father, it is a reminder of how quickly time moves, and how rare it is for a parent to watch curiosity grow right in front of them. Hollars writes with a gentle honesty about the space between generations, and about the simple joy of sharing wonder with a child who is still young enough to believe anything is possible.

Their conversations drift from dinosaurs to extinction, from Earth's deep history to the fragile moment we live in now. They begin to ask what the fossil record might be trying to tell us about our own future. Can we learn fast enough to protect the planet we depend on? Can we evolve in the ways that matter?

What keeps the book grounded is its heart. Hollars and Ellie laugh, argue, get lost, and keep driving. They carry snacks, sunscreen, and the kind of questions only a nine-year-old can ask. The trail becomes a way to measure not just distance but connection, the kind that grows one shared discovery at a time.

Dinosaur Dreams is charming, thoughtful, and full of quiet insight. It reminds us that the stories beneath our feet are often the ones that reveal who we are becoming.



A First-time Candidate: Tragedy, Courage, and Hope in the 2019–20 U.S. Senate Race in Montana
by John Mues

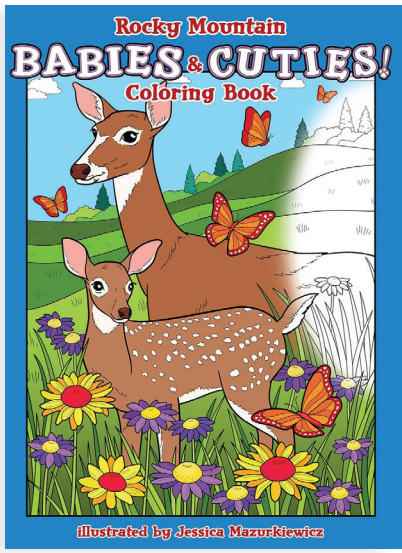
Some campaigns unfold in headlines. Others unfold in the quiet, difficult moments far from public view. In *A First-time Candidate*, John Mues offers a clear-eyed memoir of his run for the U.S. Senate during the 2019–20 race in Montana. The book follows his path from a fourth-generation upbringing to a career defined by service, beginning at the U.S. Naval Academy and continuing through years aboard nuclear submarines, work with Naval Special Warfare, NATO operations, and teaching math on a reservation through the Troops to Teachers program.

Mues enters the race with a sense of duty more than ambition. What follows is an inside look at a campaign shaped by national consultants, shifting political winds, and the reality of trying to run for high office in a state where every handshake matters. He writes frankly about the learning curve and the emotional weight of stepping into the public arena for the first time, especially in a polarized climate that tests both resolve and hope.

But the memoir reaches beyond politics. During the campaign, Mues, his pregnant wife, and their unborn son were involved in a deadly scuba accident at Canyon Ferry Lake. The event reshaped his life and gives the book a gravity that carries through every chapter. He writes about the experience with restraint and honesty, acknowledging its lasting impact without turning it into spectacle.

The book critiques leaders on both sides of the aisle, but it is not driven by partisanship. Instead, it is driven by a belief that public service should still mean something, and that ordinary citizens can and should step forward even when the path is uncertain. Mues chose to self-publish to preserve the story's full shape and immediacy.

A First-time Candidate is a personal account of courage, vulnerability, and the complicated truth behind political life. It offers readers a rare glimpse into the humanity that often gets lost in the noise.



Rocky Mountain Babies and Cuties
Illustrations and text
by Jessica Mazurkiewicz

Some books remind us how good it feels to slow down and simply look. *Rocky Mountain Babies and Cuties* is one of those small delights. Illustrator Jessica Mazurkiewicz gathers sixty-four young animals found across the Rocky Mountain region and presents them with a light touch that blends scientific accuracy with warmth. Each page features a clean, detailed line drawing paired with a short fact, inviting readers of any age to color, study, or just enjoy the charm of creatures still new to the world.

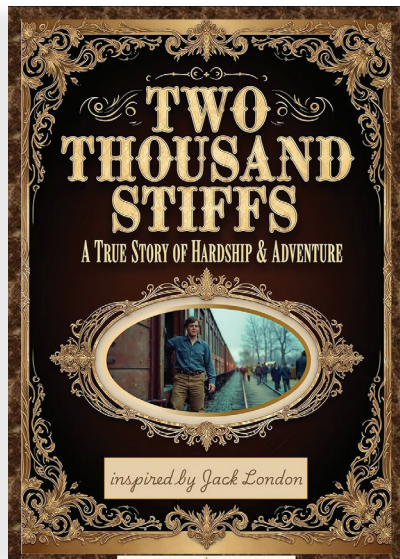
The book travels the region through its wildlife. Fuzzy bear cubs, wide-eyed deer fawns, tiny pikas tucked among alpine rocks, soft ducklings trailing through marshy water—each young animal is offered with enough detail to teach, yet enough simplicity to spark imagination. Mazurkiewicz's illustrations avoid gimmick or exaggeration. Instead, they lean on attentive observation, giving the animals a presence that feels both approachable and true.

What makes the book appealing is its mix of learning and play. A child can color a page without realizing they are absorbing real information about habitat, behavior, and the diversity of life across Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico. An adult can appreciate the accuracy of the drawings, or use the book as a meditative pause in a busy day. It feels like a field guide softened by affection.

Mazurkiewicz has more than a decade of illustration experience and over one hundred published titles, and her confidence shows. Her style holds the sweetness of childhood without slipping into sentimentality. She draws the animals as they are—curious, growing, sometimes awkward, always alive with possibility. What comes through most is her respect for the natural world and her belief that wonder can begin with a single small creature on a white page.

Rocky Mountain Babies and Cuties is a reminder that the wild is not only grand landscapes or dramatic species. Sometimes it is a newborn fawn wobbling in the light or a chick still drying its

feathers. These tiny moments, captured with care, help us see the larger story of the region we call home.



Two Thousand Stiffs: A True Story of Hardship & Adventure
Inspired by Jack London
by Jerry Spencer

Two Thousand Stiffs brings to life a moment in American history that feels both distant and strangely familiar. In 1894, following the economic collapse sparked by the Panic of 1893, thousands of unemployed workers formed what came to be known as Coxe's Army. These men walked and rode across the country to petition Congress for jobs and relief. Their march is widely recognized as the first large protest on the Capitol grounds, a call for justice during a time when the nation felt uncertain and frayed.

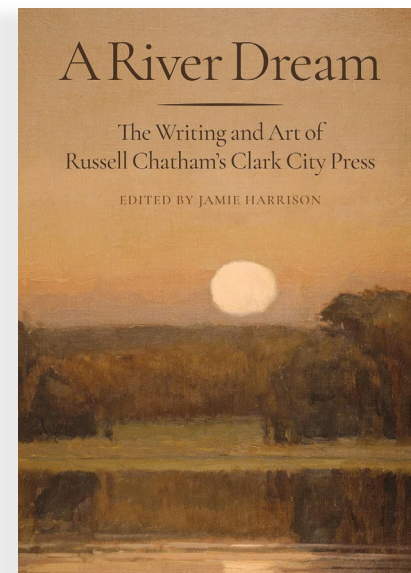
Among the marchers was a teenage Jack London. His time traveling with one of the "industrial armies" gave him a firsthand look at hunger, camaraderie, and the harsh divide between labor and power. Those months on the road helped shape the conscience that later appeared in his fiction. Jerry Spencer uses London as a lens to reveal the grit and humanity of a movement often reduced to a footnote.

Spencer writes with careful attention to documented history. He follows the marchers through rough terrain, hostile weather, and public misunderstanding. They were not vagrants or criminals, as some newspapers claimed. They were veterans, laborers, farmers, and young men chasing the promise of work in a country that had turned its back on them.

The book also includes "A Petition in Boots: The Coxe's Army Marches of 1894," offering added context and capturing the political tension of the era. The combined narrative shows how collective action grows, and how ordinary people can influence national conversation even without power or resources.

Spencer's background in publishing, beginning with his co-creation of Tidbits in 1983, adds a storyteller's instinct to the history. He has spent decades shaping narratives that keep readers engaged, and that skill is evident here.

Two Thousand Stiffs is both historical record and human story, reminding us that the struggles of 1894 still echo today, and that resilience often begins with those willing to walk forward when the world feels uncertain.



A River Dream: The Writing and Art of Russell Chatham's Clark City Press
Edited by Jamie Harrison
Godine Press

Setting up a tiny, hyperliterate publishing concern in a Montana backwater town, at a time some Americans didn't know we were a real US state, seems like a notion doomed to fail. Moreso when the words it printed involved obscure gamebirds, or the aesthetics of swapping shotguns for fly reels, or poems for family members long gone, or loosing apex predators upon the land, or permit fishing—which is not about your conservation license. Top that off by telling your authors the press is owned by an *artist*, no less, with a facility for great wine and ignoring the bottom line, and who'd happily give you a nice landscape in oil in lieu of anything so dull as an advance. The project seems destined to implode.

Which it did, of course, as Godine Press freely concedes in its publication summary of *A River Dream: The Writing and Art of Russell Chatham's Clark City Press*. But the glorious arc of the art captured in those years when it leapt above the waters of the Yellowstone made it so worthwhile, as this astonishing volume relates. Edited by Clark City's own Jamie Harrison, the anthology collects its Livingston regulars—Tom McGuane, Jim Harrison, Chatham himself—but it crosses the state's literary continental divide too, inviting Richard Hugo, Jim Crumley, and Rick Bass to hop in the boat and wet a line.

Dedicated to Chatham, his design collaborator Anne Garner, and Livingston's sainted John Fryer, the book honors their legacy by framing the words with gorgeous type and stunning imagery. And while you're savoring those words, don't feel too bad for the writers; the ones who took the paintings made out pretty well. As did we all. For few implosions, no matter how final, leave us with such wondrously dazzling debris. — Eric Heidle



Participants straddle youth-sized drawing horses while galloping through life drawing exercises.

MONTANA'S CREATIVE AGING INITIATIVE

By Monica Grable

As MAC progressed in our creative aging initiative over the past year, one throughline connected and drove the work: the recognition that access to arts learning programs serving older adult learners is needed now more than ever. As Americans are living longer healthier lives, so too are the growing number of older Montanans. Primed for learning, adults 60 and up not only deserve dedicated learning access but are inspired and ready for the opportunities.

During 2025 the Montana Arts Council was fortunate to be included in the first of a two-year grant-supported project, “Creative Aging in the West: Cross-Sector Partnerships for Healthy Aging” designed to increase program development and partnership building in the western states. Montana Arts Council staff, partnering with Montana State Library (MSL) staffers, joined our counterparts in Idaho, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming to convene regularly as the project’s Leadership Council, where we shared developments in our collective creative aging work. The team at Lifetime Arts, funder of the project and the national leader in providing training and professional and program development in creative aging, have been supporting state teams throughout the year with coaching and funds for seed programs.

In spring of 2025 a virtual workshop series entitled Creative Aging Foundations Training, was made available to Montana library, arts, and non-arts administrators and professional teaching artists. This prepared teaching artists to participate in seed programs in the fall along with those projects supported by MAC’s ongoing education grant program. Teaching artists unable to participate in spring had a second opportunity to receive training in the fall alongside national colleagues. Once trained in creative aging work, these artists were invited to be featured in a new registry created by the Montana State Library with funds from Lifetime Arts.

The year’s work focused primarily on making programs available to learners statewide. These workshops are highly intentional and thoughtfully created to accommodate the needs and skill levels of their students. Best practices

in the field dictate the development of robust and skill-based workshops designed to build confidence over a 6 to 8-week period, allowing time for participants’ learning to stretch and grow. Regularity of class meeting days and times to suit the learners was also key.

Through the Western States efforts by Smith Trust and Lifetime Arts staff, five seed projects were supported over the past year, beginning with three that took place at libraries across the state in Ennis, Havre and Philipsburg.



Figure drawing students use charcoal to describe what they see, with guidance from the class’ instructors.

For MAC’s part, two seed projects were designed this fall to exemplify the possibilities of art museum and art center-based programs. At the Missoula Art Museum (MAM), Curator of Education Kay Grissom-Kiely worked with teaching artist Bev Beck Glueckert to design and lead a figure drawing course. The response to this offering cemented their sense that the class was needed: not only did this class fill up immediately, but a long waiting list formed. From 2 - 4 PM on Wednesdays throughout mid-December, up to 20 adults aged 60 and over gathered at the museum. Some participants had maintained a drawing practice throughout their lifetime and others were engaged in drawing from life for the very first time. Live models were hired to staff the course and participants worked with traditional media such as charcoal and pencil. Drawing horses (wooden easels with seats) borrowed from a

local elementary school may not have been adult-sized, but didn’t detract from the sheer love of making marks on the page.

At the Schoolhouse History and Art Center (SHAC) in Colstrip, a small group of adult learners sculpted clay in workshops led by Miles City teaching artist Keely Perkins. In partnership with SHAC Executive Director Kayla de la Ossa, Perkins traveled to make weekly classes available to older adults in the community. Though the participants of this small town already knew one another, the community of makers still deepened their sense of connection. An electrical issue affecting the center’s kiln led to necessary improvements—which slowed the firing process but not their enthusiasm; participants eagerly awaited the chance to glaze their pieces. Early in 2026 a culminating event to showcase the class’ work will be scheduled—a chance for participants to celebrate their success and a chance for the community to see the results of their work.

In mid-December, to round out the year’s activities, MAC and MSL hosted the Montana Virtual Conference on Creative Aging, which helped bring together practitioners and students.

Five recent seed projects were showcased, with program administrators and teaching artists sharing their first-hand experiences with creative aging workshops and speed dating-style breakout rooms breakout rooms where teaching artists pitched their practices and workshop designs. Guests presented on topics that included the depth and breadth of creative aging programs and the intersections of Creative Aging program design for veterans and those programs which incorporate folk and traditional arts.

In the year ahead, MAC will continue in its grant-funded work of supporting seed programs and training opportunities for all those interested in leading creative aging programs.

To learn more, contact Monica Grable, MAC Arts Education Director, at (406) 444.6522 or Monica.Grable@mt.gov.

ARTISTS IN SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES— ARTS LEARNING FOR EVERY AGE AND ABILITY

End-of-year lists are ubiquitous, but the meaningful collective work accomplished in Arts Education across Montana in 2025 can't go without mention. To date, sixty-two grant projects totaling \$264,321 have been funded this fiscal year, the most recent round of which—awarded in late September—appear on the accompanying chart.

Led by both arts and non-arts program administrators and many teaching artists across a wide range of disciplines, MAC relies on these artists and administrators to partner with us in carrying out arts learning opportunities on behalf of every Montanan. Many of these projects are still underway, serving learners of every age and ability through a multitude of opportunities—everything from workshops with touring theater artists to a Reservation-based string music program to visual art programs taking place in public libraries and museums which benefit older adult learners.



Photographer David Spear works with a student at Two Eagle River School to make images with a traditional 4x5" view camera. Photo courtesy of David J Spear

Four grant application rounds were made available over the twelve-month period: a mid-March AISC Residencies deadline and three AISC Experiences rounds in April, August and December. Awardees from the 15 grant applications who submitted to the December 11 deadline will be identified by the end of January, completing the grant cycle for the current fiscal year.

In existence since the 1970s, MAC's Artists in Schools and Communities grant program has served an array of arts learning needs, from traditional long-term artist-in-residence projects to shorter targeted arts learning experiences that introduce or extend learning opportunities. In the year ahead that tradition will most certainly continue with new grant guidelines and a related application timeline scheduled for release by January 15.

For more information or to share a conversation about your proposed project, connect with Monica Grable, MAC's Arts Education Director, at Monica.Grable@mt.gov or by phone sat (406) 444-6522.

AISC EXPERIENCES FY26, ROUND 2 | GRANTS AWARDED

Organization	Project Name	Community	Awarded
Billings Public Library (City of Billings)	Billings Public Library's Senior and Adult Art Instruction with Bonny Beth Luhman	Billings	\$2,500
Billings Symphony Society	Musical Storytime with the Billings Symphony	Billings	\$2,500
Bitterroot Community Band	Virginia Vinal Women's Band Festival	Hamilton	\$2,500
Bitterroot Early Learning Network	Little Rhythms: A Music and Movement Residency for Young Children and Families	Hamilton	\$2,500
Hellgate Elementary District	The 5 Valleys Honor Band	Missoula	\$2,250
Living Independently for Today and Tomorrow (LIFTT)	Artful Wellness: Painting for Mind & Body	Billings	\$2,500
North Valley Music School	NVMS Artists in Schools	Whitefish	\$2,500
Opera Montana	Opera Montana's Wheels of Harmony	Bozeman	\$2,500
Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art	Museum Outreach for Middle School: Be Your Own Curator	Great Falls	\$2,500
Queen City Ballet Company	Queen City Ballet Company's School Outreach Performance of The Nutcracker	Helena	\$2,500
Ulm Elementary School	Charles Russell Museum Field Trip	Ulm	\$250
			\$25,000

“Dave brought music into the hearts of Montanans for a lifetime.”

IN MEMORY OF DAVE BUNESS

1936 - 2025

After many years bringing music into the hearts of Montanans, Dave Buness departed on November 23 at the age of 88. His quiet leadership shaped choirs, classrooms and communities across the state, leaving a steady and warm-hearted musical imprint on the people he taught and loved.

Dave was born in Powers Lake, North Dakota, and earned a bachelor’s degree in music from Minot State College and a master’s in music education from the University of Montana. He often said his greatest achievement there was meeting Fay Gonsior, who sang soprano to his bass and accompanied him throughout his life. They were married in Missoula in 1965.

Dave began his career as a band director at the Air Force base in Glasgow before moving to Helena, where he started the choral program at C. R. Anderson Middle School and later built the program at Capital High School. He taught in Helena for



nineteen years and conducted the Helena Symphony Chorale for twenty five years. He also directed the St Paul’s United Methodist Church Choir, guiding the ensemble to regional acclaim. During these years he designed and built a home in the hills of Clancy.

His service extended statewide. Dave was Music Supervisor for the Helena School District, President of the Montana State Choral Directors, President of the Montana State Music Educators Association, a Board Member of the Helena Boy Choir and a proud member of Civitans. He organized overseas tours for the Helena and Butte Symphony Chorales and was a frequent adjudicator for music festivals.

For his family and his friends, Dave was the resonant bass line that added depth and a lively beat to the music of their lives. His legacy lives on in the thousands of voices he helped develop and sing out.

“For sixty five years, Joe shaped the sound of Helena.”

IN MEMORY OF JOSEPH WILLIAM MUNZENRIDER

1940 - 2025

Joseph W. Munzenrider of Helena, master of the amazing pipe organ at the Cathedral of St. Helena for more than 60 years, died in October after a life of music, skiing, and good humor. Born in Helena in 1940, Joe was the eldest of eight children and grew up surrounded by music, faith and the beauty of Montana’s mountains. In sixth grade he fell in love with the organ—an instrument that became both his vocation and lifelong companion. (Joe later reflected that the organ “wasn’t just an instrument—it was a language, a way of thinking.”)

With a music degree from University of Montana and a master’s in music from University of Michigan, Joe served as Army chaplain’s organist and then settled at Carroll College, beginning a 42-year teaching career that influenced generations of students. As professor of fine arts and music, he taught organ, harpsichord and music theory, inspiring respect and affection in equal measure. He was known for his wit, rigor, and humor—reminding students that “discipline is what makes freedom in music possible.”

Joe created music ensembles, events, and collaborations across Montana and the Northwest. He arranged scores, directed rehearsals, accompanied on piano and organ, and even handled technical work—lighting, stage design and sound.



His recitals frequently featured his self-built harpsichord, an instrument he once described as “half mathematics, half prayer.” Joe also helped restore and enhance historic pipe organs across Montana. He also served on the Montana Arts Council—but briefly because he hated meetings of all kinds.

At 33, studying in Switzerland, he joined in a group ski lesson (they needed one more person to get a group rate). He often joked that “I went along for the discount and came home with a lifetime addiction.” Joe became a ski instructor and for 33 years taught lessons at Great Divide every Friday after class.

Joe was famous for his elaborate dinner parties and especially for his homemade gelato. His creations—like stracciatella, “Butte” and “The Virgin’s Girdle”—combined playfulness and craft. “It’s chemistry and grace,” he liked to say, “just like music.” Joe’s life was a symphony of creativity, discipline and joy. Through every concert, class, ski run and shared meal, he invited others into the music of living—a harmony that continues to resonate in every heart he touched. As Joe often said after a concert’s final chord faded into silence, “That’s all. But wasn’t it beautiful while it lasted?”



MONTANA ARTS COUNCIL

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Students watch as a fellow Poetry Out Loud competitor recites at the Friday Poetry slam ahead of the 2025 state finals the following day.

Submissions Welcome!

State of the Arts welcomes submissions of photographs, press releases, and newsworthy information from individual artists and arts organizations.

Next deadline: November 15 for the Winter issue (January-March).

Please check with the Montana Arts Council for reprint permission.

SEND TO:

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@ **email** mac@mt.gov

WE'D LIKE
TO HEAR
FROM YOU

WINTER CALENDAR 2026

BELT

Belt Performing Arts Center
www.beltperformingartscenter.com

	Tap into Soul	January 17, 3:00 PM & 7:00 PM	\$25+
	Judy Carmichael Trio	February 14, 3:00 PM & 7:00 PM	\$25
	The McDades	March 21, 3:00 PM & 7:00 PM	\$25

BIG SKY

The Big Sky Center for the Arts
www.bigskyarts.org

	Auction for the Arts	February 19, 5:00 PM	\$50+
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The Big Sky Center for the Arts
www.bigskyarts.org

	Such is Life in the Far West	January 10, 7:30 PM	\$18+
	Michael Mayo	January 24, 7:30 PM	\$18+
	In a Landscape: Classical Music in the Wild	Jan 31-Feb 1, 3:00 PM	\$43+
	Julie Fowlis	February 15, 7:30 PM	\$18+
	Kronos Quartet	February 22, 7:30 PM	\$22+
	Voctave	March 7, 7:30 PM	\$18+
	The Conjurers	March 20, 7:30 PM	\$22+
	Momix	March 28, 7:30 PM	\$22+


BILLINGS

Alberta Bair Theater
www.albertabairtheater.org

	Kinky Boots	January 6, 7:30 PM	
	The Magic of Motown	January 10, 7:30 PM	\$39+
	The Choir of Man	January 15, 7:30 PM	\$72+
	Billings Symphony Presents The Magic of Sleeping Beauty	January 23 & 24, 7:30 PM	\$20+

	Billings Symphony Presents Free Family Concert: Symphony on Pointe	January 24, 12:00 PM	Free
	Tango After Dark	February 4, 7:30 PM	\$27+
	The Adventures of Buzz Brass	February 6, 9:30 AM & 12:30 PM	\$7+
	Buzz Brass - Famous Inspirations	February 7, 7:30 PM	\$17+
	TINA - The Tina Turner Musical	February 11 & 12, 7:30 PM	\$77+
	Billings Symphony Presents Revolutionary Voices	February 21, 7:30 PM	\$20+
	The Jungle Book - Student Matinee	February 24, 9:30 AM & 12:30 PM	\$7+
	American Patchwork Quartet	February 25, 7:30 PM	\$17+
	The Black Jacket Symphony Presents Pink Floyd's "The Wall"	February 28, 7:30 PM	\$27+
	Dusty Slay: The Neighborhood Guy	March 6, 7:00 PM	\$22.75+
	Hare & Tortoise - Student Matinee	March 10, 7:30 PM	\$7+
	World Ballet Company Presents Cinderella	March 12, 7:00 PM	\$35+
	The McDades	March 14, 7:30 PM	\$17+
	Billings Symphony Presents Time for Three	March 28, 7:30 PM	\$20+
	Billings Community Band	March 29, 3:00 PM	\$5+
	Red Hot Chili Pipers - Student Matinee	Mar 31 & Apr 1, 9:30 AM & 12:30 PM	\$7+
	The Red Hot Chili Pipers	March 31, 7:30 PM	\$17+

Billings First Congregational Church
www.artmuseum.org


	New York Philharmonic String Quartet	February 12, 7:00 PM	\$25+
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Crooked Line Studio
www.crookedlinestudio.com

	Open Art	January 5, 9, 12, 16, 19, 23, 26 & 30, 11:00 AM	\$8
	Monday Night Painters w. Carolyn Thayer	January 5, 12, 19, & 26, 6:00 PM	\$225
	Wednesday Painters w. Carolyn Thayer	January 7, 14, 21 & 28, 1:00 PM	\$225
	Mixed Media Meet Up	January 8, 15, 22 & 29, 6:00 PM	\$8
	Painting 102 w. Carolyn Thayer	January 8, 15, 22 & 29, 6:00 PM	\$225

	Friday Painters w. Carolyn Thayer	January 9, 16, 23 & 30, 1:00 PM	\$225
	Open Art	February 2, 6, 9, 13, 16, 20, 23 & 27, 11:00 AM	\$8
	Monday Night Painters w. Carolyn Thayer	February 2, 9, 16 & 23, 6:00 PM	\$225
	Wednesday Painters w. Carolyn Thayer	February 4, 11, 18 & 25, 1:00 PM	\$225
	Mixed Media Meet Up	February 5, 12, 19 & 26, 6:00 PM	\$8
	Painting 102 w. Carolyn Thayer	February 5, 12, 19 & 26, 6:00 PM	\$225
	Friday Painters w. Carolyn Thayer	February 6, 13, 20 & 27, 1:00 PM	\$225


Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd
www.baroquemusicmontana.org

	I Melt Like Snow in the Sun of Your Beauty	January 10, 7:30 PM	\$5+
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NOVA Center for the Performing Arts
www.novabillings.org

	Cabaret Club	Jan 18, Feb 15 & Mar 15, 5:30 PM	\$5+
	Crazy Little Café Called Love	Jan 30-Feb 8, 7:30 PM & 2:00 PM	\$12+
	Snow White and the Seven Endings	Feb 20-Mar 1, 7:30 PM & 2:00 PM	\$12+
	As You Like It	March 15-22, 7:30 PM & 2:00 PM	\$12+

Petro Theatre
www.thepubstation.com

	Paula Poundstone	January 10, 8:00 PM	\$53
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The Pub Station Taproom
www.thepubstation.com

	Gabriel Rutledge: Don't Read the Comments	January 16, 7:00 PM	\$44.15+
	Kitchen Dwellers with Special Guest, Magoo	January 29, 8:00 PM	\$40.15+
	Hell's Belles	March 6, 8:00 PM	33.65+
	I See Stars Spin the Wheel Tour	March 28, 7:00 PM	\$36.15+
	EMO Kids	January 23, 8:00 PM	\$24
	Zechariah Peabody Band with Special Guest Hannah J Lally	January 31, 8:00 PM	\$19
	Whitney Morgan and the 78's	February 7, 7:30 PM	\$28.90+
	Coroner	February 16, 7:30 PM	\$33

Yellowstone Art Museum
www.artmuseum.org

	Slow Art Tour: Death of Adonis	January 22, 10:30 AM	Free
	Starlight on Snowdrifts: Beacons of inspiration during a season of darkness	Nov 21-May 1, Daily	Free
	Kent Monkman: The Death of Adonis	Jan 9-May 15, Daily	Free
	Folktales and Fanfare: The Art of Janina Myronova	Mar 27-Aug 15, Daily	Free

BOZEMAN

Bozeman Art Museum
www.bozemanartmuseum.org











	Bozeman High-Lights	Jan 10-Mar 28, Daily	Free
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Bozeman Pond Park
www.bozemanlibrary.org


	Literacy Trail at Bozeman Pond Park	January & February, All Day	Free
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Bozeman Public Library
www.bozemanlibrary.org

	Big Kid STEAM Play	January & February, All Day	Free
	Teen Corner Exploration	January & February, All Day	Free
	Baby Storytime	Tuesdays, 10:15 AM	Free
	Tween Art Studio	Tuesdays, 3:45 PM	Free
	Nonfiction Writers Group	Tuesdays, 5:30 PM	Free
	Toddler & Preschool Storytime	Wednesdays, 10:15 AM	Free
	Read with a Dog	Wednesdays, 4:00 PM	Free
	Intro to Circuit Venture	Jan 8 & Feb 12, 10:15 AM	Free
	Family Storytime	Saturdays, 10:15 AM	Free
	Jazz in the Library	Saturdays, 2:00 PM	Free
	Crochet and Knitting Workshop	Jan 10 & Feb 14, 2:00 PM	Free
	Virtual Author Talk	January 13, 12:00 PM	Free
	Symphony Storytime	January 14, 10:15 AM	Free
	Classics Book Club	Jan 17 & Feb 21, 10:15 AM	Free


	Teen Sewing Workshop	Jan 17 & Feb 14, 2:00 PM	Free
	Sewing Circle	Jan 18 & Feb 15, 2:00 PM	Free
	Create your own 3D Designs	January 21, 6:30 PM	Free
	Intro to Computerized Sewing	Jan 22 & Feb 19, 10:15 AM	Free
	Copyright Basics	January 26, 6:00 PM	Free
	Noon Notes	February 2, 12:00 PM	Free
	Circuit Accessories	February 4, 6:30 PM	Free
	Authors and Books	February 12, 6:00 PM	Free
	Music Together Storytime	February 17, 10:15 AM	Free
	Extreme History: Helen Sieben	February 17, 6:00 PM	Free

Hope Lutheran Church
www.baroquemusicmontana.org


	I Melt Like Snow in the Sun of Your Beauty	January 9, 7:30 PM	\$5+
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Hope Lutheran Church
www.baroquemusicmontana.org


	Lena Marie Schiffer	February 20 & 21, 8:00 PM	\$45+
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	JD Graham	March 21, 8:00 PM	\$35+
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Museum of the Rockies
www.museumoftherockies.org


	FROGS - A Chorus of Colors	Feb 6-Sept 6, Daily	\$10.50+
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Rockin' TJ Ranch
www.rockintjranch.shop


	Valentines at the Ranch	February 14, 6:30 PM	\$125
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The Ellen Theatre
www.theellen.my.salesforce-sites.com


	Paula Poundstone	January 9, 7:00 PM	\$57
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	Ragtime	Jan 23-Feb 1, 3:00 PM & 7:00 PM	\$33+
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	Montana Backcountry Discovery Route Film Premiere	February 7, 5:00 PM	\$21
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	International Guitar Night	February 11, 7:30 PM	\$44
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	J2B2 - John Jorgenson Bluegrass Band	March 6, 7:30 PM	\$39
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	The Shane Center presents RENT	March 13-22, 7:30 PM & 3:00 PM	\$22+
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The Elm
www.logjampresents.com


	Tank & The Bangas	January 27, 8:00 PM	\$35+
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	Kitchen Dwellers	January 30 & 31, 8:00 PM	\$47+
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	Gavin Degraw	February 5, 8:00 PM	\$47+
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	KT Tunstall	February 6, 8:00 PM	\$47+
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	The Elovaters	February 10, 7:00 PM	\$47+
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	Big Richard & Della Mae	February 13, 8:00 PM	\$33+
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	Hayes Carll	February 17, 8:00 PM	\$33+
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	Maddy O'Neal	February 21, 8:00 PM	\$33+
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	Opiuo	February 26, 8:00 PM	\$47+
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	10th Annual Moms Like Me	March 1, 4:00 PM	\$20
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	Hell's Belles	March 5, 8:00 PM	\$33+
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	San Holo	March 14, 8:00 PM	\$47+
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	Zoso - The Ultimate Led Zeppelin Experience	March 20, 8:00 PM	\$41+
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	Inzo	March 25, 8:00 PM	\$37+
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	Evan Honer	March 28, 7:00 PM	\$34+
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	Arc'teryx Backcountry Skiing Film Festival	January 15, 7:00 PM	\$21
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	2026 Fly Fishing Film Tour	January 23, 7:00 PM	\$15+
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Willson Auditorium
www.bozemansymphony.org


	Masters of Melody: Mozart, Copland, & Haydn	January 24 & 25, 7:30 PM & 2:30 PM	\$27+
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	Cinematic Legends: The Music of Hans Zimmer & Ennio Morricone	February 13-15, 7:30 PM & 2:30 PM	\$28+
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	Romantic Splendor: Schumann & Schubert	March 21 & 22, 7:30 PM & 2:30 PM	\$27+
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BROADUS


Held Ranch
www.baroquemusicmontana.org


	Gentle Plucks: Bach & Beyond	February 28, 7:00 PM	TBD
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BUTTE

The Mother Lode Theatre
www.buttearts.org


	Arrival from Sweden: The Music of ABBA	January 2, 7:00 PM	\$46+
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	Toast	January 10, 7:00 PM	\$32.35+
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	Dirty Dancing	January 22, 7:00 PM	\$49.15+
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	Giselle	January 25, 4:00 PM	\$36.55+
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	Vitamin String Quartet: The Music of Billie Eilish, Brigherton & Beyond	February 9, 7:00 PM	\$46+
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	The She Gees	February 22, 7:00 PM	TBA
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	World Ballet Company: Cinderella	March 6, 7:00 PM	\$48.10+
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	Dusty Slay	March 7, 7:00 PM	\$31.30+
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	The French Family Band	March 19, 7:00 PM	TBA
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Columbus Community Congregational Church
www.baroquemusicmontana.org

	I Melt Like Snow in the Sun of Your Beauty	January 11, 2:00 PM	Donation
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EUREKA


Eureka High School Auditorium
www.sunburstarts.org

	Buzz Brass	February 3, 7:00 PM	Free
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	The McDades	March 7, 7:00 PM	Free
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GREAT FALLS


First Congregational Church UCC
www.app.arts-people.com


	Chamber Music Series: Beethoven in Candlelight	February 8, 2:00 PM	\$25+
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Holiday Inn Convention Center
www.westernheritageartists.com


	Western Heritage Artists	March 18-22, Daily	Free
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Mansfield Theater
www.ticketing.greatfallsmt.net


	The Magic of Mowtown	January 9, 7:30 PM	\$52+
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	Toast	January 12, 7:00 PM	\$37+
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	The Great Beyond Film Festival	February 7, Daily	\$46+
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	TINA: The Tina Turner Musical	February 10, 7:30 PM	\$75.50+
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	She Gees	February 23, 7:30 PM	\$30+
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	World Ballet Company: Cinderella	March 8, 6:00 PM	\$45+
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	Take3	March 23, 7:30 PM	\$30+
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The History Museum
www.app.arts-people.com


	Chamber Music Series: Beethoven in Candlelight	February 6, 7:00 PM	\$25+
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	Arrival from Sweden: The Music of ABBA	January 3, 8:00 PM	\$57.50+
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	Crazy Train America's Ozzy Experience	January 4, 7:30 PM	\$34.20+
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	Bingo Loco - The World's Largest Bingo Rave	January 16, 6:00 PM & 10:00 PM	\$42
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	Party Iconic - Justin Bieber Dance Party Swag	January 17, 8:30 PM	\$29.25+
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	EMO Kids - Live EMO Tribute Band!	January 24, 9:00 PM	\$31.72+
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	Gavin Degraw	January 31, 7:30 PM	\$54.30+
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	Tease, Tease, Tease - A Flirty Pop Night	February 13, 8:30 PM	\$29.25+
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	HOF3T Fly Fishing Film Tour & Art Auction	February 20, 5:00 PM	\$38.50+
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	Deraps	February 25, 7:30 PM	\$20.50+
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	Paper Flowers - Remembering Fleetwood Mac	February 28, 7:30 PM	\$29.75+
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	Brian Posehn	March 13, 9:00 PM	\$34.20+
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	Zoso - The Ultimate Led Zeppelin Experience	March 19, 7:30 PM	\$28.75+
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	Shane Smith and the Saints	March 22, 7:30 PM	\$38.66+
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WINTER CALENDAR 2026


CM Russell Museum

www.cmrussell.org

 The Russell 2026 March 19-21, Daily \$60+


Heritage Inn

www.owas.online

 Out West Art show March 19-21, Daily Free

The Newberry


www.thenewberrymt.com

 The Meteors March 24, 8:00 PM \$39.15+


HAMILTON

Hamilton Performing Arts Center

www.bitterrootperformingarts.org

 Las Guaracheras January 17, 7:30 PM \$24+


 KT Tunstall February 7, 7:30 PM \$49

 Rising Appalachia March 14, 7:30 PM \$24+

HAVRE

MSUN/MAT Theatre


www.mtactors.com

 Hill County Christmas Revue January 2 & 3, 7:30 PM \$15+

HELENA

Coulter House

www.barquemusicmontana.org

 I Melt Like Snow in the Sun of Your Beauty January 8, 7:30 PM \$5+


Grandstreet Theatre

www.grandstreettheatre.com


 50th Anniversary Concert January 17, 7:30 PM \$27+

Helena Civic Center

www.helenasympphony.org


 Masterworks III: Tchaikovsky's Sixth! January 24, 7:30 PM \$22+

 Masterworks IV: Bernstein & Beethoven February 21, 7:30 PM \$22+

 Masterworks V: The Planets March 21, 7:30 PM \$22+


Lewis and Clark Brewing

www.lewisandclarkbrewing.com

 Corb Lund March 4, 8:00 PM \$38


Lewis and Clark County Fairgrounds


www.commerce.mt.gov

 Made in Montana Tradeshaw March 13 & 14, Daily Free

Lewis and Clark Library


www.lclibrary.org

 Books & Babies Mondays, 10:30 AM Free

 Toddler Tales Tuesdays, 10:30 AM Free

 Preschool Storytime Wednesdays, 10:30 AM Free

 Middle Grade Book Group Jan 8, Feb 12 & Mar 12, 4:00 PM Free

 Adults Who Read YA Jan 13, Feb 10 & Mar 10, 6:00 PM Free

Saint Paul's United Methodist Church

www.helenasympphony.org

 Symphony Kids: Punch's Farical Parcel January 31, 10:00 AM & 11:00 AM Free


The Holter Museum of Art

www.holtermuseum.org

 Margo Geddes: La Durée Jan 16-Mar 29, Daily \$10


 Carol Hartman: The Tipping Point Jan 16-Mar 29, Daily \$10

 Meghan Spielman: Windows and Doors Jan 16-Mar 8, Daily \$10


 Jason Elliott Clark: Myths and Legends Jan 16-Apr 1, Daily \$10

The Myrna Loy


www.themyrnaloy.com

 Michael Mayo January 22, 7:30 PM \$30


 Bassel and the Supernaturals February 5, 7:30 PM \$26

 International Guitar Night February 10, 7:30 PM \$40


 Brew and View Young Frankenstein February 12, 8:00 PM \$12+

 Always February 19, 7:00 PM Free

 American Patchwork Quartet February 26, 7:30 PM \$30

 John Jorgenson Bluegrass Band March 7, 7:30 PM \$35

 Leaving a Mark by Ophira Eisenberg March 20, 7:30 PM \$28

 Tord Gustavsen Trio March 25, 7:30 PM \$30

KALISPELL

Glacier Art Museum

www.glacierartmuseum.org

 Members Salon 2026 Jan 16-Feb 21, Daily Free

 High School Student Exhibition Feb 27-Apr 4, Daily Free


 A Life in Studio: Marge Dodge Mar 20-Jun 6, Daily Free

Wachholz College Center


www.wachholzcollegecenter.org


 The Choir of Man January 2, 7:30 PM \$49

 Las Guaracheras January 15, 7:00 PM \$27

 Glacier Symphony: West Side Story January 17 & 18, 7:30 PM & 3:00 PM \$15+

 Dirty Dancing in Concert January 23, 7:30 PM \$39

 Anana Varma February 3, 7:00 PM \$12+

 Stella Cole February 4, 7:00 PM \$38

 International Guitar Night February 9, 7:00 PM \$33

 Vitamin String Quartet February 10, 7:00 PM \$39

 Big Richard & Della Mae February 11, 7:00 PM \$30

 Glacier Symphony: Mahler 3 - What Love Tells Me February 14, 7:30 PM & 3:00 PM \$15+


 The Jungle Book: A Family Musical February 22, 4:00 PM \$16.50+

 A Night of Comedy February 27, 6:30 PM \$20+

 Ottmar Liebert & Luna Negra March 1, 6:00 PM \$35.20+

 Devon Allman's Blues Summit March 3, 7:00 PM \$39.60+

 World Ballet Company: Cinderella March 4, 7:00 PM \$47.30+


 Glacier Symphony: Galaxies Beyond! March 14, 7:30 PM \$15+

 Rising Appalachia March 15, 7:00 PM \$39

LIVINGSTON

The Dulcie Theatre


www.theshanecenter.org

 Rent Feb 27-Mar 8, 7:30 PM \$15+

MILES CITY

Tongue River Winery


www.barquemusicmontana.org

 Gentle Plucks: Bach & Beyond February 27, 7:00 PM TBD


MISSOULA

Missoula Art Museum

www.missoulaartmuseum.org

 After School Art Adventure Series 3 Jan 6-Feb 10, 3:45 PM \$63+


 MAM Gala February 7, 5:00 PM \$150+


 After School Art Adventure Series 4 Feb 17-Mar 24, 3:45 PM \$63+


Missoula Children's Theatre


www.mctinc.org


 Moon Over Buffalo January 15-25, 2:00 PM, 6:30 PM & 7:30 PM \$27+


 Candlelight Concert: Coldplay & Imagine Dragons January 31, 6:30 PM \$48.50+

 Candlelight Concert: A Tribute to Adele January 31, 8:30 PM \$39.50+

 Candlelight Concert: Featuring Vivaldi's Four Seasons and More February 7, 6:30 PM \$52.50+

 Candlelight Concert: Queen vs. ABBA February 7, 8:30 PM \$58.50+

 The Lightning Thief: The Percy Jackson Musical March 5-15, 2:00 PM, 6:30 PM & 7:30 PM \$27+

 Shakespeare Trunk Show: Macbeth March 10-21, 7:00 PM \$12


 Seussical KIDS: Red Fish Cast March 27-28, 5:00 PM & 7:00 PM \$17


Missoula Public Library

www.missoulapubliclibrary.org

 2nd Wednesday Book Group Jan 14, Feb 11 & Mar 11, 6:30 PM Free

 Art with a Purpose Mondays, 10:00 AM Free


 Tiny Tales at Empower Palace Tuesdays, 11:45 AM Free

 Teen Tuesdays Tuesdays, 3:30 PM Free

 Watercolor Painting Fridays, 12:00 PM Free

 Yarns Fridays, 12:00 PM Free


 Storytime for 3 and older Saturdays, 10:30 AM Free

 Tiny Tales Thursdays & Fridays, 10:30 AM Free


 Big Sky Writers Group Wednesdays, 4:30 PM Free

 2nd Wednesday Book Group Wednesdays, 3:30 PM Free

 Young Adult Writers Fridays, 3:30 PM Free

 Sherlock Holmes & A Musical Mystery January 25, 10:00 AM Free


TBA
www.baroquemusicmontana.org

 Gentle Plucks: Bach & Beyond February 24, 7:00 PM \$5+


The Artists Shop
www.missoulaartistsshop.com


 Now & Then Toni Spencer January 1-31, Daily Free


The Clay Studio of Missoula
www.theclaystudioofmissoula.org


 Introductory Pottery Jan 11-Feb 15, 5:00 PM \$220+


 Sunday Beginning Pottery Jan 11-Feb 15, 1:00 PM \$330+

 Monday Beginning Pottery Jan 5-Mar 9, 6:00 PM \$330+


 Tuesday Beginning Pottery Jan 6-Mar 10, 10:00 AM \$330+


 Wednesday Beginning Pottery Jan 7-Mar 11, 2:00 PM \$330+


 Thursday Beginning Pottery Jan 8-Mar 12, 6:00 PM \$330+


 Monday Open Instruction Jan 5-Mar 9, 2:00 PM \$330+


 Tuesday Open Instruction Jan 6-Mar 10, 2:00 PM \$330+

 Continuing Pottery Plus Jan 7-Mar 11, 6:00 PM \$350+


 Winter Building Furniture and Large Sculpture Jan 7-Feb 25, 6:00 PM \$400+


 Winter: Figure and Scene Sculpture Class Jan 11-Mar 1, 5:00 PM \$380+


 Winter Wood Fire: Class and Firing Jan 6-Mar 10, 6:00 PM \$380+


 Winter Wood Fire: Firing Only January 6, 6:00 PM \$235+


The Top Hat
www.logjampresents.com

 Yeedm January 16, 10:30 PM \$22+


 Tank & The Bangas January 28, 8:00 PM \$41+

 Daniel Donato's Cosmic Country February 3, 8:00 PM \$33+


 Hayes Carll February 15, 8:00 PM \$33+


 Magic City Hippies February 17, 8:00 PM \$33+


 Maddy O'Neal February 20, 10:30 PM \$33+


 Grieves March 27, 10:30 PM \$27+


The Wilma
www.logjampresents.com


 Arc'teryx Backcountry Skiing Film Festival January 23, 7:00 PM \$16+


 20th Anniversary of the Fly Fishing Film Tour January 29, 7:00 PM \$15+

 Vitamin String Quartet February 4, 8:00 PM \$47+


 Big Richard & Della Mae February 12, 8:00 PM \$33+


 Atmosphere February 18, 7:00 PM \$49+


 Neko Case February 26, 8:00 PM \$54+

 Opiuo February 27, 7:00 PM \$35+


 Hell's Belles March 7, 7:00 PM \$35+


 San Holo March 13, 7:00 PM \$43+


 Zoso - The Ultimate Led Zeppelin Experience March 21, 8:00 PM \$35+


 Inzo March 26, 8:00 PM \$36+


University of Montana Theatre
www.missoulasympphony.org

 How To Train Your Dragon Orchestra January 31, 3:00 PM \$10+


 Oceans of Sound March 7 & 8, 3:00 PM & 7:30 PM \$15+


 ACDA Benefit Concert February 6-7, 7:30 PM \$20


 Can't Drink Salt Water February 14-22, 7:30 PM & 2:00 PM \$38.25+


 Alice/Wonderland March 5-8 & 12-14, 7:30 PM & 2:00 PM TBD


Zootown Arts Community Center
www.showroom.zootownarts.org


 Let Your Nerd Flag Fly Drag Show January 4, 9:00 PM \$10+


 Belly Dance Showcase January 10, 7:00 PM \$12


 Pons w/ Dorris Doom & (Latent) January 2, 8:30 PM \$17


 Flask w/ Candygram January 7, 7:30 PM \$11.40+


 Cast from Canon January 9, 7:30 PM \$11.40+


 Sunday Swing w/ Ed Norton Big Band January 11, 7:00 PM \$11.40+


 The Brad Leali Quartet with the Missoula Jazz Orchestra January 16, 7:30 PM \$22.80+


 Marie Smith Jazz Group January 24, 7:30 PM \$19.30+

 The Perfect Pour January 25, 2:00 PM \$11.40+

 Vestminster Kennel Club Dog Pole Dance Show January 29, 7:30 PM \$11.40+


 Midnight EDM Party January 30, 9:00 PM \$11.40+


 Briscoe w/ Wells Ferrari January 31, 8:00 PM \$22

 Doom Scroll w/ Big Mosquito & Minot March 22, 7:30 PM \$13.60+

POLSON


Polson High School
www.missionvalleylive.com

 Sterling Drake January 16, 7:00 PM \$15

 The McDades March 20, 7:00 PM \$15


RED LODGE

Calvary Episcopal Church
www.baroquemusicmontana.org

 I Melt Like Snow in the Sun of Your Beauty January 12, 7:00 PM \$45

RONAN

Ronan Performing Arts Center
www.missionvalleylive.com

 Quarteto Nuevo February 6, 7:00 PM \$15


SHEPHERD


Kania House
www.baroquemusicmontana.org

 Gentle Plucks: Bach & Beyond March 1, 2:30 PM \$5+

STEVENSVILLE


Stevensville Playhouse
www.stevensvilleplayhouse.org

 A Rock Sails By February 6-15, 7:30 PM & 2:00 PM \$15+

 Eureka Day March 13-22, 7:30 PM & 2:00 PM \$15+


TWIN BRIDGES

Linda Foy Atelier
www.baroquemusicmontana.org


 Gentle Plucks: Bach & Beyond February 25, 6:00 PM \$20

WHITEFISH


FoR Fine Art
www.forfineart.com


 236 Smaller Works Show Dec 12-Jan 17, 2026, Daily Free


Great Northern Bar
www.greatnorthernbar.com

 Float Like a Buffalo February 19, 9:30 PM Free

Whitefish Theatre Co
www.whitefishtheatreco.org

 Brooklyn Laundry January 24-25, 7:30 PM & 2:00 PM \$10+

 Bassel & The Supernaturals February 6, 7:30 PM \$20+

 The Odd Couple February 20-22 & 26-28, 4:00 PM & 7:30 PM \$10+

 The Best We Could (a family tragedy) March 21-22, 7:30 PM & 2:00 PM \$10+

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